

**The *Aeneid* and the Illusory Authoress: Truth,  
fiction and feminism in Héli-senne de Crenne's  
*Eneydes***

Submitted by Sharon Margaret Marshall, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Classics, June 2011

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## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge the generosity and patience of my supervisor Dr Rebecca Langlands, whose perspicacious insight and friendship have been invaluable to me. I could not imagine a better supervisor and it is no exaggeration to say that I could not have done this without your unfaltering confidence in me and the project. Thanks also to Karen Ni-Mheallaigh and Tim Whitmarsh for their lucid criticism and their support, particularly in the early stages of the project.

I am particularly indebted to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for their generous support of this project. A number of institutions have also been extremely helpful, including the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the Bibliothèque de Genève and the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, for which I am most grateful.

To all of my colleagues in the Department of Classics and Ancient History at Exeter – in particular Matthew, Martin, Daniel, Barbara, Claire, and Kerensa – thank you for each helping to make it such an affable and stimulating environment in which to work and share ideas. To my fellow postgraduates and kindred geeks, past and present – Pauline Hanesworth, Kyle Erickson, Steve Kennedy, Kiu Yue, Claude Kananak, Liz Dollins, Beth Hartley, James Smith, Matt Smith and Mark Doidge - I cannot thank you enough for the reading groups, seminars, conferences, trips to the Rusty Bike, warmth, wit and encouragement. And the biggest thanks of all to Rowan Fraser, cheerleader number one and a constant source of support, even from the other side of the world. I am a firm believer that every department everywhere needs their own Rowan.

I am also grateful to my Latin V class – reading Latin literature with you for three years was an immense pleasure and your humour and enthusiasm consistently renewed my own passion. Thanks also to Steve Llewellyn and Jean Mace, whose tangible love of the ancient world and its literature, continues to inspire me. I can only hope to convey some of that enthusiasm in my own teaching. Finally, to Mike and Mum, who are always there for me, always proud of me. I will never be able to thank you enough. This thesis is for my dad, who always encouraged me to ask questions and seek out the answers.

## Abstract

In 1541, writing under the pseudonym Hélienne de Crenne, the French noblewoman Marguerite Briet produced a translation of the first four books of Virgil's *Aeneid* that remains largely unknown. As a female author, Hélienne provides a sixteenth-century woman's perspective on the *Aeneid*, an on classical literature more generally, and the uniqueness of her translation in this respect makes her work extremely significant, particularly given the relatively recent interest in women and other marginal voices within the field of classics.

This thesis contributes to an understanding of the need for a holistic approach to Classical Reception Studies, through a thorough examination of Hélienne's translation not only with regard to her gender but also the social, historical and literary climate in which she writes. Focussing on the *mise en livre*, as well as the text, my approach also stresses the need to reevaluate the relationship between the author and the text that we often assume in classics is more direct than is actually the case. Through such an examination of her *Eneydes*, Hélienne emerges as a serious participant in the humanist tradition who engages with classical literature in such a way as to question masculine textual authority and the notion of an objective truth, whilst deliberately implicating herself through her translation in a web of authorities who are not to be trusted.

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## Abbreviations

<i>Aen.</i>	Virgil, <i>Aeneid</i> .
<i>Ang.</i>	De Crenne, H. (1968) <i>Les Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d'amours</i> , ed. Paule Demats. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
<i>Ap. Rh.</i>	Apollonius of Rhodes.
<i>Cité.</i>	De Pizan, C. (1997) <i>Cité des Dames</i> , ed. E. J. Richards. Milan: Luni Editrice.
<i>En.</i>	De Crenne, H. (1541) <i>Les quatre premiers livres des Eneydes: du treslegant poete Virgile</i> . Paris: Denys Janot.
<i>FGrH</i>	Jacoby, F., ed. (1923-62) <i>Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker</i> . Berlin & Leiden: Brill.
<i>Just. Epit.</i>	Justin <i>Epitoma historiarum Philippicarum Pompei Trogi</i> .
<i>Liv.</i>	Livy, <i>Ab urbe condita</i> .
<i>Lucr.</i>	Lucretius, <i>De rerum natura</i> .
<i>Ov. Her</i>	Ovid, <i>Heroides</i> .
<i>Ov. Met</i>	Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i>
<i>Ov. Trist.</i>	Ovid, <i>Tristia</i> .
<i>Plaut. Am</i>	Plautus, <i>Amphitruo</i> .
<i>Sat.</i>	Macrobius, <i>Saturnalia</i> .
<i>Sen. Ag.</i>	Seneca, <i>Agamemnon</i> .
<i>Serv. A</i>	Servius, <i>Ad Aeneis</i> .
<i>Stat. Theb</i>	Statius, <i>Thebais</i> .

## Introduction

This thesis aims to provide the first in-depth examination of Hélienne de Crenne's 1541 translation of Books One to Four of Virgil's *Aeneid* into French, exploring how Hélienne renders Virgil's text and her rationale for the choices she makes. More specifically, I investigate the lexical choices Hélienne makes, how thorough her knowledge of Virgil's *Aeneid* is and how this knowledge might have been obtained, what role her publisher plays, who her reader (both real and imagined) is, how we are to understand the dedication of the translation to François I, and what the purpose of the translation is. In so doing, I contribute to three distinct but interrelated fields: our understanding of Hélienne de Crenne and her works, the reception of Virgil during the French Renaissance, and women's engagement with Classical literature. Examining the translation from several perspectives – including the gender of the translator, the socio-historical milieu in which she writes, the literary climate of sixteenth-century France, and the publishing context – this thesis will clearly demonstrate that a holistic approach to a text is the most fruitful mode of enquiry in Classical Reception Studies.

Throughout the thesis, I offer a close reading of Hélienne's translation and its paratext, in comparison with Virgil's *Aeneid*, using Josse Badius Ascensius' edition of the complete works of Virgil, since it was the most common edition of Virgil in circulation in sixteenth-century France. In order to establish what is peculiar to Hélienne's translation and how much her rendering of Virgil might have been influenced by the translations of her contemporaries, I also compare selected passages of her translation with other French translations of the *Aeneid* from the sixteenth century. Moreover, I consider Hélienne's translation alongside her other literary works throughout, in order to more clearly understand how they contribute to the ways she engages with the *Aeneid* and, in turn, how her knowledge and reading of the *Aeneid* might have contributed to her other works.

One of the key questions at the heart of this study relates to Hélienne's gender, as I ask how a female translator might respond to the masculine genre of Roman epic, especially during a time in which women's engagement with the languages and literature of the ancient world was uncommon. The principal theory that underlines the study, and with which I engage throughout, is reception theory, which insists on the situatedness of all receptions of a text. It is precisely this



situatedness that I explore throughout in order to understand why Hélienne transforms Virgil's text in the way she does. Furthermore, in addition to the text itself, I also examine closely the paratext of the translation, recognising its potential contribution to our understanding of Hélienne and her publisher's intentions, and revealing some of the ways in which it might have shaped a potential reader's response to the text, especially given the relative lack of actual extant response to the translation. In particular, I insist that translation – as a process in which the translator assumes the role of reader-as-writer – is a very specific type of reception; one in which the translator occupies a particularly authoritative position as a stand-in for the author and is able to exert their influence over the interpretation of the text.

Chapter One explores my methodology in greater depth, arguing that current reception theory, despite emphasising the historical situatedness of readings, elides some of the possible differences between readers, such as place, lifestyle and identity. Instead, I propose a model for approaching individual receptions of a text that acknowledges the influence of previous receptions of a text, but considers them alongside the more individual circumstances of the particular reader. Another feature of current reception theory is its tendency to treat reading as a straightforward communication between reader and writer. I argue, however, that the gap between what the author intends and the reader understands does not result solely from the reader's inability to access the full consciousness of the author, but also from the material form of the text.

Chapter Two offers a bio-bibliographical sketch of Hélienne de Crenne. I provide an overview of what we know of the life of the historical figure behind the pseudonym Hélienne, before considering the implications of the choice of this pseudonym. Exploring the literary resonances of the name, I suggest that Hélienne creates a deliberately elusive persona that forms part of a much broader strategy of the sophisticated literary playfulness that is evident throughout the translation. I then offer a survey of Hélienne's other works and scholarship on them in order to ascertain the principal ideological and stylistic concerns of her writing. In particular, I suggest here that Hélienne's translation of the *Aeneid* allows us to examine more closely her engagement with the humanist tradition, arguing that the limited scholarly attention afforded to the text so far has failed to fully appreciate the way in which Hélienne uses it to challenge Virgil

superficially and textual authority more generally. Turning to the translation itself, I then offer a survey of extant copies of the text and their condition, providing details of a copy not previously known to scholars, located in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin. Finally, I offer a brief examination of women writers in sixteenth-century France in order to show that Hélienne can be distinguished as working in the capacity of a professional female author and is almost unique in this respect. Situating Hélienne's work within the context of the *querelle des femmes*, a literary debate about the nature of women and their place within society, I argue that we must consider Hélienne's uncommon position as a professional female writer and this polemical context in order to appreciate the defence of women, and in particular their intellect, as one of the principal concerns borne out by Hélienne's writing.

Chapter Three explores further the literary and cultural climate in which Hélienne's translation of the *Aeneid* is produced, providing comparison with other sixteenth-century French translations of the *Aeneid* to demonstrate how Hélienne departs from the practice of her contemporaries in her paraphrastic approach, ornate style, and introduction of glosses and even major digressions into the text. Given the relative lack of extant translation theory from the period, I provide a brief exploration of the practice of translation by examining a short passage from five other sixteenth-century translations of the *Aeneid* into French, demonstrating the general pattern of increasing accuracy combined with an increasing concern for style among Hélienne's contemporaries. With links to developments in both vernacular literature and the translation of classical literature – through her printer Denys Janot and dedicatee François I – we will see that Hélienne challenges the general trends in translation practice as she attempts to reach both an audience of readers of vernacular literature and one of learned humanist scholars, in an attempt to bridge the worlds of the academic institutions and the people of Paris.

In the final part of this examination of the literary and cultural climate in which Hélienne writes, I consider the Virgilian tradition beyond the *Aeneid* in sixteenth-century France, proposing that an understanding of general trends in the reception of the *Aeneid* will give us a sense of the Virgil that Hélienne and her readers encountered. Drawing particular attention to the accounts of the Trojan War by Dares of Phrygia and Dictys of Crete, whose popularity persisted through

the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, I suggest that Virgil's *Aeneid*, though providing a prevalent and authoritative account of the story of the Trojan War, was not the only account that Hélienne and her readers inherited.

Chapter Four explores paratextual elements of the translation such as the title page, the privilege, and the dedicatory letter, arguing that they can all be read programmatically. Beginning with a brief consideration of the typical output of Hélienne's printer, Denys Janot, I demonstrate that Hélienne's translation of the *Aeneid* marks a departure from the majority of Janot's work, particularly in the folio format, and I consider the implications of such a format in terms of both cost and prestige. Moving to the title page, I explore a number of features that appear to support the thesis previously advanced that Hélienne, and perhaps Janot too, have a broad audience of both readers of vernacular literature and learned humanists in mind. The privilege that follows the title page, I argue, is a sign of commercial protection of the translation and a seal of quality, but more importantly raises crucial questions about the dynamics of ownership and control of the text between the author and publisher, as well as the difficulty in ascertaining from early modern books the extent of the author's involvement in the publishing process.

A detailed study of the dedicatory letter to François I at the beginning of the translation draws out a key feature of the text: the challenge of authority. Focussing on the Trojan War and pre-signalling a digression on the death of Hector in Book Two, the dedicatory letter challenges the authority of Homer, as Hélienne insists instead on the veracity of the accounts of Dictys. Making reference to the myth that the French monarchy were descended from the Trojans, Hélienne's focus on the death of Hector and the fall of Troy, which would very likely have resonated with François' own recent defeat in Italy, calls into doubt a reading of the dedicatory letter as pure encomium. The digression itself, in terms of its structure, its layout on the page and the dubious authenticating strategies of Dictys' prologue cited by Hélienne, all lead us, I suggest, to question whether we are really meant to accept Dictys as the most credible author, as Hélienne creates a framework of veracity that cannot be upheld.

Turning to the *vie du poete* that also precedes the translation, a thorough examination of the contents of the biography and identification of Hélienne's sources brings out her concerns as a humanist and the range of material with which she engages, reinforcing the suggestion that the translation is written with

an audience of both humanist scholars and readers of vernacular literature in mind.

Chapter Four concludes with an analysis of the woodcut illustrations that appear throughout the text. Here I argue that the woodcuts are not designed specifically for this text, but are in fact copies of illustrations from an earlier German edition of the complete works of Virgil and, though designed for both educated and uneducated readers, may have had a negative impact upon the appeal of the text as a result of the lack of refinement in their finish and their unusual placement within the text.

Chapter Five offers the most sustained treatment of the text itself, focussing in particular on the figure of Dido, offering close reading of selected passages of Virgil's *Aeneid* and Hélienne's translation to show how she transforms Virgil's tragic queen, and exploring the impetus behind such a transformation. I begin by exploring the centrality of Dido to Hélienne's whole corpus, proposing that Dido provides inspiration for female characters in her other works, serves as an exemplum for other characters and the implied reader and, most importantly, functions as a key allegorical figure for Hélienne's self-fashioning as a female author engaging in a masculine pursuit. Surveying the three models of Dido – the chaste historical Dido, the passionate Virgilian Dido and the abandoned Ovidian Dido – and the interplay between those types through the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, I suggest that Hélienne and her reader inherit a rich composite Dido figure, whose complexity Hélienne exploits to challenge Virgil's presentation of her story.

Turning to Dido's exemplary function within Hélienne's works, I explore the way in which her presentation of Dido explicitly enacts the failure of exemplarity and questions the notion of objective authority. This dismantling of authority is, I suggest, the principal strategy employed by Hélienne in her defence of women and in her definition of her own role within the humanist tradition. To achieve this, Hélienne emphasises the tragic qualities of Dido already apparent in the *Aeneid*, affecting the reader's response to the question of Dido's responsibility for her own tragic downfall.

In the subsequent section I consider how, despite the pathos she affords Dido, Hélienne nevertheless makes her an exemplum of vice to be avoided,

stressing the danger of yielding to one's passions. Hélienne stresses the agency of Dido and objectifies Aeneas as part of this exemplary process.

The second half of this chapter re-examines the figure of Dido explored thus far, suggesting that Hélienne in fact destabilises the figure of Dido, creating uncertainty about who is telling her true story. In so doing, Hélienne not only challenges the authority of Virgil, but also textual authority more generally, offering both a defence of women and an exposition of an erudite female intervention in the humanist tradition.

The re-examination of Dido begins with the cave-scene, as I show how Hélienne downplays Dido's responsibility by reminding us of the divine forces at work and casting doubts over her guilt. I continue with a consideration of the consistent emphasis placed by Hélienne upon Dido's former chastity, which makes her subsequent abandonment to passion all the more unexpected – to the extent that it gives the reader cause to question her exemplary function. This apparent defence of Dido is reinforced by the way in which Hélienne closes down gender oppositions more broadly in the *Aeneid* that attribute negative characteristics, such as changeability and foolishness, to the female sex, by demonstrating them to be equally applicable to the male characters.

Finally, I investigate the way in which Hélienne treats the theme of deception, and in particular deceptive words, throughout her translation. Portraying Aeneas as a feckless and manipulative lover who deliberately misleads Dido with flattering words, Hélienne challenges Virgil's presentation of the hero of his epic. Through resonances with the challenge of Homer posed in the dedicatory letter, Hélienne links Aeneas and his capacity for deception with unreliable classical texts that are generally considered to be authoritative, accusing both of misrepresentation. The challenge to authority does not, however, stop there, as the deceptiveness of Aeneas is applied to Dido too, with Hélienne stressing Dido's own use of deceitful and manipulative language. I therefore suggest that, if Dido functions as an allegorical figure for Hélienne as an author, then by questioning her reliability Hélienne invites scrutiny of her own account of the story of Dido and Aeneas, just as much Virgil's. Her translation of the *Aeneid* does not then simply tell Virgil's story from another perspective, but demonstrates that claims to truth are rarely straightforward. Hélienne's treatment of truth and fiction thus questions the way in which women have been represented and allows

her to defend women's intellect through her own sophisticated appropriation and bold rewriting of an authoritative masculine text.

## Chapter One: Methodological context

### 1.1 A woman's response to "arms and the man"

In 2008, Yale University Press published a new translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* by Sarah Ruden, a fellow of the Yale Divinity School who had previously translated Petronius' *Satyricon* and Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. The promotional blurb on the back cover of the translation boldly claims:

"This extraordinary new translation of the *Aeneid* stands alone among modern Vergil translations for its accuracy and poetic appeal. Sarah Ruden, a lyric poet in her own right, is the first woman to translate Vergil's great epic, and she renders the poem in the same number of lines as the original work—a very rare feat that maintains technical fidelity to the original without diminishing its emotional power".<sup>1</sup>

Ruden's translation was well-received, and praised by reviewers for its fidelity to the original and its style; in particular, its reproduction of the proportions of Virgil's *Aeneid* and the rapidity of his narrative.<sup>2</sup> A recurring preoccupation of the reviews, also stressed in the blurb above, is the gender of the translator.

In his piece for the *New York Review of Books*, Garry Wills praises what he calls Ruden's "virtuosic" use of iambic pentameter and the metrical effects that she produces, which retain the "tight aphoristic ring" of the original.<sup>3</sup> Having explored stylistic aspects of the poem, Wills then proceeds to discuss Ruden's reading of the *Aeneid*, explicitly positing her gender as a key factor in the way she is likely to interpret the poem: "How is she on the larger meanings of the work? She is the first woman to translate the whole epic, and she seems an unlikely candidate for the job."<sup>4</sup> Wills goes on to suggest that, as a poem so heavily centred on war, the *Aeneid* is an unusual choice for Ruden to translate, given that she is a Quaker. It is significant, however, that the first aspect of Ruden's identity that Wills sees as being incongruous with the subject matter is her gender.

We find an even more sustained focus on Ruden's gender in Jennifer Howard's review of the translation for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, in which she suggests that the translation reveals greater tenderness and intimacy in Virgil's

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<sup>1</sup> Promotional blurb from back cover of Ruden 2009.

<sup>2</sup> For detailed reviews that stress the metrical effects achieved by Ruden, see Krisak 2009 and Farrell 2010. For more general, but equally favourable reviews see Howard 2008 and Wills 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Wills 2009.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

story than previous efforts and that Ruden's gender accounts for this. At the beginning, Howard offers her own view of the gender hierarchy encoded in the *Aeneid* as a possible explanation for the fact that women have, traditionally, steered clear of translating it: "From its arms-and-the-man opening to its climactic blood bath on the battlefield, the Latin epic tells a tale of exile, combat, and slaughter, with a body count rivalling that of Homer's *Iliad*. Women figure mostly as collateral damage."<sup>5</sup> She then explores the various scholarly positions on women's traditional lack of engagement with epic, centred not only on grounds of subject matter, but also the exclusion of women from the elite male social order – and in particular its institutions – in which epic is so heavily embedded.<sup>6</sup>

Ruden was not, however, the first female translator of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Our earliest extant female-authored translation of the *Aeneid* dates back as far as 1542, when the French noblewoman Marguerite Briet, writing under the pseudonym Hélienne de Crenne, translated Books One to Four of the *Aeneid* into French under the title *Les quatre premiers livres des Eneydes du treslegant poete Virgile, Traduictz de Latin en prose Francoyse, par ma dame Hélienne, à la traduction desquelz y a pluralite de propos, qui par maniere de phrase y sont adioustez: ce que beaucoup sert à l'elucidation & decoration desdictz Livres, dirigez à tresillustre & tresauguste Prince François premier de ce nom invictissime Roy de France*.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the tone of the reviewers' responses to Ruden's translation – and her gender in particular – raises a pertinent question about how a female translator might respond to a text so firmly inscribed in a literary tradition arguably more masculine than any other. Given that, as recently as 2008, a female-authored translation of the *Aeneid* was still uncommon and considered noteworthy on account of the translator's gender, Hélienne<sup>8</sup> gives us remarkable insight into how

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<sup>5</sup> Howard 2008: B8.

<sup>6</sup> For more on the gender dynamics of Latin epic see Keith 2000, especially Chapters 1 and 2 where Keith argues that Latin epic is a masculine genre composed by men for men and is integral to the construction of Roman masculinity. On the treatment of female characters in Virgil, see James 2002 and Nugent 1992. On how Virgil complicates gender roles whilst generally maintaining the antithesis between male and female throughout his poetry, see Oliensis 1997. Stephen Hinds (2000) provides a nuanced reading of gender in Latin epic, suggesting that epic poets tend to present their inclusion of female and erotic elements as subversive when they are, in fact, constitutive of the epic plot.

<sup>7</sup> Hereafter I shall refer to this by the more succinct title of the *Eneydes*.

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed discussion of Marguerite Briet's choice of pseudonym, see below. While the origin of the first part of the pseudonym is still subject to speculation, it is generally agreed that the second part is a place name taken from the estate owned by her husband. As such, and in accordance with the majority of criticism, I refer to her as Hélienne throughout. Although Jerry Nash finds this tendency somewhat condescending (see Nash 1996: 14), given that the title page of the *Eneydes*



a woman approached the task centuries earlier, before women's engagement with classical languages and literature was widespread.

The publication of Hélienne's translation therefore constitutes a significant moment in both the history of the *Aeneid* and the history of women writers within the French Renaissance. Hailed by critics as a forerunner of modern feminism,<sup>9</sup> in her creative translation of the *Aeneid*, Hélienne provides us with an important early example of a female intervention in a male Classical tradition. Aimed at both a learned elite and a broader reading public, her *Eneydes* includes supplementary material in the form of illustrations, marginal glosses and digressions from the narrative of Virgil's *Aeneid* that amount to a rewriting of the story of Dido and Aeneas. Explicitly engaging with the Classical tradition, including material from outside the *Aeneid*, and creating a self-styled literary persona that identifies with Dido, Hélienne challenges the way in which Virgil and his successors have presented women, and questions the concept of exemplarity. In the preface to her translation, Hélienne invests Virgil's text with a certain antecedent authority, suggesting that it is superior to her own creation. Expressing admiration for Virgil as the most "pre-eminent and sublime" poet of antiquity (*praef.* iii), Hélienne modestly refers to her own translation as "ce mien petit labour", "this little work of mine" (*praef.* v) and expresses her concerns about "the weakness of her style" (*praef.* iv).<sup>10</sup> However, Hélienne is far from a passive recipient of Virgil's text and the way in which she challenges the Virgilian presentation of the story of Dido and Aeneas belies her deference to him and her apparent anxiety about engaging with

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itself separates "dame Hélienne" and "De Crenne", I consider this entirely appropriate. For further discussion of the title page and the implications of the discontinuity between Hélienne and De Crenne, see below. Christine de Buzon rightly highlights the problem caused by the author Hélienne de Crenne's decision to name the protagonist and narrator of her novel, *Les Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d'amours*, Hélienne, and the resultant potential to misread the romance as autobiography rather than autobiographical fiction (1997: 8). This clearly has less impact in a study largely devoted to the *Eneydes*. However, when I discuss the protagonist of the *Angoysses*, I am careful to differentiate between the author and the protagonist.

<sup>9</sup> Early recognition of the feminist aspect of Hélienne's work can be found in Lula McDowell Richardson's 1929 survey of Renaissance figures who express pro-woman ideas. Joan Kelly attempts to give a fuller sense of the tradition of feminist thought, identifying the four-century long literary debate about women and sexual politics, the *querelle des femmes*, as the vehicle through which early feminist thinking evolved (see Kelly 1982). For more recent discussions of Hélienne's feminism, see Wood 2000: Chapter Four; Nash 1997; Hodges 2005.

<sup>10</sup> All references are to the copy held by the Arsenal Library of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (Fol BL 613 Rés). Since none of the pages of prefatory material are numbered, I have numbered each page in roman numerals starting with the title page, followed by the privilege and the dedicatory letter. In references to the main body of the text, for ease of reference, I have included the book number, followed by the leaf number as printed in roman numerals in the Parisian edition, followed by recto or verso, e.g. III, f. lxxv. v. On further editions of the *Eneydes*, see below.

the text that T. S. Eliot called “the classic of all Europe”.<sup>11</sup> Hélienne offers a highly personalised reading of the *Aeneid* – Virgil’s subject matter rewritten to reflect her own concerns. This “little work” of hers offers a daring contribution and challenge to the male-dominated humanist tradition and reflects her engagement with key issues of her day including the role of women and their intellect, the prestige of vernacular literature and the question of truth and authority.

## 1.2 Virgil at the centre of theorising Classical Reception Studies

The works of Virgil have been central to the theorising of Reception Studies since its inception within the discipline of Classics. Charles Martindale first issued a call for classical scholars to adopt Reception Studies in his *Redeeming the Text*, and although still relatively new, Classical Reception Studies are playing an increasingly prominent role in the discipline.<sup>12</sup> Martindale insists on the need to turn to readers and their responses to texts, arguing throughout that “meaning is always realised at the point of reception”.<sup>13</sup> The study of responses to texts was not a new idea and had been undertaken by classical scholars for centuries under the title of History of Scholarship or the Classical Tradition.<sup>14</sup> These kinds of studies of the transmission and influence of classical texts on later literature and culture tended, however, to include terms such as ‘legacy’ and ‘heritage’,<sup>15</sup> with implications of remoteness and superiority, not to mention the idea that ancient culture was effectively dead, rather than living and constantly evolving. The works of Virgil, in particular, have been subject to studies of their transmission and influence due to the central position they occupy in the literary canon of the whole of Europe, as evinced by the number of volumes dedicated solely to the reception of Virgil.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Eliot 1957: 70.

<sup>12</sup> Martindale 2006: 1. Martindale provides a brief but useful account of the increased adoption of Reception Studies in Classics in the UK during the past two decades, citing as examples the addition of reception as a category in the Research Assessment Exercise and the inclusion of chapters on reception in Cambridge Companions to ancient authors from the mid-1990s onwards.

<sup>13</sup> Martindale 1993: 3 and *passim*.

<sup>14</sup> Notable studies that come under these headings and that indeed gave rise to the notion of ‘the Classical Tradition’ include Gilbert Highet’s *The Classical Tradition* (1949) and R. R. Bolgar’s *The Classical Heritage and Its Beneficiaries* (1954).

<sup>15</sup> On the shift from the Classical Tradition to Classical Reception Studies, see Hardwick 2003: Chapter 1.

<sup>16</sup> Examples include Domenico Comparetti’s *Virgilio nel medio evo* (1872), Ziolkowski and Putnam’s *The Virgilian Tradition: The First Fifteen Hundred Years* (2008), and Farrell and Putnam’s *A Companion to Vergil’s Aeneid and Its Tradition* (2010).

Martindale recognised that implicit in this positivistic approach to classical texts and use of terminology is the assumption that classical works have a fixed definable meaning that can somehow be grasped and passed on, unchanged, thereby casting the act of reception in a somewhat passive role.<sup>17</sup> Dismissing the idea that we might ever be able to return to a reified text-in-itself, Martindale criticises Richard Jenkyns' study of Virgil's *Eclogues*,<sup>18</sup> in which Jenkyns seeks to distinguish what is 'there' in the original and the accretions that have been imposed upon it by scraping away "the barnacles of tradition".<sup>19</sup> Martindale offers a convincing discussion of the situatedness of Jenkyns' own reading (finding in it a post-Romantic sensibility) in order to demonstrate the contingent nature of all readings and thereby shifting the emphasis from passive reception to active interpretation and challenging the idea of a stable and knowable past.<sup>20</sup>

Reception is founded on a strong theoretical background particularly associated with a group of German critics at the University of Constance in the 1960s.<sup>21</sup> In particular, it is Hans-Georg Gadamer's theory of hermeneutics in his *Truth and Method*, in which he insists that all interpretation takes place within history, that provides the theoretical basis for the study of reception in the literary theory sense.<sup>22</sup> Gadamer's argument is that understanding is the result of a "fusion of horizons" between past and present and there is no essential meaning to anything.<sup>23</sup> Hans Robert Jauss, a student of Gadamer, developed a theory of the "aesthetics of reception", applying Gadamer's theory of hermeneutics to literary interpretation. Modifying Gadamer's "fusion of horizons", Jauss created the notion of a "horizon of expectations",<sup>24</sup> which posited that meaning is located in the

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<sup>17</sup> Martindale 1993: 4-5.

<sup>18</sup> Martindale 1993: 4.

<sup>19</sup> Jenkyns 1989: 26.

<sup>20</sup> Martindale 1993: 5.

<sup>21</sup> Martindale notes that the concern with reception in general was not the invention of the critical theorists of the 1960s but might instead be traced back to philosophical origins in the work of Immanuel Kant who argued in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) that the thing in itself is unknowable. See Martindale 2006: 1.

<sup>22</sup> Gadamer 1975: 304ff. Gadamer notes that "effective historical consciousness is at work in all the hermeneutical activity of both critic and historian" (305) and that the reader "can, indeed must, accept the fact that future generations will understand differently what he has read in the text" (304).

<sup>23</sup> Gadamer 1975: 273: "The horizon of the present is being continually formed, in that we have continually to test all our prejudices. An important part of this testing is the encounter with the past and the understanding of the tradition from which we come. [...] Understanding, rather, is always the fusion of these horizons which we imagine to exist by themselves".

<sup>24</sup> Jauss 1982: 23. The chapter "Literary History as a Provocation to Literary Scholarship" included in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* was originally delivered by Jauss in 1967 as his inaugural

interaction between production and reception. Jauss's argument is similar to Gadamer's in that it insists that the meaning of a text is not essential, but shaped by the social and cultural context in which it is read; that is, the expectations that the reader brings to it.

The insistence on the contingency of all readings lays the groundwork for two theses advanced by Martindale; one he identifies as weak, the other strong. The weak thesis is that receptions such as imitations and translations may contain numerous insights into ancient literature that are as yet unexplored; the strong is that all current interpretations of ancient texts are constructed by a "chain of receptions".<sup>25</sup> Martindale succinctly summarises his central point as this: "What else could (say) 'Virgil' be other than what readers have made him over the centuries?"<sup>26</sup> The point is echoed by Joseph Farrell and Michael Putnam in their introduction to the recent *Companion to Vergil's Aeneid and Its Tradition*, in which they suggest "[...] the *Aeneid*, perhaps not more than but certainly as much as any poem, has been defined by the tradition of which it is so central a part".<sup>27</sup> It is apparent then not only that Virgil has played a central role in the development of Reception Studies within Classics, but also that the reception of Virgil is crucial to our understanding of what 'Virgil' is, not with the aim of getting back to the 'original' Virgil, but of focussing instead on the various ways in which his works have been interpreted.

To demonstrate the contingency of all readings, Martindale first examines a scholarly interpretation of Virgil's *Aeneid* to show that critical responses to ancient literature are no less situated than literary responses. To do this, Martindale uses the influential work of Adam Parry, founder of the so-called Harvard school of criticism, whose 1963 article "The Two Voices of Virgil's *Aeneid*" first suggested that alongside the commonly perceived public voice of celebration of Augustus, we might find in the *Aeneid* a private voice of lament at the cost of empire.<sup>28</sup> Martindale demonstrates the situatedness of Parry's reading of the *Aeneid*, arguing that it is a response to American involvement in the Indochina Wars and reading Parry's article as "a subtle apologia for empire", grounded on hostility to

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lecture at the University of Constance under the title "What is and for what purpose does one study Literary History?".

<sup>25</sup> Martindale 1993: 7.

<sup>26</sup> Martindale 1993: 10.

<sup>27</sup> Farrell and Putnam 2010: 2.

<sup>28</sup> Parry 1963.

imperialism alongside a desire to stress the pain and loneliness of the burden of empire.<sup>29</sup>

To demonstrate that literary readings might open up other insights into ancient literature, Martindale explores the ways in which Lucan's *Pharsalia* can show us fresh ways of reading the *Aeneid* and, in particular, ways that question the validity of multiple-voice readings such as Parry's. For example, where Virgil juxtaposes the pastoral simplicity of Pallenteum with the grandeur of Rome in Book Eight of the *Aeneid*, Martindale insists that, while liberal critics might see this as evidence for the public/private opposition in Virgil's sensibilities, Lucan's reworking of the episode in the *Pharsalia*, where Caesar visits the site of Troy, removes the resonances of romanticism and renders the scene entirely desolate.<sup>30</sup> This, Martindale argues, reveals Virgil's hidden subtext – a desire to elide the past and present and, in keeping with Augustan ideology, offer a vision of a city that, despite its wealth and power, is still a pastoral idyll.<sup>31</sup> Martindale thus uses his reading of Parry's and Lucan's responses to Virgil as a warning against the dangers of modern criticism's appeal to historicism and objectivity, and the potential fruitfulness of literary responses that do not "mask [their] positionality behind a validating scholarly rhetoric".<sup>32</sup>

### 1.3 Incorporating lateral dialogues in the "chain of receptions"

Martindale's argument becomes problematic when he advances his "chain of receptions" position further, insisting that we need to reconceptualise Virgil as "all-the-forces-that-moulded-the-text-plus-its-reception".<sup>33</sup> For Martindale, our readings of a text are inseparable from its reception, including literary revisions of it, and he offers as an example the influence of Dante's reading of Virgil on T. S. Eliot's reading of Virgil.<sup>34</sup> This notion of a "chain of receptions" is somewhat too

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<sup>29</sup> Martindale 1993: 42. Martindale is not the only scholar to position American scholars' readings of the *Aeneid* against a critical landscape of sociopolitical debate about humanity and imperialism during and after the Vietnam War. See also Galinsky 1992: 32; Waswo 1997. As early as 1982, the American scholar Allen Mandelbaum explicitly situated his own translation of the *Aeneid* in this context, stating in the preface (xiv) that it was written during a period of "personal discontent" with the state over the Vietnam war. More recently, scholars have sought to defend the work of the Harvard school by exploring pessimistic readings of the *Aeneid* prior to Vietnam. See, for example, Thomas 2001: xi-xii and *passim*; Kallendorf 2007a.

<sup>30</sup> Martindale 1993: 49-51.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Martindale 1993: 40.

<sup>33</sup> Martindale 1993: 54.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

linear in its focus, over-emphasising the role of literary predecessors at the expense of other contextual elements that might affect a reception.

One of Martindale's criticisms of the Jaussian theory of reception is that it falsely emphasises the conformity of reading practices within particular periods, eliding other possible differences between readers, such as place and lifestyle.<sup>35</sup> Yet Martindale's insistence that there is no access to a text outside the tradition in which it has been inscribed also seems to elide those differences. This model might well hold true for those who have been exposed to Virgil in a traditional way, through a conventional education in the classics, but it does not account for those whose access to Virgil has not been so conventionally acquired. It is clear that not every reader of Virgil will necessarily have read Dante or even other works that have been influenced by him.<sup>36</sup> As a woman, Hélienne's education and introduction to Virgil, which I discuss further below, would have differed significantly from that of her male counterparts and she would not have been party to the all the same cultural and social influences. As such, she could not possibly bring the same "horizon of expectations" to the *Aeneid* as her male contemporaries and we can assume that the difference is more significant than that between her male contemporaries. Martindale's model accounts for the relationship between the present reception and previous receptions; since Hélienne's translation crosses the boundaries of place, language and – most importantly – gender, it represents a much more nuanced relationship with the *Aeneid* than simply being the culmination of a chain of receptions. In this sense, it calls for analysis of the lateral dialogues that are at play as well as those between the past and the present.

I therefore propose an approach to reading Hélienne's *Eneydes* that is applicable to all studies of an individual reception of a classical text: an approach that acknowledges the influence of previous receptions, but also insists on the uniqueness of those receptions to a particular reader, given the broader context of lateral relationships that also exist. This is very much in line with Lorna Hardwick's model of reception as a study not only of individual texts and their relationship with one another, but also the broader cultural processes that shape

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<sup>35</sup> Martindale 1993: 10.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Thomas similarly hints that readers will have been exposed to Virgil in different ways when he identifies John D. Long, whose translation of the *Aeneid* was published in 1879, as "the closest we have to a naïve reader of Virgil", since he had no formal study of Virgil after his schooldays (and therefore had encountered little Virgilian criticism) and claimed to have written it without consulting any other translation. See Thomas 2001: 173.

those relationships.<sup>37</sup> Thus, I not only explore the lexical choices involved in Hélienne's translation, but also her knowledge of Virgil's *Aeneid* and how this might have been obtained, the role of her publisher, the role of the reader (both real and imagined), the dedication of the translation to François I and the purpose of the translation. In order to better understand these detailed aspects of Hélienne's work, it is essential to consider the socio-historical and literary context in which she writes, taking into account the *querelle des femmes*, the rise of humanism, and contemporary attitudes towards Virgil, as well as Hélienne's identity as a French noblewoman, separated from her husband, and in the rare position of a female professional author.

#### 1.4 Reading Virgilian paratext

A further modification that I would seek to add to Martindale's model is based on Roger Chartier's observation that the Jaussian model of reception pays little attention to how the reception of a text is affected by its material form, tending to create the false impression of an immediate relationship between the text and the reader.<sup>38</sup> The role of paratext – the titles, prefaces, pagination, typography and so on – has become increasingly prominent in scholarship on the literature of the early modern period.<sup>39</sup> In his seminal work, *Seuils*, Gérard Genette defines paratext as a threshold – a strategic zone of interaction between the text and the *hors-texte* – thus underlining its importance to the way in which we read and interpret a text.<sup>40</sup> The question of the relationship between the text and its material form is particularly relevant to the literature of this period, since this is when many of the features of what we now class as paratext were developed in response to new print technology. As such, scholars have begun to note how the *mise en livre* – the publishing of a text in book form – has the potential not only to reflect an author's intentions, but also to shape the reader's perception of a text.<sup>41</sup>

Martindale criticises an interpretative approach that treats reading as a straightforward communication between the writer and reader, but locates the gap

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<sup>37</sup> Hardwick 2003: 5.

<sup>38</sup> Chartier 1989: 157-8.

<sup>39</sup> For a full discussion of the recent rise in interest in *mise en livre* see Adrian Armstrong's introduction to *Book and Text in France, 1400 – 1600*, ed. Malcolm Quainton and Adrian Armstrong (2007).

<sup>40</sup> Genette 1997: 2.

<sup>41</sup> Quainton and Armstrong's 2007 edited collection provides an interesting range of articles that explore *mise en livre* from both of these perspectives.

in the reader's inability to access the full consciousness of the author,<sup>42</sup> failing to recognise the material form of the book as a further complication to the relationship between the writer and reader. In the discipline of Classics there is, as yet, relatively little research on the materiality of the text and its influence on reading practice,<sup>43</sup> particularly in relation to early printed versions of classical texts. One particularly notable exception is the work of Craig Kallendorf, whose collection of essays, *The Virgilian Tradition: Book History and the History of Reading in Early Modern Europe*, demonstrates that the material form in which early modern readers encountered the works of Virgil played a crucial role in their understanding and interpretation of the texts.<sup>44</sup> Aspects of the *Eneydes' mise en livre* – including the title page, privilege, dedicatory letter, marginalia, chapter division and woodcuts – will therefore form an essential part of my enquiry into the aims of Hélienne and her publisher, and how this translation of the *Aeneid* might have been received.

### **1.5 Translation and the negotiation of timelessness and contingency**

As an important medium of reception, translation is a particularly useful tool for exploring an individual moment in the reception history of a text since in many ways it embodies the kinds of questions that reception studies ask and seek to answer. If Classical Reception Studies are considered to be an exploration of the differences and commonalities between the past and present, based on an understanding that the two are always implicated in one another, then there are clear parallels with Translation Studies that seek to interrogate sameness and difference between an original work and translation in a way that brings a greater understanding of both.<sup>45</sup> A study of Hélienne's translation of *Aeneid* 1-4 will thus provide a contribution to the theorisation of Classical Reception Studies in so far as it will raise questions about the methodology and in particular the remit of the field. But to understand better the specific use that can be made of translation, we

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<sup>42</sup> Martindale 1993: 30.

<sup>43</sup> Recent work in this area includes Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier's edited volume *A History of Reading in the West* (2003), which includes chapters on reading in archaic and classical Greece (37-63) and the Roman world (64-83) and Johnson 2010.

<sup>44</sup> Kallendorf 2007b.

<sup>45</sup> For more on Reception Studies and the dialogue between antiquity and modernity, see Martindale 2006: 5-6.



must first explore how translation relates to Reception Studies and how it is unique as an act of reception.

Firstly, all translation is necessarily interpretation. The translation theorist Lawrence Venuti, in his seminal work *The Translator's Invisibility*, describes translation as a process whereby “the chain of signifiers that constitutes the source-language text is replaced by a chain of signifiers in the target language which the translator provides on the strength of an interpretation”.<sup>46</sup> This theory collapses the distinction that had previously been made between translation and original writing, overcoming the low status once accorded to translation studies.<sup>47</sup> Venuti’s use of semiotic language (“chain of signifiers”) underlines his point that a translator relies on his particular interpretation of the meaning of a sign in the original (source-language) and then has to choose how to signify that in his translation (the target language). If all translation is interpretation, then we can already see that what is at stake when we study translation is exactly the same as what is at stake when we study reception: we are looking at a particular response to a source, at what is similar and what is different and what choices have been made.

When we study Classical Reception, we are looking at the relationship between the past and the present and, as Alexandra Lianeri argues, translation is the paradigmatic expression of that relationship.<sup>48</sup> Lianeri shows in her discussion of translations of Homer that translation both “affirms and negates the possibility of Classics being meaningful”.<sup>49</sup> On the one hand, the translation of classical texts emphasises their alienness and the fact that they are historically situated and do not carry a transhistorical value.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, somewhat paradoxically, the act of translation implies that there is a timelessness to classical texts; a value that transcends history and allows them to continue to be meaningful.<sup>51</sup>

Venuti proposes two possible strategies of translation: one foreignising, the other domesticating.<sup>52</sup> The foreignising strategy emphasises the gap between the source text and the target culture, stressing the otherness of the source text; the

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<sup>46</sup> Venuti 1995: 17.

<sup>47</sup> For an overview of the former “low status” view of translation and the critical shift away from thinking of translation as a secondary activity, see Bassnett 2003: 12-17 and 43-44.

<sup>48</sup> Lianeri 2006.

<sup>49</sup> Lianeri 2006: 142.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Venuti 1995: 81.

domesticating strategy attempts to bridge that gap, with the emphasis on sameness.<sup>53</sup> Alexandra Lianeri and Vanda Zajko in *Translation and the Classic* argue that, in its ability to stress sameness or otherness, translation articulates the paradoxical condition of a classic such as the *Aeneid*, in so far as it both “manifests historical endpoints and enables their transcendence”<sup>54</sup>. In other words, a classic is constructed as such on two mutually opposing grounds – timelessness and contingency – and a translation enables us to explore how in practice those contradictions are negotiated. Translation becomes then the embodiment of what Classical Reception Studies seeks to understand: continuity and discontinuity between the past and the present and how this relationship is negotiated.

Secondly, the shift in critical attention from the production of a work towards its reception began in translation studies. Jorge Louis Borges, prefiguring the development of reception theory, was one of the first critics to use translation to explore the reading-writing process, developing in his essay on translations of Homer the concept of the “reader as writer”.<sup>55</sup> Following Borges’ model, it is clear that Hélienne’s translation of the *Aeneid* works well in this respect as a means of exploring the reading and writing processes simultaneously. We know Hélienne was a reader of the *Aeneid* and we do not have to imagine what her response to the *Aeneid* might have been – it is laid out for us in her creative translation of it. There is no need for us to construct a response from an implied reader; we can instead study the response of a real reader.

What differentiates translation from other types of reception is the particularly pliable relationship between source and target text; a pliability that has problematised attempts within Reception Studies, by academics such as Lorna Hardwick, to develop a working vocabulary that effectively describes the relationship between a reception and its source.<sup>56</sup> Hardwick differentiates between a translation and a version, insisting that a version is “a refiguration of a

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Lianeri and Zajko 2008: 1.

<sup>55</sup> Borges 1932. “Las versiones homéricas” first appeared in a volume of essays entitled *Discusión* and prefigures a series of pieces on the translator’s activity that privilege the relation between the reader’s context and the text, a theory developed further in “Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote” (1939). In this fable Borges explores the way in which two verbally identical texts *mean* differently as they are written and read in different contexts through Pierre Menard, who attempts to translate Miguel de Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* by reproducing the original words, but fails to achieve the similitude he seeks, since the style of the once-current language now seems archaic.

<sup>56</sup> Hardwick 2003: 9-10.

source which is too free and selective to rank as a translation”.<sup>57</sup> Yet can we really differentiate so easily between the two? Héli-senne’s *Eneydes* is a noteworthy example of the complex relationship between source and reception in so far as it claims to be a translation of the *Aeneid*, and yet in its liberal paraphrasing, digressions, and extra divisions, it changes the *Aeneid* so significantly that the scholar Christine Scollen-Jimack suggests it should not be considered a translation at all, but rather “almost a fictional work, loosely inspired by Virgil”.<sup>58</sup> As Venuti has argued, translation can present itself as a neutral paraphrase of an original text rather than an interpretation, to the extent that the translator can appear to be voicing the thoughts and ideas of the original author and effacing himself from the text.<sup>59</sup> Yet, as Martindale suggests, if meaning is not fixed then every translation is an act of interpretation that might involve foregrounding some elements at the expense of others.<sup>60</sup> Richard Thomas warns of the danger of the invisibility of the translator, specifically with regard to translations of the *Aeneid*: “Translations [...] may exert enormous power over the possible meanings of the original and may control and direct reading with an authority that is not usually conceded by the reader to those other forms of interpretation or commentary.”<sup>61</sup> This highlights the duality of translations and their potential: translators are able to disguise their hermeneutics and seamlessly incorporate their own preoccupations, while at the same time investing their interpretation with authority through their self-effacement. Thus translation, arguably more than any other type of reception, has the potential to open up or close the gap between the original work and its reception, between the past and the present.

A study of Héli-senne’s translation then, which calls itself a translation, but departs significantly from its source, allows us to explore the nuanced ways in which this particular relationship is negotiated. In the chapter that follows, I offer a brief introduction to Héli-senne and her works so that we can begin to understand the *Eneydes* in the context of Héli-senne’s wider corpus and in relation to her authorial identity.

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<sup>57</sup> Hardwick 2003: 10.

<sup>58</sup> Scollen-Jimack 1982: 210.

<sup>59</sup> Venuti 1995: 5: “Under the regime of fluent translating, the translator works to make his or her work “invisible,” producing the illusory effect of transparency that simultaneously masks its status as an illusion: the translated text seems “natural,” i.e., not translated.”

<sup>60</sup> Martindale 1993: 86.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas 2001: 126-7.

## Chapter Two: The author and the text

### 2.1 The author

The identity of Hélienne is elusive and has attracted much speculation both from her near contemporaries and modern scholarship. This section will give an overview of what we know of the life of the author behind the pseudonym Hélienne, before considering the implications of the pseudonym itself. Here, I suggest that through her choice of pseudonym Hélienne creates a deliberately elusive literary persona that plays with the ideas of truth and fiction in a programmatic fashion. Truth and fiction are, as I will demonstrate, the key to understanding Hélienne's text and her engagement with the humanist tradition.

#### 2.1.1 The life of the author

In 1562, approximately twenty years after Hélienne was writing, Nicolas Rumet, a Picardian historian, wrote of Hélienne in his chronicle, *Historia Picardiae, De Abbavilla*, identifying her as a Marguerite Briet, a French woman of the lesser nobility:

*Anno 1540, mense Maio, perdocta mulier, ortu quidem Abbavillaea, nomen Margaritae Brietae habens (vulgo dicebatur Helisenna Crennea) gallico poemate coruscabat [...].*

"In the year 1540, in the month of May, a learned woman, born in Abbeville, called Marguerite Briet (but commonly called Hélienne de Crenne) shone in French poetry."<sup>1</sup>

Here we have a near-contemporary of Hélienne's, referring to her as a *perdocta mulier* and claiming that she "shone" (*coruscabat*) in French poetry. This immediately marks Hélienne as a figure of interest, remarkable for her time.

Until 1904, when Alcius Ledieu found this reference to Hélienne in Rumet's history of Picardy, which revealed Hélienne to be a pseudonym, little was known about the life of Hélienne de Crenne. Yet despite this identification of the author behind the pseudonym, further details of the life of Marguerite Briet lay in obscurity. The fact that the principal protagonist in Hélienne's earliest work – a novel entitled *Les angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d'amours* – shares the

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<sup>1</sup> Rumet *apud* Loviot 1917: 139. All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.

name Hélienne and the work is written in the first person, led Gustave Reynier in 1908, to assume that it was the first example of an autobiographical novel in France and to piece together the biography of the author based on the novel.<sup>2</sup> Leah Chang has argued that this kind of speculation as to the life of the woman behind the pen-name arose from a need for readers to organise texts around an authorial identity, irrespective of how fictive that identity might be and how much extant documentation supports the reader's assumptions.<sup>3</sup>

Attempts to establish details of the life of the historical figure behind the literary persona came to fruition in 1917 when archival research by Louis Loviot unearthed a legal document concerning a donation made by "demoiselle Margeurite de Briet" and her husband to their servant, identifying her husband as Philippe Fournel, "écuyer" (squire) of Crasnes near Coucy.<sup>4</sup> After this initial breakthrough, several other legal documents relating to Marguerite Briet were discovered, allowing scholars to piece together a sketchy picture of her life. We know that the couple had a son, Pierre, who was a student at the University of Paris in 1548 when Phillippe Fournel gave him 80 *livres tournois* and that by 1552 the couple were separated. Marguerite Briet was now, according to this notary act, living in Saint-Germain-des-Prés and was paying an annual sum plus the income from two properties to Christopher Le Manyer for some unspecified services rendered.<sup>5</sup>

Since various spellings for Crasnes are documented throughout the sixteenth century, including Craone, Cresne or Cresnes, this seemed to confirm the identification of Hélienne de Crenne as Marguerite Briet and provided scholars with a convenient explanation for the "de Crenne" of Hélienne's name, as a place name – an epithet of origin, as it were – indicating her husband's estate.<sup>6</sup> This view is reflected in the fact that the majority of scholars refer to Hélienne by her forename, rather than "de Crenne".<sup>7</sup> Further research by Abel Lefranc, a contemporary of Loviot, corroborated the identification, finding resonance of

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<sup>2</sup> Reynier 1908: 118.

<sup>3</sup> Chang 2001: 382.

<sup>4</sup> Loviot 1917: 143; Saulnier 1964: 461.

<sup>5</sup> For the most comprehensive biography of Margeurite Briet based on these notary acts, see Wood 2000: 57-62.

<sup>6</sup> On the various documented spelling of Crasnes, see Wood 2000: 62.

<sup>7</sup> The association of "de Crenne" with Crasnes has not gone entirely unchallenged however. Wood, for example, questions why Hélienne would choose to make reference to her husband's estate, when she herself owned property at Goranflos, but fails to offer her own suggestion as to the choice of name.

Picardian names in the locations and characters mentioned in Hélienne's novel, offering the particularly compelling suggestion that the fictitious place names Eliveba and Hennerc are anadromes of Abbeville and Crenne respectively.<sup>8</sup>

The discovery of these scant facts from notary records did not put an end to speculation about Hélienne's life, however, but rather increased it. Paule Demats, for example, questions the nature of the relationship between Hélienne and Christopher Le Manyer, extrapolating that he may have been the influence for the lover Guenelic in the *Angoysses*.<sup>9</sup> Like Leah Chang, Diane Wood warns against the autobiographical treatment of Hélienne's works, insisting that the character Hélienne must be considered a fictional construct. It is important to note, however, that Hélienne's contemporaries were no less speculative than modern critics in their attempts to establish Hélienne's identity. This is particularly apparent if we return to Rumet's history of Picardy. The identification of Hélienne as Briet is complicated by Rumet's reference to her illustriousness in "French poetry". The obvious difficulty here is that, among Hélienne's extant works, there is no poetry. Neither do we find any reference to her having written any poetry, and, of course, her *Eneydes* is noteworthy partly by virtue of the very fact that it is the first French translation in prose rather than verse. This issue seems to have raised very little concern amongst scholars,<sup>10</sup> which I would suggest confirms Leah Chang's suspicion that Marguerite Briet is "almost as much a construct as Hélienne de Crenne".<sup>11</sup> Since Rumet's chronicle places Briet in Paris in 1540, calls her a learned woman and suggests that she wrote in the vernacular – all of which equate with Hélienne – the identification does seem correct, yet his error in identifying Hélienne as a poet seems to suggest that Hélienne was somewhat of an elusive figure even in her own day.

### 2.1.2 The elusive pseudonym

As already mentioned, in the absence of any historical record relating to an Hélienne de Crenne, it was widely assumed that the name was a pseudonym. As far back as 1772, for example, Bernard de la Monnoye, a French lawyer, poet and scholar, questioned the authenticity of Hélienne's name:

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<sup>8</sup> Lefranc 1917: 376-7.

<sup>9</sup> Demats 1968: ix.

<sup>10</sup> Wood 2000: 59: Wood is the only scholar to notice the problem, but does not seem overly concerned, dismissing it as an inaccuracy on Rumet's part.

<sup>11</sup> Chang 2001: 382.

“C’est un nom supposé & Romanesque, sous lequel un Auteur capricieux a écrit en terms François écorchés du Latin, une Histoire imaginé à plaisir”.

“It is an imaginary and novelistic name under which a capricious author wrote, in French terms mutilated from the Latin, a story contrived to please.”<sup>12</sup>

This, like Rumet’s error above, demonstrates further that – from the time of publication onwards – Héli-senne’s identity was a matter of speculation. And this speculation has persisted into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as scholars attempting to explain Héli-senne’s choice of pseudonym have elicited various explanations.<sup>13</sup>

After attempts to provide etymological explanations for the name Héli-senne were unsuccessful, scholars looked towards female literary characters from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance.<sup>14</sup> One suggestion is that it is taken from Elisene, the mother of the Amadis de Gaule in the tale of the same name, written by Nicholas Heberay de Essarts and also printed by Denys Janot. This identification is problematic, however, since the *Amadis de Gaule* was not printed until 1540 and Héli-senne’s earliest work is dated 1538.<sup>15</sup>

Christine Buzon provides a more speculative suggestion that Héli-senne is associating herself with various female literary characters quoted in her works by taking letters from each of their names to form the syllables of her own name. So Buzon sets forth, using typography for clarification, her reading of the spelling of the author’s pen name:

“HELENE	méDEe
YSEul	luCREsse
	GeNEvre” <sup>16</sup>

While Buzon’s elaborate suggestion effectively underlines the allusiveness of the pseudonym, its problem lies in the fact that it is arguably too allusive. Could the

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<sup>12</sup> La Monnoye *apud* La Croix du Maine 1772: 1.362.

<sup>13</sup> For an overview of the speculation surrounding the name Héli-senne, see Wood 2000: 57-76, Nash 1996: 7-15 and Buzon 1997: 20-27.

<sup>14</sup> Possible etymologies proposed included the Greek *κρήνη* (fountain). For a full discussion of etymologies posed, see Vercruysse 1967: 79.

<sup>15</sup> Archambault and Mustacchi attempt to overcome this problem by suggesting that Janot may have lent Héli-senne the *Amadis de Gaule* manuscript before it was officially published. While this hypothesis is clearly possible, they offer no discussion of why Héli-senne would choose to identify herself as an author with this character. See Archambault and Mustacchi 1991: 100.

<sup>16</sup> Buzon 1997: 25.

reader ever really be expected to recall the character of Medea, just from the letters “de”, or Genever from “ne”? This is particularly problematic in the light of the number of female historical, mythical and literary figures to whom Hélienne alludes throughout her work, as it poses the question of why these figures in particular.

More recently, Diane Wood has pointed to the sibilant resonance of Elissa in the name Hélienne.<sup>17</sup> Significantly, we know that Hélienne was aware of Elissa as the Phoenician name for Dido, since in the eighth letter of her *Epistres familiares et invectives* she makes explicit reference to it:

“Helisa: Mais subsequemment appellée fut Dido, qui en langaige Phenicien est interpreté, & vault autant à dire comme Virago.”

“Elissa: but she was subsequently called Dido, which in the Phoenician language is interpreted and means Virago.”

(*Epistres* 95)

It is tempting to see this as the most apt literary association for Hélienne to make, given that Hélienne’s role as a professional writer marks her too as a *virago* – a woman engaging in masculine activity.<sup>18</sup> Hélienne’s *Eneydes* obviously affords the most suitable opportunity for exploring the possibilities of this connection, and it is a question that I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter Five, where I demonstrate the importance of Dido as a figure in Hélienne’s self-fashioning.

Most recently, Janine Incardona similarly suggested that the name Hélienne might be derived from a combination of Elissa and Helen, offering a convincing argument that the protagonist of the *Angoysses*, Hélienne, bears strong resemblances to both Dido and Helen.<sup>19</sup> Incardona explains that Hélienne in the *Angoysses*, having fallen in love with another man and been held captive by her husband, is like Helen, in that she is married and then held by force. Unlike Helen, however, she does not commit adultery. Once imprisoned in the castle at Cabasus, Hélienne is like Dido as her passion causes her inner turmoil and she eschews her former constancy and reputation. Incardona also provides the most compelling argument for accepting that Crenne is a reference to Hélienne’s husband’s estate by showing that this is part of a broader strategy of mixing real place names with

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<sup>17</sup> Wood 200: 66.

<sup>18</sup> For a full discussion of women’s social history in the Renaissance and a definition of what it meant in the Renaissance to be a *virago*, see King 1991.

<sup>19</sup> Incardona 2005: 275.



fictitious ones throughout the *Angoysses* and thus playfully blending truth and fiction.<sup>20</sup> The paronomasia apparent in Héli**s**enne de Cren**n**e, Incardona argues, further underlines the blur between the real and fictitious elements.<sup>21</sup> Again, I return to this in Chapter Five, where I offer the fullest account on Héli**s**enne's self-fashioning as a Dido-model.

Whatever the actual key to understanding Héli**s**enne's choice of pseudonym, it is clear that it is deliberately both allusive and elusive. It is likely that an erudite reader could not fail to recognise and recall the sound of some of the great heroines of antiquity or the Middle Ages, but the complexity makes it deliberately difficult to pinpoint exactly which. This idea that Héli**s**enne de Crenne is a deliberately playful pseudonym that blends truth and fiction underpins the argument that will be made throughout my discussion of the *Eneydes* about the way in which Héli**s**enne's work constantly reflects upon literary creation and the ways in which truth and fiction can be (mis)represented.

## 2.2 Héli**s**enne's works

This section offers a brief survey of Héli**s**enne's works and scholarship on them, demonstrating that while the rest of Héli**s**enne's works have gained increasing attention and have been the subject of sophisticated attempts to understand the stylistic and ideological concerns they convey, Héli**s**enne's *Eneydes* has received much less critical attention, despite offering what I would suggest is her most challenging engagement with the male-dominated field of letters. While Diane Wood insists in her monograph that we consider Héli**s**enne a serious participant in the humanist tradition, my thesis seeks to examine that engagement more closely and to show that Héli**s**enne uses Virgil's Aeneid to grapple with some of the major literary and cultural concerns of her day.

### 2.2.1 Héli**s**enne's corpus and a survey of critical attention

Before her *Eneydes*, Héli**s**enne wrote three other works that were also published with Janot: a novel entitled *Les angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d'amours* (1538), a set of letters entitled *Les epistres familiares et invectives* (1539) and an allegorical dream sequence entitled *Le Songe* (1541).

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<sup>20</sup> Incardona 2005: 41.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

By the end of the sixteenth century, Héli-senne's works were all but forgotten, perhaps because of the credence given to the idea that they were some kind of literary hoax, until their reappraisal in 1840 by J. Marie Guichard.<sup>22</sup> The first half of the twentieth century saw interest in Héli-senne steadily grow, as Loviot's biographical study was followed in 1929 by Lula Richardson's recognition of the "feminist" aspect of Héli-senne's work, placing her among the forerunners of feminism in the French Renaissance.<sup>23</sup> At this point, attention was limited to the *Angoysses*, a novel charting the progress of an illicit love affair between the narrator, called Héli-senne, and her lover Guenelic, which drew heavily on the model of the *roman chevaleresque* (chivalric novel) of the Middle Ages, with its ideal of courtly love. Since the chief protagonist and narrator of the *Angoysses* share the name adopted by the author, the novel was originally assumed to be autobiographical (although this view is no longer supported by scholars<sup>24</sup>) and its dedication to "honnestes dames" meant that it was taken as a didactic warning to women on how to avoid the moral dangers of love.

The momentum of the interest in Héli-senne grew in the second half of the twentieth century, as critical editions of some of Héli-senne's works began to appear: the *Angoysses* in 1957 by Harry Secor, 1968 by Paule Demats and Jérôme Vercruysse and 1997 by Christine de Buzon; the *Epistres* in 1995 by Jean-Philippe Beaulieu and again in 1996 by Jerry Nash; the *Songe* also in 1995 by Beaulieu. And English translations followed these critical editions.<sup>25</sup>

This period also experienced, to some extent, a move away from reductive critical approaches that centred on gender towards attempts to fully appreciate Héli-senne's stylistic as well as ideological concerns. Scholars began to examine instead the psychological depth of her characters, her narrative structure and her engagement with other literature.<sup>26</sup> While the *Angoysses* remained most popular, the *Epistres*, a collection of thirteen personal letters and five invective letters on female companionship, moral values, love and infidelity, and the education of women, were attracting critical attention and the edition of Beaulieu and Fournier

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<sup>22</sup> Guichard 1840: 276-84.

<sup>23</sup> Richardson 1929.

<sup>24</sup> Wood 2000: 17.

<sup>25</sup> The *Epistres* were translated by Marianna Mustacchi and Paul Archambault in 1986, the *Angoysses* by Lisa Neal and Steven Randall in 1996, and the *Songe* by Neal in 2000.

<sup>26</sup> For an excellent overview of scholarship on Héli-senne's first three works, see Wood 2000: 16 and 52-56.

also presented a detailed study of the literary allusions found in the *Epistres*, which demonstrated the intertextuality of Hélienne's works and the breadth of her sources.<sup>27</sup>

Studies of the *Songe*, an allegorical dream sequence, began to raise new questions, since its depersonalisation necessitated a move away from autobiographical readings.<sup>28</sup> In this text, the narrator observes a couple who are suffering from love sickness, then interacts with a series of allegorical figures such as Reason, and upon awakening recalls the contemporary theological arguments on love and the status of women's souls that they cited. Hélienne draws here on the popular genre of dream literature of the Middle Ages, whilst incorporating contemporary theology, revealing the multiplicity of her concerns as a reader and writer and the traditions with which she engages.

Despite this burgeoning interest in Hélienne's other works throughout the twentieth century, her *Eneydes* remains practically unknown. There are several possible explanations for the lack of critical interest in Hélienne's translation. The first is the accessibility of the text. We cannot be sure how many copies were originally printed, but only three survive and no modern critical edition has been published. Susan Broomhall notes in her study, *Women and the Book Trade in Sixteenth Century France*, that studies of women's works still tend to be restricted to those that are easily available in modern editions.<sup>29</sup> The second explanation might lie in the perception of translation studies as a discipline. In her work, *Translation Studies*, Susan Bassnett repeatedly refers to the "low status" accorded to translation and the translator, particularly when distinguished from the writer.<sup>30</sup> Diane Wood, author in 2000 of the first monograph on Hélienne de Crenne, discusses the *Eneydes* in a chapter on Hélienne as a Renaissance humanist, in which she considers the translation as the most developed expression of Hélienne's humanism.<sup>31</sup> Wood argues that the erudition Hélienne displays by translating the *Aeneid* marks her as a serious scholar in the humanist tradition and suggests that her translation is a sentimentalised epic focused on the temptations of passion and the dignity of women, presenting it as some sort of moralising

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<sup>27</sup> Beaulieu and Fournier 1994.

<sup>28</sup> Wood 2000: 107.

<sup>29</sup> Broomhall 2002: 4.

<sup>30</sup> Bassnett 2003.

<sup>31</sup> Wood 2000: 119.

didactic work akin to her novel on the torments of love, the *Angoysses*.<sup>32</sup> Wood's argument does not go any further than this and she calls for further research on the *Eneydes* in her conclusion.<sup>33</sup> While Wood's argument about the focus of the *Eneydes* and its didacticism is undoubtedly correct, in her brief treatment she fails to recognise the serious engagement Héli-senne makes with the humanist tradition, particularly with regard to the way in which she challenges Virgil and textual authority more generally.

Two other scholars who have written on the *Eneydes* in any detail both focus on the style of Héli-senne's translation and find it outmoded by the standards of her contemporaries. In 1982 Christine Scollen-Jimack compared the *Eneydes* with the 1509 translation of Octovien de Saint-Gelais and found Héli-senne's translation unfavourable, criticising her "abuse of Latinisms",<sup>34</sup> and condemning, albeit imaginatively, the prolixity of her style:

"It becomes increasingly obvious that Héli-senne, faced with the Virgilian text, rendered virtually sacred by fifteen hundred years of fame, feels herself at a distinct disadvantage, and tries to make up for this like the Red Queen in *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*, who runs very fast in order to stay on the same spot."<sup>35</sup>

Scollen-Jimack went on to argue that this style does not reflect the literary current of Héli-senne's day, bluntly concluding: "It is perhaps not surprising that this backward-looking translation seems to have achieved little popularity."<sup>36</sup>

Valerie Worth-Stylianou offers a similar comparative reading of Héli-senne's translation against other sixteenth-century translations of the *Aeneid* into French and comes to a similar conclusion, although expressed in more forgiving terms. She suggests that the *Eneydes* was "still close to medieval tradition in its paraphrastic approach", and refers to it as a "prose version" rather than translation.<sup>37</sup>

Readings such as these, I suggest, fail to appreciate the sophisticated strategy that Héli-senne adopts in her translation, and in Chapter Three I will offer a brief comparison of Héli-senne's style with her contemporaries, suggesting that Héli-senne embraces the contemporary ethos of translation while deliberately

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<sup>32</sup> Wood 2000: 151.

<sup>33</sup> Wood 2000: 153.

<sup>34</sup> Scollen-Jimack 1982: 201.

<sup>35</sup> Scollen-Jimack 1982: 201-2.

<sup>36</sup> Scollen-Jimack 1982: 210.

<sup>37</sup> Worth-Stylianou 2002: 148.

running counter to some of the trends in the development of its practice. This will pave the way for a discussion in Chapter Four of the style of the translation (on both a visual and lexical level), where I will suggest that Héli-senne deliberately adopts a prolix and Latinate style to create a register far removed from everyday language, which stands in stark contrast to the psychological depth she affords Virgil's characters, in such a way as to underline the fictionality of the text. More importantly, such reductive readings that focus only on the style of the translation fail to recognise the creativity of Héli-senne's translation, her subtle manipulation of Virgil's text to create uncertainty and challenge authority, and the significant engagement it makes with contemporary debates, both literary (on the truth of the Trojan war) and social (on the nature of women).

### 2.2.2 The reception of Héli-senne's works among her contemporaries

We know relatively little about what Héli-senne's contemporaries thought about her writing, and this dearth of critical response continues right up to the early twentieth century. The few extant examples of criticism that we do have vary greatly and tend towards extremes. None of these refer specifically to the *Eneydes*, but are nevertheless worth considering briefly for an impression of the various responses Héli-senne's works generally elicited.

The commercial success of Héli-senne's novel, the *Angoysses*, is attested by the fact that eight separate editions were published between 1538 and 1560 and at least three writers made brief mention of Héli-senne in catalogues of noteworthy women.<sup>38</sup> One of these, François Billon, also attested to the popularity of Héli-senne as an author, writing that her works were "si souvent es mains des François se delectans de Prose, qu'il n'est besoin en faire autre discours", "so often in the hands of the French who delight in prose that there is no need to say anything else".<sup>39</sup>

Not all readers were so complementary. In 1586, Etienne Pasquier identified Héli-senne as the model for Rabelais' *Ecolier limousin*, a character from his work *Pantagruel* who inserts Latin words with French endings into conversation, thus attacking Héli-senne's use of Latinate language.<sup>40</sup> This criticism is echoed by Claude Colet, who in 1550 wrote a revision of Héli-senne's first three works – The *Angoysses*, *Songe* and the *Epistres* – which was, in part intended to

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<sup>38</sup> Wood 2000: 29.

<sup>39</sup> Billon 1555: f. 35v.

<sup>40</sup> Pasquier 1956: 91.

cancel her Latinisms. A letter to two of his female readers – known only as Demoyelles M. et F. de N. – outlines the impetus for the project. Colet wrote that during a conversation after dinner about the learned people of the day, the two women asked for his help in understanding the works of Hélisenne and, in particular, her complex language, which contained “les motz obscures et trop approchans du Latin”, “words that were obscure and too close to the Latin”.<sup>41</sup> Colet’s revisions seem to suggest that Hélisenne’s use of Latinate language is out of the ordinary; the fact that the two women, to whom Colet writes, are not able to understand Hélisenne’s Latinisms immediately implies that they are not commonly found in vernacular literature. To the contrary, Colet is quite explicit that Hélisenne’s Latinate words are not commonly used, insisting that he will render them into words that are “maintenant usitez entre les François”, “now used among the French”.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, Colet was able to find a great number of replacements for all of the terms that he deemed overly Latinate, demonstrating that these words are not simply used for want of a more suitable contemporary alternative.<sup>43</sup> We can see then that much contemporary discussion of Hélisenne’s work relates to the style of her writing and her use of Latinate language, which will prove useful to our discussion of Hélisenne’s prose in Chapter Four.

### 2.2.3 Copies of the *Eneydes*

In his catalogue of works printed by Denys Janot, Stephen Rawles lists two extant copies of the *Eneydes*, one in the Arsenal Library of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and the other in the Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire in Geneva (now known as the Bibliothèque de Genève).<sup>44</sup> Wood notes that the copy in the Arsenal library was once badly damaged and has since been saved by restoration, but that she has not seen the Swiss copy.<sup>45</sup> Though all my references here are to the French copy, I have also been able to examine the Swiss copy, which is in a better state of repair. More significantly, I have located and examined a third copy of the *Eneydes* which has, to my knowledge, escaped the attention of scholars thus far. This third copy is held by the State Library of Berlin and though it has some damage, is in a

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<sup>41</sup> Colet *apud*. Buzon 1997: 664

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> For a full list of every noun, verb and adjective replaced by Colet see Secor 1957: c-cii.

<sup>44</sup> Rawles 1976.

<sup>45</sup> Wood 2000.

fair condition.<sup>46</sup> This third copy is the same 1541 Denys Janot edition as those held by the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Bibliothèque de Genève, but its significance lies in the fact that it has long been assumed that no further extant copies exist; it is quite possible that there are yet more copies to discover.

### **2.3 Women writers and writing about women**

The final section of this chapter looks at Hélienne's career and the exceptionality of female writers in the sixteenth-century, suggesting that Hélienne can be distinguished as one of very few professional female writers, that is, those for whom writing is a chief source of income. This gives us a sense of the significance of Hélienne's work, since her independence from the French royal court allows her the autonomy to explore her own literary interests, such as the heated defence of women she offers throughout her corpus, that situates her work firmly within the tradition of the *querelle des femmes*, the outlines of which I trace in the final section of this chapter.

#### **2.3.1 Women writers in sixteenth-century France**

Figures compiled by Susan Broomhall on the number of female writers in sixteenth-century France give us some indication of how remarkable Hélienne's position as a female writer is. Female writers made up less than one per cent of the authors of sixteenth-century France and their works account for far less than one per cent of the total number of printed editions for this period.<sup>47</sup> These figures reflect women's limited access to education and to texts as readers, and also dominant thinking about the nature of women and their role in society.<sup>48</sup> Regarding literacy in the sixteenth-century, we distinguish two separate categories: the ability to read and the ability to write.<sup>49</sup> A proportionately small number of women, mostly belonging to the upper class fell into the former category and were encouraged to read – particularly moralising literature that might encourage proper behaviour – but very few fell into the latter, since writing might be a threat to the social order because it would allow them to express their

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<sup>46</sup> The classmark for the Berlin copy is 4" Wd 810.

<sup>47</sup> Broomhall 2002: 1.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Broomhall 2001: 14.

ideas.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, there were women, mostly belonging to wealthy families, who did learn to write, since they were educated at home with tutors, or in cloisters, rather than in schools.<sup>51</sup> But, despite their access to education, very few of those women who were taught to write engaged in writing on a professional level. Héli-senne seems to be one of the very few exceptions to this rule.

We know little about Héli-senne's education, but her literacy in Latin may give us some clues in this respect. Margaret King notes that convents were "the main locus for female learning" throughout the Renaissance and that girls "learned enough Latin to recite their prayers".<sup>52</sup> Moreover, she suggests that all the intellectual women of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance were the product of a convent education. It seems possible then that this may have been Héli-senne's route to education and subsequent literary career.

But on what level were women generally able to engage in literary pursuits? Alain Viala's *Naissance de l'écrivain* attempts to outline three distinct models of authorship to categorise the works of seventeenth-century male writers.<sup>53</sup> The first category is those who engage in writing as an occasional pursuit and whose main profession is outside of the field of writing, citing lawyers and physicians as examples. The second category is those who were wealthy enough to pursue writing as an interest or pastime, but did not derive their social status from it – normally members of the nobility – who are termed *amateurs éclairés*. The final category is the *careeriste* – those for whom writing is a profession. More recently, Susan Broomhall took Viala's models and applied them to sixteenth-century female authors in order to examine whether their participation in literary culture could follow the same schema of categorisation and whether it might be useful in making a distinction between the different modes of female authorship.<sup>54</sup> For each of Viala's models, Broomhall found sixteenth-century women who were participating on the same level.<sup>55</sup> Contradicting Viala's insistence on the absence of women from the third model,<sup>56</sup> Broomhall offers the examples of Catharine des Roches and

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<sup>50</sup> Wiesner 1993: 123.

<sup>51</sup> Moore 1987: 89.

<sup>52</sup> King 1991: 171.

<sup>53</sup> Viala 1985.

<sup>54</sup> Broomhall 2002: 100-102.

<sup>55</sup> Broomhall cites, for example, in category one, the Parisian midwife Louise Bourgeois as someone for whom writing provides an occasional pursuit but does not form the basis of her profession, and in category two, Marguerite de Navarre, sister of King François I.

<sup>56</sup> Viala 1985: 205.



Hélisenne de Crenne.<sup>57</sup> Hélisenne is classed by Broomhall as a *careeriste* author on account of the fact that we know of no link between her and the royal court and it appears that she was a woman of independent wealth, who had secured collaboration with a publisher (the Parisian Denys Janot) and was able to sustain herself financially through her literary pursuits.<sup>58</sup>

### 2.3.2 *Querelle des femmes*

Hélisenne's independent wealth and apparent lack of patronage allowed her the freedom to explore her own literary themes and one that runs prominently throughout her work is her defence of the nature of women and, in particular, their intellect. As such, Hélisenne's works can be considered a contribution to the *querelle des femmes*, a broad tradition of literary debate about the nature of women and their place within society, concerned with the dynamics of authority and subordination. As a tradition, the *querelle des femmes* cannot be definitively dated, but it is generally regarded to have lasted for around four centuries, with Joan Kelly's seminal study of its participants setting its limit at 1789.<sup>59</sup> Having begun in France at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the tradition spread across Europe and its contributors include Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, Juan Luis Vives, Desiderius Erasmus and John Knox. Although, as has been suggested, the true limits of the *querelle* would be difficult to determine, Ruth Kelso lists 251 works that she classifies as belonging to the tradition.<sup>60</sup> Of those works listed, 90 are attacking and 161 are in defence of women.<sup>61</sup>

The starting point most commonly given for the *querelle des femmes* is the *Querelle de la Rose*, an epistolary debate written largely in response to Jean de Meun's continuation of Guillaume de Lorris' *Roman de la Rose*.<sup>62</sup> The *Roman de la Rose* is an allegorical narrative telling of a young man, *Amant*, and his quest for a lady, the *Rose*, which ends with the rape of the *Rose*. Whilst Jean de Meun's *Rose* generally found favour amongst its readership, it was not without its critics and in

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<sup>57</sup> Broomhall 2002: 101-2.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Kelly 1982: 4.

<sup>60</sup> Kelso 1956: 326-424.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Certain scholars assert that the *Querelle des Femmes* in fact began with Christine de Pizan's *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours*. See for example, Fenster and Lees (2002: 2) in their introduction to *Gender in Debate from the Early Middle Ages to the Renaissance* and Baird and Kane (1978) who include the *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours* among the *Querelle de la Rose* documents.

1401 The *Querelle de la Rose* began, in which notable intellectuals of the time debated the merits of De Meun's work. In brief, the principal arguments were over the perceived morality of the *Roman de la Rose* and its portrayal of women. The debate over the *Roman de la Rose* continued intermittently for approximately two years, but its repercussions were still being felt much later in the tradition of debate about the female sex that it provoked.

The *Querelle de la Rose* took the form of a polemical exchange of letters between the chanceries at Paris and Avignon. Its principal participants were, on the one hand, Jean de Montreuil, Provost of Lille; Pierre Col, Canon of Paris and Tournay; his brother Gontier Col, First Secretary and Notary to King Charles VI – all defenders of the *Roman de la Rose* – and, on the other, Jean Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris and Christine de Pizan, understood to be France's first professional female writer,<sup>63</sup> who were both morally opposed to the attitudes it promoted.

Brown-Grant divides the *Querelle de la Rose* into two phases.<sup>64</sup> The first began with a treatise written in favour of the *Rose* by Jean de Montreuil and the second with a dream-vision written by Jean Gerson in which the figure of *Eloquence Theologienne* tries Jean de Meun before the court of Christianity. Christine de Pizan participated in both phases of the debate. In the first, she wrote a critical reply to Jean de Montreuil's treatise on the *Rose*, in addition to a reply to Gontier Col, who had been asked to intervene in support of Jean de Meun. In the second phase, she responded in condemnation of the views of Gontier Col, who had likewise shown his support for the *Rose*.

It is important to note that there was much written in praise, or at least in defence, of women before this literary quarrel; for example, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the *Biens des Fames* arose to counter the *Blastanges des Fames*, which were didactic poems outlining the vices of women.<sup>65</sup> Blamires, in presenting both the French and Latin material that preceded Christine de Pizan, shows that she should be viewed as neither the sole instigator of the *querelle des femmes*, nor entirely representative of its breadth.<sup>66</sup> Moreover it is important to note that the general themes of the *querelle des femmes*, such as whether or not

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<sup>63</sup> King 1991: 177; Brown-Grant 1999:1.

<sup>64</sup> Brown-Grant 1999b: 8.

<sup>65</sup> Powers 1975: 29.

<sup>66</sup> Blamires 1997.

man should marry, whether women are deceitful and whether women are loyal, arose long before the turn of the fifteenth century and persisted long after the quarrel is deemed to have ended.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, scholars such as Joan Kelly argue that, although Christine de Pizan was not the first to rebut misogyny, she was the first to investigate its underlying causes, and as such, the *Querelle de la Rose* must be viewed as the pivotal point in formal literature in defence of women.<sup>68</sup>

Christine's response to Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose* and involvement in the *Querelle de la Rose* was not a reaction to this work alone, however. Up until the late fourteenth century courtly literature had generally been pro-women in the sense that it had promoted the ideals of chivalry and *l'amour courtois*, which raised women to an elevated status in which they became the inspiration behind man's virtue.<sup>69</sup> However, by 1400 courtly attitudes to women, and in particular to romance, were increasingly becoming replaced with *fabliaux*, popular rhyming comic anecdotes on the deceitful and vicious nature of women.<sup>70</sup> In an attempt to counter the mockery of women and of chivalric love, two orders were founded in France with the intention of protecting women's honour and interests. These were the *Ordre de l'Escu Vert à la Dame Blanche*, founded in 1399 and the *Court de l'Amour*, organised by the Dukes of Bourbon in 1400, to which Christine de Pizan belonged.<sup>71</sup>

It was in this context that Christine wrote the *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours* – a courtly poem in which Cupid excommunicates men who deceive women – that preceded the *Querelle de la Rose*. In the poem, Christine rails against both Ovid and Jean de Meun for the misogynist views expounded in their work.<sup>72</sup> It was Jean de Meun's *Rose* in particular, however, that established itself as the vernacular authority on anti-female attitudes or, as Kelly puts it, “the classic statement” of misogyny,<sup>73</sup> and inspired a wealth of imitators.<sup>74</sup>

Even after her participation in the *Querelle de la Rose*, Christine did not relent in her defence of women. In fact, it seemed to encourage her all the more

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<sup>67</sup> For example, Marbod de Rennes' *Liber Decem Captiulorum* includes a diptych attacking and praising women, the one painting a picture of women that is sinful, the other virtuous.

<sup>68</sup> Kelly 1982: 9.

<sup>69</sup> Power 1975: 24.

<sup>70</sup> Power 1975: 28.

<sup>71</sup> Kelly 1982: 10

<sup>72</sup> Christine *Epistre* 388-9.

<sup>73</sup> Kelly 1982: 10.

<sup>74</sup> Furr 1979: 1-2. Furr notes that the influence of the *Roman de la Rose* was so great as to rival Dante's *Divina Commedia*.

and so her defence continued in both the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, in which she deals with women from history, and its sequel the *Livre des Trois Vertus*, in which she attempts to advise contemporary women on how they might live a virtuous existence.

Kelly outlines the broad range of feminists who were influenced by Christine to the point that they too took up their pen against specific literary attacks against women. These include Marie de Romieu's discourse on the excellence of women, written in 1591 in response to a misogynist satire written by her brother,<sup>75</sup> and the Venetian poet Lucrezia Marinella's critique of Italian Renaissance literature expressing anti-women sentiments.<sup>76</sup> Moreover she insists that: "The opposition of early feminism to male ideology has remained central to subsequent feminist thought, as has the creation of adequate, empowering images of women."<sup>77</sup> Thus it is evident that the impact of the early *querelle des femmes* and its origins in France were far-reaching and that it played a key role as the vehicle through which early feminist thinking evolved.<sup>78</sup> It is essential that we consider Hélienne's work within this literary context.

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<sup>75</sup> Kelly 1982: 16.

<sup>76</sup> Kelly 1982: 17.

<sup>77</sup> Kelly 1982: 25.

## Chapter Three: The humanist context

### 3.1 Humanism and translation

Hélisenne's *Eneydes* was among the earliest French translations of the *Aeneid* and the first to be written in prose rather than verse, situating her firmly in the forefront of the humanist drive to produce vernacular translations of the Classics. This period of vulgarisation marked the penetration of humanism into vernacular literature aimed at a popular, and no longer merely a learned, public. At the same time, it was a period in which the readiness of the vernacular for the translation of Classics was still open for debate and translation was considered a politically loaded (and potentially dangerous) activity. Moreover, as a translation of Books One to Four, Hélisenne's is the earliest extant French translation to treat a specific selection from the *Aeneid* rather than the whole work. Dedicated to the King of France, François I, her translation represents a clear engagement with the dissemination of classical literature endorsed by François and establishes her as a serious participant in the humanist tradition. Diane Wood describes the translation as "the most developed expression of [Hélisenne's] humanism".<sup>1</sup> In addition to her choice of prose over verse, Hélisenne's translation also departs from the translation theory and practice of her humanist contemporaries, with its paraphrastic approach, ornate style, comments and glosses freely introduced into the text, and major digressions from the Virgilian narrative. Thus it is first necessary to examine briefly the context in which Hélisenne is writing, to understand better her serious engagement with the humanist tradition and her position at the forefront of vernacular translation, while also outlining the uniqueness of her approach.

#### 3.1.1 The development of French humanism under François I, dedicatee of the *Eneydes*

A brief overview of the rise and growth of French humanism will show that Hélisenne is writing at a pivotal moment of revival for both classical and vernacular literature and that the addressee of the dedicatory letter of the *Eneydes*, François I, is the driving force behind this movement.

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<sup>1</sup> Wood 2000: 135. Wood argues that Hélisenne's interest in translation is the most scholarly of her intellectual pursuits (which include astrology and dream interpretation), seeing it as the culmination of her increasingly scholarly and bold literary project.

Although not given the label until much later, humanism – that is, a concern with the legacy of the classical world involving the rediscovery of ancient texts, their restoration and their interpretation – had its roots in the surge of scholarship that took place in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries known as the Carolingian Renaissance.<sup>2</sup> During this time the Carolingian teacher Heiric, for example, built up a substantial library of classical manuscripts that were to provide later Italian humanists with the material for their philological enterprises.<sup>3</sup> The study of classical literature saw a second revival in the twelfth century, as the courts and cathedral schools of Southern Europe turned it to practical ends, using the works of classical authors as the basis for professional training of lawyers, doctors, and civil servants.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, classical material was beginning to make its presence felt in vernacular literature, as the authors of medieval romances looked to classical material for their subject matter, with the *Roman de Thèbes*, *Roman de Troie* and *Roman d’Eneas* all written during this period.<sup>5</sup>

The three most characteristic features of humanism – the appetite for classical texts, the philological concern to ascertain their meaning and the desire to imitate them – were most keenly felt, however, in the fourteenth century, and the impetus for this revival is generally credited to Petrarch.<sup>6</sup> Petrarch’s revival of classical scholarship began with the writing of an epic poem, *Africa*, written in Virgilian hexameter and heavily indebted to the language of Virgil, Livy and Cicero, all of whom he had read whilst studying Roman Civil Law.<sup>7</sup> Petrarch also revived textual criticism, which had begun in the Carolingian era, attempting to restore text in those cases in which he assumed it to be corrupt, thus combining in his work both poetry and scholarship.

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<sup>2</sup> For a general overview of the origins of humanism, see Mann 1996. According to Mann, the term *umanista* was first used in fourteenth-century Italian to refer to a student or teacher of classical literature and associated disciplines such as rhetoric (1996: 1). For a general introduction to the Carolingian Renaissance, see Ullman 1969. It should be noted that the literary legacy of the classical world is only one aspect of humanism; on a broader scale humanism might also imply the assimilation of values and ideas contained within ancient texts.

<sup>3</sup> For an overview of the work of Heiric and his legacy, see Jeaneau 1991: 353-372.

<sup>4</sup> The range of texts available now included Latin translations of Greek scientific, medical and philosophical texts. See further Mann 1996: 4.

<sup>5</sup> For more on these texts and their use of classical sources, see Kelly 1992.

<sup>6</sup> On Petrarch as the “father of humanism”, see Pfeiffer 1976: 3 and Margolin 1989: 4.

<sup>7</sup> Petrarch had predecessors in this area, particularly Lovato Lovati and Albertino Mussato, both influential scholars and poets who studied classical literature intensively and in response strove to write a purer style of Latin themselves. However, their work might be considered prehumanistic, as Petrarch was the first to abandon the style of medieval chronicles and incorporate ideas and excerpts from the original ancient sources in his own work, without quoting them verbatim. For this argument, see Pfeiffer 1976: 4.

The Italian Giovanni Boccaccio was a keen devotee of Petrarch and eager to spread his fame in Florence. The social and political conditions of the consolidated new Italian city states were particularly favourable to this development and diffusion of Petrarch's ideas. Expansion of trade and increased contact with the East led not only to greater diversity in terms of personal taste and expression, but an increased interest in the worldly as opposed to the ascetic. Rudolf Pfeiffer suggests that this is why humanists embraced the works of classical writers – for they contained similar social values and secular attitudes.<sup>8</sup> One of the most eminent Florentine humanists is Colucci Salutati, who had frequent contact with both Petrarch and Boccaccio. Salutati held the position of Chancellor of Florence, combining literary and philosophical pursuits with an active participation in society or, as Pfeiffer puts it, binding together the “*vita humanitatis*” with the “*vita activa*”.<sup>9</sup>

It was in this position as Chancellor that Salutati came to influence the ecclesiastical and royal dignitaries in France amongst whom humanism gained a following, particularly among the clerks of the chanceries of Paris and Avignon.<sup>10</sup> The French clerks Jean de Montreuil and Nicolas de Clamanges at Avignon admired Petrarch and Salutati and thus were keen to imitate both their search for manuscripts and their Latin scholarship.<sup>11</sup> However, compared with the spread of humanism in Italy and Germany, this movement towards humanism in France was, for the moment, limited and those at Paris and Avignon remained isolated groups.

François I provided the humanist movement with the large-scale patronage it had previously lacked and thus played a pivotal role in its development and spread. François appointed four *lecteurs royaux* in Greek and Hebrew in 1530 upon the advice of Guillaume Budé, which was the founding act of what was to become the Collège *de France*.<sup>12</sup> Latin already formed the basis of education in France and throughout Europe, where the curriculum consisted of literary texts (largely the works of Cicero and selected poets including Terence, Virgil, Ovid, Horace, Seneca and Martial).<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, François instigated the collection and copying of rare

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<sup>8</sup> Pfeiffer 1976: 16.

<sup>9</sup> Pfeiffer 1976: 25.

<sup>10</sup> On Salutati's influence see Margolin 1989: 23 and Pons 1992: 9-24.

<sup>11</sup> Pons notes that Montreuil had copies of 200 letters written by Salutati and saw them as models of good style. See Pons 1992: 142-3.

<sup>12</sup> Knecht 1996: 83.

<sup>13</sup> For a general overview of humanist education and patterns in education across Renaissance Europe, see Moss 1999: 145-154.

ancient manuscripts in his library at Blois, which was later moved to Fontainebleau. Under François' direction and with Budé's guidance, France thus took the lead in classical scholarship throughout Europe in this period. The names of the great scholars who studied under those first *lecteurs royaux* give an immediate indication of the success of the project: Adrien Turnèbe, Jean Dorat, Pierre Ramus, Denys Lambin, to name but a few. In 1539 François appointed Robert Estienne as the official court printer for Hebrew and Latin works, and three years later for Greek works too, with the intention of making the works of classical authors more accessible.<sup>14</sup> In the preface to one of his printed works, a Latin edition of Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, Estienne pays tribute to François' efforts to disseminate classical literature:

*Ipse autem tantum abest, ut, quae ex Italia & Graecia maximis & plane regii sumptibus comparavit veterum Scriptorum monumenta, ea cuiquam invidet, ut ultro etiam illa omnibus impertire atque offerre in animo habeat. Quo consilio omnium earum Linguarum, quas supra demonstravimus, novas & accuratissime imitatas litterarum formas per Artifices praestantissimos exculpi iussit, ut hac intra hosce centum annos nata atque inventa scribendi ratione quisque Liber in quamplurima Exempla transfusus ad omnium manus perveniret.*

"[...] he himself is far from grudging to anyone the records of ancient writers which he at great and truly royal cost has procured from Italy and Greece, he intends to put them at the disposal and service of all. With this in mind he has ordered that new and accurately copied forms of letters should be cut by distinguished craftsmen, in all the languages above-mentioned so that, by this method of writing, born and invented within the last hundred years, every excellent book – multiplied in any number of copies – might come into the hands of all."<sup>15</sup>

François' insistence that the works of ancient writers should be available to all men marks a significant development in the humanist movement, since it is indicative of a move away from the Carolingian Renaissance and medieval scholasticism, towards an ideal of secularisation and the idea that classical literature should not only be revived, but also disseminated more widely into French culture. Since Estienne is referring to François' patronage of printed editions of classical texts in the original language, "all men" here can only mean those literate in the ancient languages. Yet, as will be discussed further in the

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<sup>14</sup> For more on the appointment of Estienne as royal printer, see Armstrong 1986: Books III and IV.

<sup>15</sup> Letter from preface to *Tusculans*, reprinted in Armstrong 1986: 286.



following section, a corollary of this shift in the humanist ideal was the growth of vernacular translation.

### 3.1.2 The rise of translation and the flourishing of vernacular literature under François I

In addition to his fondness for classical literature, François' patronage of French literature was also significant and he was keen to see vernacular culture thrive. As will become apparent, the development of vernacular literature was strongly associated with humanism, with imitations of classical literature forming the basis of a newly emerging vernacular literature, first through translation and then through other forms of imitation.

As a consequence of the renewed interest in Classics and the drive for secularisation of knowledge brought about by humanist scholars, the sixteenth century saw an increase not only in the printing of classical texts, but also in the number of translations into the vernacular to make them more accessible to a wider audience.<sup>16</sup> The increased importance of translation at this time is underlined by the fact that it was during this period of growth that humanist scholars first coined specific French terms to describe the process of translation, with the aforementioned royal printer Robert Estienne being credited with the introduction of the verb *traduire*,<sup>17</sup> "to translate", and Etienne Dolet the nouns *traduction* and *traducteur*.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, although the spread of the practice of translation was not entirely without its opponents and attracted some debate,<sup>19</sup> in

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<sup>16</sup> For a summary of the growth of translation in sixteenth-century France, see Salama-Carr 2009: 410. Translation of classical literature into French was not an entirely new activity, however. In the thirteenth century Cicero's *De inventione* and *Ad Herennium*, extracts from Seneca and Suetonius, and Vegetius had all been translated into French. Boethius' *Consolatio* also appeared in three separate translations, followed by a further five in the fourteenth century. The fourteenth century also saw Pierre Bersuire translate as much of Livy as was known at the time and, in terms of Greek literature, Nicolas Oresme translated the works of Aristotle into French, but from Latin versions rather than the Greek itself. Other translations produced around the same time or shortly thereafter included Aristotle's *Problemata* and *Physiognomica*, all known works of Terence, Cicero's *De amicitia*, *De senectute* and *De officiis*, selections from Ovid, Sallust, Seneca's *De remediis* and *Epistulae*, Lucan, Valerius Maximus, Suetonius and Josephus. For more on thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth century translations of classical literature into French see Hutton 1950: 134.

<sup>17</sup> This was presumably based on the Latin *traducere* which was already in usage in Italian to describe the process of translation, with Leonardo Bruni being credited as the first to use the term in this sense (see Folena, 1991: 71).

<sup>18</sup> On the invention of French terminology for translation see Salama-Carr 2009: 410. For more on the career of Dolet, see Worth 1988.

<sup>19</sup> The spread of humanism meant that translation soon found itself at the heart of literary, political and religious controversies. Etienne Dolet, for example, a French humanist and printer, was burnt at the stake for heresy in 1546 after translating a phrase in the pseudo-Platonic *Axiochus* in such a

the 150 years following the advent of printing, it was practised right across Europe on an unprecedented scale.<sup>20</sup> Virgil and Ovid, whose works had remained popular throughout the Middle Ages, continued to find an ever-increasing audience, but other authors who had been neglected during the Middle Ages enjoyed renewed attention, including Horace, Martial and Ausonius.<sup>21</sup> Generally, however, familiar Latin classics remained more popular texts for translation than 'newer' works that had only recently been rediscovered by humanist scholars; thus, Lucretius, Tibullus, Propertius, Quintilian, Silius Italicus and Pliny the Younger were ignored.<sup>22</sup> Thus translations from Greek into the vernacular were less common, given that most Greek texts were 'new'.<sup>23</sup>

For the most part, those who practised translation in sixteenth-century France were humanist scholars such as Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and Etienne Dolet, who worked on translations as part of a broader study of classical texts, or poets such as Octovien de Saint-Gelais, Clément Marot and Joachim Du Bellay for whom translation was an activity undertaken alongside the composition of original poetry. In her work on vernacular translations in Renaissance France, Valerie Worth-Stylianou also identifies, however, a number of writers for whom translation formed so great a part of their literary output that they might be considered professional translators.<sup>24</sup>

The scholars Alice Hulubei and Valerie Worth both note the way in which translation affects the original writings of many authors in the French Renaissance.<sup>25</sup> Worth notes, for example that phrases from Joachim Du Bellay's translation of the *Aeneid* resurface later in his original poetry. Furthermore, such borrowings are not limited to the translator's own work, but also found in the works of others. Hélène Nais, for example, also identifies lines from Du Bellay's

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way as to suggest that the author was denying the immortality of the soul. For more on this controversy, see Christie 1899.

<sup>20</sup> For an overview of the extent of translation across Renaissance Europe, see Bolgar 1954: 504ff. and Pfeiffer 1976.

<sup>21</sup> Knecht 1994: 464.

<sup>22</sup> There were some exceptions to the general avoidance of newer texts, such as Etienne de la Planche's 1555 translation of Tacitus. For more on the distinction between newer and more well-established texts, see Hutton 1950: 135.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Worth-Stylianou 2002: 139.

<sup>25</sup> Hulubei 1931: 58-74 and Worth-Stylianou 2002: 151.

translation in the sixteenth-century French dramatist Etienne Jodelle's play *Dido se sacrifiant*.<sup>26</sup>

Under the preceding monarchs, Charles VIII and Louis XII, poetry at the French court had been dominated by the *rhétoriciens* – a group of poets whose work was mostly religious and propagandist in nature, often promoting the supposed Trojan origins of the French monarchy and famous for its verbal ingenuity in experimentation with patterns of verse, rhyme and alliteration.<sup>27</sup> Leading figures among the *rhétoriciens* were Jean Lemaire de Belges, Jean Molinet, Jean Meschinot, Jean Marot and Octovien de Saint-Gelais. Under François, however, a more varied poetic output found its home, with elegy, the epistle, and the eclogue all flourishing.<sup>28</sup> The poet Clement Marot and his followers attempted to move away from the mannerism of the *rhétoriciens*, writing French epistles, eclogues, elegies and epigrams based on classical models – as well as translations of classical works – in a more direct and pointed style.<sup>29</sup> Much of Marot's early work circulated in manuscript form, but in 1532 he published an anthology under the title *l'Adolescence Clémentine*, which included a translation of Virgil's first eclogue, original elegies and a translation of *Psalms*. Followers of Marot also produced translations of classical works; François Habert translated Horace's *Satires*, Hugues Salel Homer's *Iliad* and Louis Des Masures the first two books of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

The scholar Alice Hulubei, who provides a fairly comprehensive survey of the reception of Virgil in sixteenth-century France, marks the work of Marot and his followers as a distinct period within the development of humanism and French literature, distinguishing the practises of the "*marotiques*" from the *rhétoriciens*.<sup>30</sup> In particular, Hulubei notes that responses to the *marotiques* suggest that their work was favourably received and seen by their contemporaries as a departure from the *rhétoriciens*. Thomas Sébillet, for example, in his 1548 *Art Poétique*, encouraged poets to imitate those who were themselves successful imitators, listing examples of good translations. Ignoring all previous examples of vernacular literature, all those works mentioned by Sébillet as worthy of imitation

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<sup>26</sup> Nais 1967: 486.

<sup>27</sup> The standard and most comprehensive work on the *rhétoriciens* remains the first volume of Henry Guy's *Histoire de la poésie française au XVIe siècle* (1910).

<sup>28</sup> On the increased freedom of poetic form under François, see Knecht 1996: 84.

<sup>29</sup> On the change in style from the *rhétoriciens* to the *marotiques*, see Hutton 1950: 131-2

<sup>30</sup> Hulubei 1931: 33-4.

were those of the *marotiques*, such as Marot's own translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Hugues Salel's *Iliad*.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, it may be argued that Marot is still very much a transitional figure in the development of vernacular literature since, as James Hutton convincingly argues, the allegories, abstractions and acrostics found throughout Marot's works tie him closely to the school of the *rhétoriques*.<sup>32</sup> Alice Hulubei identifies Hélienne as a *marotique* but has not seen her work and cites it only according to Du Verdier.<sup>33</sup> But this seriously misses the importance of Marot as a literary predecessor for Hélienne and the transitional period of vernacular literature that she occupies. Hélienne's printer Denys Janot had published six volumes by Marot between 1537 and 1538.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, in her 1539 collection of literary epistles, entitled *Les epistres familiares et invectives*, Hélienne defended the work of Marot, along with her own work, against the disparaging comments that she imagines, coming from a fictive reader named Elenot:

“Je suis certaine que bien te souvient que ta venimeuse langue scaturie d'iniquitez, s'est esforcée de desestimer le hault & doulx stile, du treseloquent poete Marot.”

“I am sure you remember how your venomous tongue, spouting wretched lies, attempted to disparage the lofty and sweet style of that most eloquent poet Marot.”

(*Epistres* 131)

We can see here Hélienne explicitly aligning herself and her own work with Marot and his new school of vernacular literature – a significant challenge to the idea that Hélienne's translation is only backward looking. Clearly, then, Hélienne sees herself as part of the literary movement that is increasing the prestige of the vernacular. This allows her to appeal at once to an audience that has still has a taste for the popular novels of the Middle Ages, and to a more contemporary scholarly audience who are imitating classical literature in the vernacular as a contribution to the development of the French field of letters, with the aim of producing a vernacular literature to rival that of the ancient world.

It was not until the 1540s however – a critical moment in the development of French literature, according to Hutton – that the “emptiness of ideas” of the

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<sup>31</sup> Sebillet 1548: 188-9.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Hulubei 1931: 33.

<sup>34</sup> See Rawles 1976: Catalogue entries 66, 67, 69, 80, 81 and 83.

*rhétoriciens* fully gave way to the work of a new generation of poets, the *Pléiade*.<sup>35</sup> One of the principal influences that set the *Pléiade* apart from the *rhétoriciens* was the fruitful relationship they enjoyed with the scholars of the period who came forward at the same time and who had studied under the first two royal Greek lecturers that François had appointed, Toussain and Danès. The interest of these scholars in the poets of antiquity meant that they were also eager to form and encourage new poets, the *Pléiade* poets Ronsard, Jean-Antoine de Baïf and Joachim du Bellay, for example, all studying under the scholar Jean Dorat, who was himself a student of Toussain and Danès.

The *Pléiade* were keen to break with earlier traditions of French poetry – particularly Marot and the *rhétoriciens* – and a central concern of their literary project was to contest both that French was a worthy language for literary expression, and that France could have a language and literature to rival that of the ancients. The clearest expression of what the *Pléiade* thought and were trying to achieve is provided by Du Bellay's *Deffence et Illustration de la Langue françoise*, which was published in 1549. The first part of the *Deffence* was the argument that, with cultivation, French could be a vehicle for sophisticated literary expression. The second was how this might be realised by future poets through the vernacular imitation of different types of classical literature. The success of Du Bellay's manifesto was significant and the importance of the *Pléiade* to the development of vernacular literature is summed up by Hutton: "In the high sense of their calling, imbibed from humanism, they pass well beyond Marot and Saint-Gelais and set French literature upon a new plane."<sup>36</sup>

Significantly, it is in this context of growing prestige in vernacular literature that Denys Janot, the Parisian printer of all of Hélienne's works including the *Eneydes*, was appointed by François as the King's official printer of French language texts in 1543. We can see then that Hélienne is writing at the start of a decade that was pivotal in the development of French literature and that François and the humanism he fostered were driving forces behind this development. Hélienne's closeness to this twofold movement – reviving classical literature and developing new literature – is born out in the dedication of her translation to François I and her printer Janot's position as his official printer. It is essential that

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Hutton 1950: 132.

we consider Hélienne's work in this context to appreciate her as a serious participant in the humanist tradition, a fact which has only recently been recognised.<sup>37</sup>

### 3.1.3 The role of translation in sixteenth-century France

There is a clear correlation between the philological interest of humanists in comparing classical languages with vernacular languages as precisely as possible – a desire reflected in Robert Estienne's printing of the first Latin-French dictionary in 1538 – and their undertaking of their own translation projects.<sup>38</sup> Translations were not a purely philological exercise, however, but also a marketable commodity. This appetite for translations of classical works in sixteenth-century France is clearly attested by the prolific output of Guillaume Michel de Tours, who completed translations of Virgil, Apuleius, Cicero, Justin, Suetonius, Valerius Maximus and Josephus between 1516 and 1542 – clearly suggesting a ready market of readers.

Aside from their inherent interest to other humanists and translators wishing to compare their readings of a particular work with others, one possible market for translations in sixteenth-century France may have been schoolchildren. Worth-Stylianou notes a translation of Cicero's *Epistulae ad familiares* by Guillaume Michel de Tours from 1539 in which each letter is preceded by a summary of its contents and the first few lines of the Latin. Given the popularity of Cicero in school curricula of the period, Worth-Stylianou suggests that the text was aimed at schoolchildren who would benefit from the summaries and the ability to match the Latin up with the French.<sup>39</sup> This underlines further the integrity of the *mise en livre* to our understanding of texts, particularly in this period for which we have less evidence of authorial intent or reader response than we might find with more recent works. Marie du Gournay, a female translator of the second half of the sixteenth-century, confirmed this pedagogic value of translations into the vernacular, claiming in the preface to her translations of Sallust and Tacitus that it

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<sup>37</sup> Wood 2000.

<sup>38</sup> In 1539 Estienne reversed the entries to produce a French-Latin dictionary. He also produced two books for French schoolchildren studying Latin which compared the formation of verbs and nouns respectively.

<sup>39</sup> Worth-Stylianou 2002: 140.

was precisely through comparison with vernacular translations that she herself acquired a firm grasp of the Latin language.<sup>40</sup>

Etienne Dolet criticised Guillaume Michel de Tours' translation of the *Epistulae ad familiares* for lacking the high level of precision that he saw as integral to the process of translation, writing in the introduction to his own translation: "le gentil traducteur premier a si bien corrompu le sens qu'il faudroit ung Apollo pour deviner ce qu'il veult dire", "the first kind translator corrupted the sense so greatly that one would need an Apollo to work out what he means".<sup>41</sup> It is clear Dolet is advocating a more scholarly approach here – an approach that requires a good command of the target language as well as the source language and which involves producing a work that conveys as much sense in the target language as it did in the source. For Dolet, it seems, translation is not just a marketable commodity; it is as much a philological exercise as it is an act of vulgarisation, as we shall see further below when we examine the precepts laid out in his treatise on how to translate well.

Joachim du Bellay insisted that translation held a value beyond the pedagogical or the scholarly, suggesting that the utility of vernacular translations lay in their ability to make classical texts accessible to those without a knowledge of classical languages in *La Deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse*. While Du Bellay criticised translation, since it did not enrich the French language in the same way as original composition, he nevertheless appreciated the value of reading ancient works for pleasure and the idea that vernacular translation would make this possible for a wider audience.<sup>42</sup>

All these translations seem to embrace the humanist ideals of ascertaining the meaning of classical texts and disseminating them more widely, while at the same time seeming to encompass different aims and appealing to different audiences. Throughout this thesis, I will argue that Hélienne shares the humanist zeal for classical literature – both in terms of the pleasure of reading it and appreciation of its usefulness – and it is for this reason that she also shares in the desire to disseminate that literature as widely as possible. Since Hélienne is a professional writer working in conjunction with a publisher, the marketability of translations of classical literature during this period allows Hélienne to realise

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<sup>40</sup> Worth-Stylianou 2002: 143.

<sup>41</sup> Dolet 1979: *praef.*

<sup>42</sup> Du Bellay 1904: 1.5.

this project. I suggest that Héli-senne uses her translation to mount a twofold attack on the authority of classical literature, questioning both the way in which the Trojan war story is told generally and, more specifically, the portrayal of the character of Dido. In so doing, Héli-senne makes a point about the literary manipulation of truth and fiction that both reflects upon the act of writing and simultaneously contributes to the defence of women offered throughout her work. Translation is a vehicle through which Héli-senne can aim to reach as broad an audience as possible, since it has the potential to appeal to an audience of humanist scholars and a broader public of readers of vernacular literature.

### 3.1.4 Translating the *Aeneid* in sixteenth-century France

To understand what is significant about Héli-senne's translation, we must first get a sense of how many translations of Virgil's *Aeneid* there were in sixteenth-century France, what parts her contemporaries translated and why. Section 3.1.6 will examine the translations of Héli-senne's contemporaries in more detail, but for now an overview will demonstrate that Héli-senne's is the first of a number of translations to treat a specific selection of books rather than the whole, as well as being the first prose version. Both of these factors, I will argue, are part of Héli-senne's strategy to reach as wide an audience as possible.

As already noted, interest in the works of Virgil continued without interruption from antiquity and their popularity throughout the Middle Ages is well-attested.<sup>43</sup> In an educational setting, Virgil was read in Latin in French schools and universities – as throughout Europe – and offered as a model to imitate and comment upon.<sup>44</sup> Outside of the pedagogical environment, a twelfth-century vernacular adaptation of the *Aeneid*, the *Roman d'Eneas*, introduced Virgil to a wider audience, not necessarily literate in Latin. (The *Aeneid* is exceptional among classical works for the number of published versions of all or parts of the text throughout the sixteenth century.)

The late fifteenth-early sixteenth century saw the first printed versions of Virgil's works in France. The first of these was a vernacular retelling of the *Aeneid* printed in Lyons in 1483 by Guillaume le Roy which, like the *Roman d'Eneas*, was freely adapted from the Latin and is often labelled a *remaniement*. At the turn of

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<sup>43</sup> See especially Comparetti's 1872 *Vergilio nel medio evo*.

<sup>44</sup> For an excellent overview of the place of Virgil in the French education system, see Huppert 1984.



the century, the humanist and printer Josse Badius Ascensius produced the first editions of Virgil's works – which had previously only circulated in manuscript form – to be printed in France. Copied from Italian editions, which had in turn been copied from manuscripts, Badius' editions were grouped into three parts: the *Bucolics* and *Georgics* in 1500; the *Opuscules* (minor works which the fourth-century commentator Servius had mistakenly attributed to Virgil) in 1500; and finally the *Aeneid* in 1501.

As part of the humanist drive to disseminate Classics, the same period saw the first translation of the *Aeneid* into French, that of Octovien de Saint-Gelais. Written in 1500, printed in 1509 and reappearing in five subsequent editions over the next forty years, Octovien's translation enjoyed a longevity that surpassed other translations of the work. Significantly, in 1540, just two years before Hélienne's own translation was published, a new edition of Octovien's translation was produced that appears to have been something of a bestseller, with copies having been found in the Ecole des Beaux Arts, the British Library and several provincial libraries in France.<sup>45</sup> Given the widespread dissemination of this text, it is possible that Hélienne may have had access to a copy. In fact, there are some clear similarities between Hélienne and Octovien's texts, which led Christine Scollen-Jimack to suggest that Hélienne had not even seen a copy of Virgil's text and was merely paraphrasing Octovien's translation.<sup>46</sup> I will demonstrate, particularly through the close reading offered in chapter five, that while there are some clear borrowings from Octovien, Hélienne manipulates them in a creative way to suit her own literary ends.

Octovien translated all twelve books of the *Aeneid* and it was to be almost fifty years before another French translation of the whole work appeared, in 1547. This new translation, by Louis des Masures, appeared in instalments. The first contained Books One to Two, followed by One to Four in 1552, Four to Eight in 1557 and the final instalment in 1560. In the intervening years between Octovien de Saint-Gelais' and Louis des Masures' translations, Guillaume Michel de Tours produced his translation of Virgil's *Georgics* and *Bucolics* and various translations of parts of the *Aeneid* were also produced.<sup>47</sup> These include Hélienne's own

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<sup>45</sup> Scollen-Jimack 1982: 205.

<sup>46</sup> Scollen-Jimack 1982: 203.

<sup>47</sup> For a comprehensive overview of sixteenth-century translations of the works of Virgil, see Hulubei 1931.

translation of Books One to Four in 1542 and Joachim du Bellay's translations of Books Four and Six in 1552 and 1560 respectively. Later in the sixteenth century, Jacques Peletier, in his 1581 *Œuvres poetiques*, translated selections from Books One, Four and Six. We can see then that Hélienne's *Eneydes* is among the earliest extant translations of the *Aeneid* into French and is the first of a number of sixteenth-century French translations to treat a specific selection of books rather than the whole work.

In addition, it is important to note that Octovien's translation was written in decasyllabic rhyming couplets, making Hélienne's translation the first ever French prose translation. Furthermore, the aforementioned later translators of the *Aeneid* return to the verse form. This makes Hélienne's prosification<sup>48</sup> of the text particularly significant, raising questions about the reasons behind it and the effect that it has.

### 3.1.5 The theory of translation

While, as we have seen, the apparent concerns of translators in sixteenth-century France were quite disparate, Worth-Stylianou nevertheless notes a general trend, right up until mid-century, of a lack of confidence in the resources of the French language to sufficiently convey the meaning of classical texts.<sup>49</sup> She attributes this commonly expressed concern to the relatively immaturity of French as a literary language compared to Latin or Greek.<sup>50</sup> This preoccupation clearly relates to style and the ideals of translation rather than its viability, since translations were being produced and had been for some time. Translators were clearly concerned with the question of interpretation, that is, how best to render the source text in the target language, rather than the practical feasibility of translation and possibility of lexical equivalence between the two languages, which was proved by the very fact that translations of classical texts into French were being produced on an unprecedented scale. Given the widespread concern among translators with how best to convey the sense of the original, it is perhaps surprising that we have very little extant work from sixteenth-century France devoted specifically to the theory of translation.

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<sup>48</sup> The terms prosification is coined by Genette to describe the translation of poetic works into prose. See Genette 1982: 219.

<sup>49</sup> Worth-Stylianou 2002: 145.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

The first work in French devoted specifically to the theory of translation that does survive is by Etienne Dolet, a printer, classical scholar and translator, and was published in 1540.<sup>51</sup> *La Maniere de bien traduire d'une langue en autre* was originally intended to form one chapter of an ambitious work entitled the *Orateur françoys* – a project that never came to fruition – but was published by Dolet as a stand-alone treatise and became popular fairly rapidly, with ten editions published in the first ten years.<sup>52</sup>

As the only treatise to offer a full theoretical analysis of the art of translation in this period, Dolet's work is extremely significant for our understanding of how translation was perceived in the sixteenth century. However, the precepts propounded by Dolet are rather general and he offers little in the way of concrete examples. Also, since it is an isolated work, it is not possible to state conclusively to what extent the treatise truly represents contemporary thinking about translation. Nevertheless, his insistence on the need for accuracy and proficiency in the vernacular does seem to reflect a trend of increasing concern for fidelity, combined with an increasingly unaffected French style, in translations from the late fifteenth century onwards, as often anticipated in the prefaces to the works and demonstrated in the works themselves.

Dolet's text opens with an apparent claim, echoing the title, to have found the key to producing a good translation:

“La maniere de bien traduire d'une langue en autre, requiert principalement cinq choses.”

“The manner of translating well from one language into another principally requires five things.”<sup>53</sup>

The reader is led to believe here that, if the five rules are followed, this will automatically result in the production of a 'good translation'. I will briefly outline the five rules laid out by Dolet, as they are central to the way in which we examine Hélisenne's *Eneydes* in its proper intellectual climate. The first is that the translator must understand the meaning of the text he is translating in order to render it accurately:

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<sup>51</sup> Worth 1988: 51. Worth notes that aspects of translation theory had been discussed before Dolet's work, but were restricted to the prefaces of particular translations and usually in response to a specific problem encountered by the translator.

<sup>52</sup> Longeon 1980: 93-111.

<sup>53</sup> Dolet 1540: 13.

“[...] il est besoing et necessaire à tout traducteur d’entendre parfaitement le sens de l’auteur, qu’il tourne d’une langue en autre. Et sans cela, il ne peut traduire seurement et fidelement.”

“It is essential and necessary for every translator to understand perfectly the meaning of the author that he is rendering from one language into another. Without that, he cannot translate accurately and faithfully.”<sup>54</sup>

The second rule is that the translator should have complete competence in both the source and target language:

“La seconde chose, qui est requise en traduction, c’est, que le traducteur ait parfaite congnoissance de la langue de l’auteur, qu’il traduit: & soit pareillement excellent en la langue, en laquelle il se mest a traduire.”

“The second thing that is required in translation is that the translator has a perfect knowledge of the language of the author whom he translates and is equally excellent in the language in which he begins to translate.”<sup>55</sup>

In the third rule, Dolet guards against a slavish approach to translation, insisting that it is not necessary to translate “mot pour mot”, “word for word” and furthermore insists that it is folly to translate line for line or verse for verse.<sup>56</sup>

The fourth rule warns against using words that are “trop approchans du Latin”, “too close to Latin” and therefore “hors de l’usage commun”, “outside of common usage”.<sup>57</sup> The fifth and final rule of good translation that Dolet advocates is to observe the “nombre oratoires”, “rhetorical cadences”<sup>58</sup> of the French language, again reflecting the wider preoccupation with producing a translation that in itself conforms to the stylistic concerns of the literature of the period.

In her use of digressions, Latinate language and paraphrastic approach, Hélisenne’s *Eneydes* clearly does not follow Dolet’s formula for a ‘good’ translation. Theory, however, is one thing and practice is quite another. So how does Hélisenne’s translation compare to other contemporary translations, particularly of Virgil? As we will see in the following section, French translations of Virgil from the first half of the sixteenth century do seem to follow a pattern of increasing accuracy, combined with an increasing concern for the style of the French.

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<sup>54</sup> Dolet 1540: 14.

<sup>55</sup> Dolet 1540: 15.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Dolet 1540: 16-17.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

### 3.1.6 The practice of translation

To give an initial impression of the way in which Hélienne's translation runs counter to the general development in the practice of translation across the sixteenth century in France, I will briefly examine the way in which Hélienne and five other translators of the *Aeneid* into French render the same passage. I have chosen an extract in which none of the translators depart significantly from Virgil's text and in which the content is reasonably homogenous across the translations to allow for effective comparison of fidelity and style rather than interpretation *per se*.<sup>59</sup>

In the following short extract from Book Four, Virgil describes the grief that spreads through the city of Carthage after Dido is seen to have stabbed herself, likening the uproar of lamentation at Dido's death to the fall of the city:

*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.*

"The houses resound with weeping and sighing and women's cries,  
the sky echoes with mighty lamentations,  
as if all Carthage or ancient Tyre were falling  
to the invading enemy, and raging flames were rolling  
over the roofs of men and gods."

(*Aen.* 4.667-671)<sup>60</sup>

- 1) Puy visies lors grans lamentacions grans cris grans plaintes et grant dueil demener femmes gemir douloir et larmoyer et tout le peuple de fureur forcener. Dont la cite estoit forment esmeue en grant desolacion par telle forme et maniere comme se les ennemys capitaulx dicelle ville y fussent entres a force pour mettre a destruction ou la grant ville ancienne de chir qui les a nouris avecques celle de cartage fussent tost reduitz en flambes de feu tout embrasee.

*Le livre des Eneydes compilé par Virgille, trans. anon., 1483 (fol. 103).*<sup>61</sup>

- 2) Si que les lieux et habitations

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<sup>59</sup> The passages are presented consecutively and are numbered for ease of comparison. Discussion of each passage in turn follows.

<sup>60</sup> All references to Latin works are to the Oxford Classical Text edition, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>61</sup> The full title reads *Le livre des Eneydes compile par Virgille, lequel a esté translate de latin en françois.*

Furent tous pleins de lamentations  
De pleurs et cris de plaintes feminines  
De grans regretz et piteables signes  
Tout en ce point que si durs ennemis  
Dedens cartaigne feussent entrez et mis  
Qui la cite de tout point desmollissent  
Et qui le feu comme furieux missent  
Par les maisons et aux temples des dieux  
Sans espaigner leur rigueur en tous lieux.

*Les Eneydes de Virgille*, trans. Octovien de Saint-Gelais, 1509 (fol. 80r)

- 3) Parquoy tous lieux habitables furent remplis de lamentations, lachrymes, plainctes & ululations muliebres: & ne furent les acerbes regretz moins grandz, que si cruelz & furieux ennemys, entrantz dedans Carthage, l'eussent totalement desmolie & que par trop excessive insolence meissent le feu aux sumptueulx temples, & magnificques domicilles, sans que de leur oultrageuse rigueur aucuns lieux fussent exemptz.

*Les quatre premiers livres des Eneydes*, trans. Hélisienne de Crenne, 1541 (IV, f. ci. r)

- 4) [...] & de maints cris divers  
L'hostel fremist, & de gemissemens,  
Et de piteux feminins hurlemens.  
En l'air espars vont les douloureux sons.  
Non autrement que si de comble en fons  
Se renversoit Carthage, s'estans mis  
D'elle au dedens les mortelz ennemis,  
Ou de Tyros la ville antique prise:  
Et qu'en fureur par l'air la flame esprise  
Allast volant par les palais & lieux  
Hault eslevez des hommes & des Dieux.

*Les quatre premiers livres de l'Eneide*, trans. Louis des Masures, 1552 (fol. 213r)

- 5) Les hullems des femmes gemissantes  
Hurte le toict des maisons fremissantes:  
Et du hault cry, qui par la ville tonne,  
La terre en tremble, & le ciel en resonne:  
Non autrement, que si les ennemis  
Estoyent en Tyr, ou en Carthaig mis:  
Et que le feu tounoyast furieux  
Par les maisons des hommes, & des Dieux.

*Le Quatriesme Livre de l'Eneide de Vergile*, trans. Joachim du Bellay, 1552 (fol. 63r)

- 6) De lamentations, de leur gemissement,  
D'hurlemens feminins chasque haut toict s'entonne  
D'un dueil horrible & grand par tout l'air espars tonne:  
Non autrement que si dedans Carthage estoient  
Les ennemis entrez & toute l'abatoient,

Ou Tyr l'antique, & si sur maisons eminentes  
D'hommes & Dieux couraient les flammes tournoyantes.

*Les Quatre premiers livres de l'Eneide*, trans. Pierre Tredehan, 1575 (fol. 26r)

The first passage is from the first printed translation of the *Aeneid* into French, which dates from 1483. The translator of the work is unknown, but the printer is identified as Guillaume Le Roy of Lyons. This prose translation can be considered a *remaniement*, since it corresponds loosely to Virgil's Latin, with the author rearranging the order of events as well adding passages of his own invention. As such, it is often overlooked in comparative studies of Renaissance French translations and classified (along with a fifteenth-century prose translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* entitled the *Bible des poetes*) as belonging to a late-Medieval tradition of combining translation with liberal paraphrase and allegorical commentary.<sup>62</sup> However, I would suggest that such a distinction fails to give a full picture of the development of translation and, most importantly, that the resonances of the *remaniement* found in Hélienne's translation, as outlined below, make it vital to our study and problematise the hitherto distinct shift between the Medieval and Renaissance practise of translation.

The preface to this work suggests that the translator conceives it to be a popular work with a didactic value, aimed at "tous citoyens et habitans en villes et chateaulx", "all citizens and inhabitants in towns and chateaux", who will find within it "comme jadis troye la grant et plusieurs aultres places fortes et inexpugnables ont este assiegees aprement et assaliez et aussi courageusement et vallament deffendues", "how once the great Troy and several other strong and undefeatable places were savagely besieged and assailed and just as courageously and valiantly defended" (fol. A2v). This idea of vulgarisation is supported by the layout of the book which, rather than twelve books, is divided into a series of shorter chapters, recalling the style of a medieval chronicle. While Hélienne retains the division of the *Aeneid* into books, like the translator of the *remaniement*, she too breaks each book down into a series of shorter chapters. Each chapter of

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<sup>62</sup> On the distinction between the late-Medieval and the Renaissance tradition of translation see, for example, Worth 2002: 147. The *Bible des poetes* included extensive allegorical commentary within the translation and continued to be printed in the first 30 years of the sixteenth century in a revised form under the title *Le Grand Olympe des histories poetiques*. Following the close verse translations of parts or the whole of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* between 1532 and 1557 by Clément Marot, Barthélemy Aneau and François Habert, the *remaniement* fell from favour and was not republished.

the *remaniement* begins with a prefatory summary of the events that follow, beginning with the word “comment”. In this case, passage one comes from a chapter prefaced by “Comment Dydo plaine de raige desprovée de sans se tua [...]” “How Dido, full of rage and out of her mind, killed herself” (IV, f. ci. r). Significantly, Hélienne prefaced her chapters with anticipatory titles, often also beginning with “comment”. The Latin text is entirely absent from the *remaniement*, to the extent that, as Valerie Worth suggests, the visual impact first suggests a work of prose rather than a translation of a poem.<sup>63</sup>

The notion that this is a vulgarising rather than learned translation and that it is not intended to be compared with the Latin text is borne out by the rendering of this passage. While the translator conveys the sense of the passage and retains the simile comparing the grief of the people after Dido’s death with the fall of a city to an invading enemy, it is generally a loose translation, with a fair amount of paraphrase. The translator gives a sense of grief, but not of the physical reverberations that result from the uproar in Virgil; there is no mention of resounding roofs or echoing skies. Similarly at the end of the passage, while Virgil is keen to stress the idea that the homes of neither men nor gods are safe from the flames (*Aen.* 4.671), the translator’s rendering is less precise, as it is “la grant ville ancienne” that is enveloped by fire. Furthermore, the translator includes adjectives not present in the Latin to add colour, such as the “ennemys capitaulx”. Thus, it is clear that this is not an attempt to faithfully render every word of Virgil’s Latin, but, using his material, retell the story in the vernacular in the style of a popular tale.

The second passage is from what is often labelled the first translation of the *Aeneid* into French, that of Octovien de Saint-Gelais. A translation of all twelve books of the *Aeneid*, it was written in 1500 and printed posthumously in 1509. Reappearing in five subsequent editions over the next forty years, Octovien’s translation enjoyed a longevity that surpassed other translations of the work.

In the preface to his translation Octovien states that his intention is to translate “mot a mot et au plus pres”, “word for word and as closely as possibly (fol. Aii v.). To allow the reader to compare how successfully this is achieved,

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<sup>63</sup> Worth 1985: 18.



portions of the Latin text are presented alongside the French,<sup>64</sup> orientating the reader and allowing them to match the translation up against an edition of the Latin text. To what extent then is the apparent concern for fidelity realised in the text? Octovien's translation is written in decasyllabic verse and is thus the first translation that attempts to render Virgil's poem in French verse. The immediate impression given to us by this passage is that it is twice the length of the original, with ten lines of verse as opposed to Virgil's five. And this prolixity can, at times, be attributed to the constraints of Octovien's decasyllabic scheme, which leads him to paraphrase or elaborate. The last line of the passage for example, in which Octovien further elaborates on the breadth of destruction wreaked by the enemy, seems designed to accommodate the rhyme scheme, rhyming "lieux" with "dieux". Elsewhere, we find examples of reduplication, the use of two words in French to convey the sense of one in Latin: for example, in "lieux and habitations" in the first line to render Virgil's *tecta* (*Aen.* 4.668). This might point to the concern that the French language lacked the lexical richness to convey concisely the exact meaning of the Latin, as already suggested. Some of the detail of Virgil's passage is absent, such as the resounding sky (*Aen.* 4.668) and the naming of Tyre as well as Carthage as the falling city Virgil imagines in the sound of the citizens' cries (*Aen.* 4.670). Nevertheless, for the most part, we can see Octovien attempting to follow the Latin closely and find some equivalent in French for almost every word of the Latin. As such, we see more respect here for the integrity of the Latin than in passage 1 and the assumption that the translation will be compared against the original. For Octovien then, the practice of translation is no longer an act of pure vulgarisation and his translation marks the beginning of a turn towards fidelity, albeit in a somewhat convoluted style with priority accorded to the rhyme scheme.

The third extract is Hélienne's rendering of the same passage. Hélienne's translation marks a return to prose and I have already noted some of the similarities with the 1483 prose *remaniement* (passage 1), in terms of layout, chapter division and titles summarising the contents of each chapter. However, there are also clear similarities with Octovien's text. We might expect that, free from constraints of a rhyme scheme, Hélienne would avoid the tendency towards paraphrase and elaboration that we find in Octovien, but this is not the case. We

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<sup>64</sup> Worth estimates that between a quarter and a third of the Latin text is presented. See Worth 1985: 19.

find echoes of Octovien's "lieux et habitations" in Héli-senne's "lieux habitables", for example, and like Octovien, she has four different expressions of grief ("lamentations, lachrymes, plainctes & ululations muliebres") for Virgil's three (*lamentis, gemituque et femineo ululatu*). Like Octovien, Héli-senne also sometimes deviates somewhat from the text, also omitting the resounding sky, for example, and seeming to admire Octovien's last line in which he stresses that no place is safe from the enemy's rage, choosing to follow this elaboration.

Despite the evident similarities to Octovien, Héli-senne can, on occasion be seen to follow the Latin more closely than her predecessor, her "ululations" clearly picking up on the Latin *ululate*.<sup>65</sup> Again, we find a kind of reduplication in "cruelz & furieux ennemis", though it is an elaboration rather than a translation of a Latin word, thus reflecting not so much a concern for the resources of the French language and the ability to convey the full sense of the Latin, as an exuberant and prolix style. This prolixity is further apparent when, like the anonymous translator of the prose *remaniement*, Héli-senne introduces into her translation phrases and words that do not have any equivalent in the Latin text to add colour, including "par trop excessive insolence", "sumptueux" and "magnifiques".

This ornate style of prose gives Héli-senne's *Eneydes* a somewhat archaic feel, which is contributed to by her frequent use of Latinate language. In this passage for example, where Octovien uses (and those translating after Héli-senne also use) the more common adjective "féminin", Héli-senne uses the less common "muliebres". This goes against Dolet's fourth principle of good translation, which suggests avoiding words "trop approchans du Latin", "too close to Latin".<sup>66</sup> In fact, Héli-senne's use of Latinate language throughout her corpus is so pronounced that it led one of her readers to revise her first three works, replacing her Latinisms with words in more common usage in order to make them more accessible.<sup>67</sup>

Passage 4 is from Louis Des Masures' translation of Books One to Four of the *Aeneid*, which was published in a series of instalments, with Books One and Two appearing in 1547, followed by Books One to Four in 1552. This translation included the entire Latin text alongside the French translation, indicating – much

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<sup>65</sup> This one word contributes to the argument, *pace* Scollen-Jimack, that Héli-senne must be working with the Latin.

<sup>66</sup> See above page 60.

<sup>67</sup> See above page 37

like Octovien's translation – a concern for accuracy and an expectation that the translation would be compared with the original.

Like Octovien, Des Masures' translates Virgil's text in decasyllabic verse. However, Des Masures appears to follow Virgil's text more closely, scrupulously following Virgil's imagery and insisting on the detail. He is the first of our translators, for example, to include the image of the sky resonating with the sound of mourning, translating Virgil's *resonat magnis plangoribus aether*, as "En l'air espars vont les douloureux sons". Furthermore, Des Masures is also the first to insist on likening the uproar to the fall of Carthage or Tyre, as in the original Latin, not glossing over the second city in the same way as Octovien and Hélienne. Nevertheless, Des Masures is, on occasion, also forced to adopt a more paraphrastic approach to accommodate his rhyme scheme. This is arguably most apparent at the end of this passage, where – like Octovien – he uses three lines of French to render one and a half lines of Virgil to describe the raging flames rolling over the roofs of men and gods, following Octovien in rhyming "lieux" and "Dieux".

Passage 5 is from Joachim Du Bellay's translation of Book Four of the *Aeneid*, published in 1552. In the preface to this translation, Du Bellay suggests that he turned to the *Aeneid* when lacking inspiration for his own original vernacular poetry. In keeping with his ethos of developing and promoting the French language, Du Bellay expresses a desire that his translation should invite judgment as poetry in its own right.<sup>68</sup> The translation is thus presented without the Latin text.

This is the shortest translation of the passage so far, at only eight lines – just three lines longer than the original Latin. And much of Du Bellay's conciseness results from the fact he is prepared to gloss over words in the Latin and occasionally omit them altogether. So, for example, in the first line, Virgil's *lamentis gemituque et femineo ululatu* becomes compressed into "les hullemens des femmes gemissantes". The words that Du Bellay chooses are, according to Hulubei, selected for their rhyme and not for the colour or force they bring to the translation.<sup>69</sup> What we see here is something of a departure from the attempts of Octovien and Des Masures to create an accurate translation of the *Aeneid*. For Du Bellay, concern for fidelity must give way to style as he concentrates on the rhythm and sound

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<sup>68</sup> Du Bellay 1552: praef.

<sup>69</sup> Hulubei 1931: 41.

patterns of his translation. As with the author of the prose *remaniement*, respect for the integrity of the original text is not a concern.

Passage 6, from Pierre Tredehan's 1575 translation of *Aeneid* 1-4 marks a return to the concern for accuracy. Like Des Masures', Tredehan's translation offers the complete Latin text for comparison. Tredehan is the earliest translator to use alexandrines rather than decasyllables for his version of the *Aeneid*. Despite this being a less common, and therefore trickier metre to handle, Tredehan offers a fairly literal rendering of the text, taking care to find lexical equivalence for almost every word of the Latin. As this passage demonstrates, Tredehan generally avoids elaboration, but Worth notes that he is occasionally forced to resort to paraphrase to ensure that the exact sense of the Latin is conveyed.<sup>70</sup> For the time being then, the elusory ideal translation described by Dolet, that combines precision and confidence in the French language, remains elusive.

We can see then that translation is still very much an evolving form during this period. In comparison with the works of her contemporaries, Hélienne's translation seems to embrace the humanist spirit of wishing to disseminate classical literature more widely, with less concern for fidelity to the original than some of her counterparts. One of the ways in which she reaches out to a wide audience of readers of vernacular is to adopt a prose form, recalling the earlier *remaniement* of Virgil and the popular novels of the romance genre, in an attempt to close down the gap between humanist and popular literature.

### **3.2 Reconsidering the authority of Virgil**

Having considered translations of Virgil, I will now briefly survey the ways in which Virgil was encountered outside of the *Aeneid*, since this will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the prestige in which the *Aeneid* was held. The enormous influence exerted by Virgil and his works from antiquity through the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance – and the sheer number of receptions – means that it would be extremely difficult to account for all the various ways in which they were received by those who came before Hélienne or to get any real overall sense of what Virgil meant to the Medieval scholiast, for example, or the Carolingian scholar.

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<sup>70</sup> Worth 2002: 159.

It is, however, possible to discern some general trends in the reception of Virgil – such as the allegorising commentaries of the Middle Ages – that are illuminating since they persist right up to the sixteenth century and continue to affect the way in which Virgil is perceived. After briefly outlining some of these interpretative trends and, in particular, some of the ways in which Virgil was received besides translation, I will suggest that the pervasive presence of Virgil and the persistence of certain interpretations have provided a somewhat skewed impression of the unchallengeable authority of Virgil in Renaissance France.

The reception of Virgil in late antiquity was dominated by the commentary of the grammarian Maurus Honoratus Servius on the *Eclogues*, *Georgics* and *Aeneid*, written towards the end of the fourth century in Rome. The influence of Servius' commentary was broad and long-lasting, as it continued to be read through the Middle Ages and was published in various forms throughout the Renaissance. Servius took the *Eclogues* as a *roman à clef*, seeing the characters as reflections of Virgil himself and his contemporaries. The influence of Servius' commentary was such that finding parallels between poetic fiction and reality in the works of Virgil became commonplace in the commentary tradition as scholiasts continued to find supposed allusions to reality throughout.<sup>71</sup>

Servius was responsible for the conception of the works of Virgil as a meaningful trilogy that could most successfully be interpreted as a whole corpus. So, for example, in literary terms, the *Eclogues*, *Georgics* and *Aeneid* were considered to represent the three possible literary genres: the *humilis*, *moderatus* and *sublimis* respectively.<sup>72</sup> At the same time, on a more allegorical level, they were thought to represent the three ages of man's development; the three stages of the poet's literary development through increasingly lofty subject matter and possible social conditions (the shepherd, the farmer and the warrior). This concept of the works as an evolving trilogy persisted for such a time that the early printed editions of Virgil from the sixteenth century did not separate the works, but printed them as a collection.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, after its first appearance in print in Italy in 1471 as a stand-alone commentary, Servius' commentary was then published alongside the text of Virgil and finally with other more modern

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<sup>71</sup> For a detailed survey of the influence of Servius on later commentators, see Wilson-Okamura 2010: especially 197-9.

<sup>72</sup> Hulubei 1931: 4.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

commentaries too. By the end of the fifteenth and through the first half of the sixteenth century, all of the large folio editions of Virgil's works printed in Italy and France included Servius' commentary. We can see them the pervasive influence of Servius right from the fourth century through to the sixteenth century.

I would suggest, however, that this gives us a somewhat false sense of an unchanging and unchallengeable Virgil running from antiquity through the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance. However, while the mainstream account of the story of Aeneas remains that told of Virgil in the *Aeneid*, throughout late antiquity and the Middle Ages there co-exists a second telling of the story, colourfully labelled "a Rosencratz-and Guildenstern-type adaptation" by Sarah Spence.<sup>74</sup> The *De Excidio Troiae Historia* of Dares of Phrygia and the *Ephemeris belli Troiani of Dictys*<sup>75</sup> of Dictys of Crete were both texts claiming to be pre-Homeric eye-witness accounts of the Trojan War. Written in Latin in Roman imperial times, but translated from Greek originals, they are both prefaced by a dedicatory letter in which the translator – in Dictys' case Septimius, and in Dares' case Cornelius Nepos – claims to have had the Greek to hand and, as such, both belong to the genre of pseudo-documentary fiction.<sup>76</sup> And both Dares and Dictys enjoyed immense popularity throughout the Middle Ages, beyond that of Homer,<sup>77</sup> arguably because of their claims to autopsy, the rationalism of their accounts, and the fact that Homer's texts were largely unread by a medieval audience.<sup>78</sup> Dictys alleges to have taken part in the war on the Greek side and Dares on the Trojan.

Sarah Spence has recently explored how both of these texts not only challenge the authority of Homer's *Iliad*, but also of Virgil's *Aeneid*, through the way in which they represent Aeneas' role in the fall of Troy, going so far as to call them "anti-*Aeneids*".<sup>79</sup> In both of these adaptations Aeneas is depicted as a traitor rather

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<sup>74</sup> Spence 2010: 133.

<sup>75</sup> Hereafter *Ephemeris*

<sup>76</sup> The date of the Latin text of the *Ephemeris* has been the subject of much debate, but is supposed to be during the fourth century CE. For a full discussion see Merkle 1989: 263-91. The Dares text is dated to the fifth century CE. For both texts, the long-debated existence of a Greek original has now been proved. See Merkle 1989: 263-91 for the argument that the Greek Dictys must have been composed not later than 200 CE. For the dating of the Greek Dares to the second century CE see Pavano 1998.

<sup>77</sup> Griffin 1907.

<sup>78</sup> The gods do not appear personally in either account and the heroism of the protagonists is reduced to human scale. See Merkle 1994: 184. On the reading of Homer in the Middle Ages, see Spence 2010: 135.

<sup>79</sup> Spence 2010: 134.

than hero, since it is on his account and not that of Sinon that the horse is introduced into Troy.

Spence notes that, because they were adapted in vernacular literature by the French author Benoît de Saint-Maure circa 1160 and the Sicilian Guido delle Colonne circa 1287, Dares and Dictys became for some the primary source for the story of the Trojan war and its aftermath.<sup>80</sup> Yet, the presence of these anti-*Aeneids* – or in fact any challenge to the authority of Virgil – is entirely absent from Hulubei's account of the reception of Virgil in sixteenth-century France. Furthermore, despite how well-known and influential they were throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, their significance remains underplayed by classicists.<sup>81</sup>

Belief in Dictys' and Dares' accounts of the Trojan War over that of Homer was unflinching throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>82</sup> However, it is important to note that it is precisely during the era in which Hélienne was writing, the sixteenth century, that doubts began to creep in over the authenticity of their accounts, as we will discover below. The accounts of Dares and Dictys are particularly significant since Hélienne refers to them by name in her prefatory letter and in her digression on the death of Hector. Hélienne insists on the veracity of the accounts of Dares and Dictys over Homer, claiming that they tell the true story of the Trojan war. While she does not draw on them explicitly for her depiction of Aeneas, it is nevertheless clear that by strongly aligning herself with a challenge to Homer's *Iliad*, she is also implicitly challenging the authority of Virgil's *Aeneid* and its pious hero too. It is thus essential that we consider the tales of Dictys and Dares and their complication of the Virgilian tradition in the Middle Ages to fully appreciate the context in which Hélienne writes – at a time during which Virgil's *Aeneid* is the dominant, but not the only story of the Trojan war and Aeneas' part in it, but also during which the authority of those anti-*Aeneids* is beginning to be called into question.

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<sup>80</sup> Spence 2010: 136.

<sup>81</sup> See, for example, Rudd 2006.

<sup>82</sup> Griffin 1907: 16.

## Chapter Four: Mise en livre, mise en prose

### 4.1 *Mise en livre: exploring the prefatory paratext*

Gérard Genette encapsulates the importance of the prefatory material of any text when he notes that, while not all prefaces function in exactly the same way, they all share a common aim: “to ensure the text is read properly”.<sup>1</sup> The preface is key then to understanding both the author’s and the publisher’s intention. Here, I use ‘preface’ in the broadest sense to specify every item that precedes Chapter One of Hélienne’s *Eneydes*, including the title page and privilege, before turning to the dedicatory letter. The reason for this, as will become apparent, is that elements such as the title page and privilege are every bit as instructive as the dedicatory letter that precedes the translation and can also be read programmatically.

Before examining the prefatory material itself, I begin with a discussion of Hélienne’s publisher, Denys Janot, since he obviously plays a significant role in the creation of the book. To understand better some of the features of the text, it is useful to first consider what Janot’s intentions as a publisher might have been. This will give us some indication of the target audience and introduce the idea that the *Eneydes* appears to appeal to both a community of learned male humanists and a more heterogeneous audience of readers of vernacular literature. The printing of the work in folio form, I suggest, reflected the growing prestige of the vernacular and Janot’s position as the King’s official printer for French language texts, but potentially deterred his usual customer base on account of cost. I will then move on to look at the prefatory material – including the title page, privilege, and dedicatory letter.

The title page immediately raises a number of critical issues. It promises the reader a female-authored translation, with remarks added for elucidation and decoration, and raises a differing range of expectations as it tells us the printer is Denys Janot (printer of popular vernacular literature) and the dedicatee François I (father of humanism). The privilege that follows the title page not only gives us vital information about the publishing context of the *Eneydes*, but also raises questions over the extent of Janot’s involvement and the roles of Hélienne and Janot respectively in the creation of the book.

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<sup>1</sup> Genette 1997: 197.



#### 4.1.1 Hélienne's Printer: Denys Janot

Denys Janot, Hélienne's publisher, warrants an examination in his own right. Little is known about Janot, since documentary evidence concerning his life is sparse,<sup>2</sup> but a certain amount has been gleaned from the evidence left by his books, which were catalogued in an extremely thorough bibliographical study by Stephen Rawles in the 1970s. Rawles characterises Janot not just as a representative of the print trade, but "an artist whose medium happened to be print".<sup>3</sup>

Janot's career was short, spanning the fifteen years between 1529 and his death in 1544.<sup>4</sup> He began his career as a bookseller in Paris, selling books from a stall "au premier pillier de la grande sale du palais" and did not begin printing on his own until 1534.<sup>5</sup> Before this time, there is some suggestion that Janot may have been working jointly with the Parisian printer Alain Lotrian.<sup>6</sup> Then, in 1534, Janot took up residence on his own at the "rue neufve nostre Dame" and began his independent career as a printer.

From this early stage in his career, Janot was innovative in his publications. In 1534 he acquired a Roman type previously used by Geoffroy Tory and from this point on the vast majority of his works – including Hélienne's *Eneydes* – were in the Roman or Italic, rather than the more common Gothic type. Janot's extensive use of woodcuts also became groundbreaking in French publishing. Between 1534 and 1535 only six of Janot's publications included illustrations and only one original woodcut was produced for him. In 1536, however, Janot acquired forty original new woodcuts and thus began a period of heavy illustration that marked Janot's distinctive style and made him one of the most "modern" and "innovative" printers of his day.<sup>7</sup> Hélienne's text is full of these woodcut illustrations so typical of Janot's work, and features 41 woodcuts over its 204 pages. Aside from some stock images, such as Janot's *colophon* (printer's mark) depicting a pot of thistles, the majority of the woodcuts depict scenes from the *Aeneid* and, given that the *Eneydes* is the only Virgilian work published by Janot, it is reasonable to assume that the woodcuts were procured specifically for this work. These woodcuts are an

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<sup>2</sup> Rawles 1976: 13a.

<sup>3</sup> Rawles 1976: 13a.

<sup>4</sup> Rawles 1976: 1.

<sup>5</sup> Rawles 1976: 16.

<sup>6</sup> Rawles 1976: 18. Rawles notes that, in one edition of Lotrian's books, both men are described on equal terms as "imprimeur" rather than "imprimeur" and "libraire".

<sup>7</sup> Rawles 1976: 27.

important site of engagement between the reader and the text and play a key role in the interpretative process. We will, therefore, return to them in section 4.3.4, where I suggest that they appeal to both the learned humanist and wider reading community at the same time, but their haphazard placement points to a lack of authorial control or even collaboration that threatens to undermine Héli-senne's attempts to bridge the gap between these two literary worlds.

Janot's publications were almost exclusively small volumes, both portable and inexpensive to purchase. They were thus likely to have appealed to a popular audience – a literate but not necessarily scholarly audience – that Susan Broomhall describes as “a clientele who wanted romances, poetry and theatre”.<sup>8</sup> Héli-senne's decision to translate Books One to Four – with its thematic focus on the tragic love story of Dido and Aeneas – clearly fits the bill in this respect and may, at least in part, be an attempt to appeal to Janot's usual clientele.

The dates of publication for Héli-senne's works also pose an interesting proposition about the assumed audience of Janot's books. All of Héli-senne's first editions were published by Janot and appeared in almost annual succession: the *Angoysses* in 1538 and the *Epistres* in 1539, followed after a brief pause by the *Songe* in 1541 and the *Eneydes* in 1542. Susan Broomhall, in her study of the book trade in sixteenth-century France, proposes that the staged publishing of Héli-senne's works in this way implies that sales were targeted at a broad reading community of readers-for-pleasure, rather than the smaller intellectual market of the learned humanist community, arguing that “it is unlikely that this represents an annual literary output by Crenne; rather, it seems to be a deliberate policy of Janot.”<sup>9</sup> The idea, therefore, is that Janot serialised the books in an attempt to whet the appetite of those readers who had read Héli-senne's previous work(s) and were keen to read more of this author.

It is clear from the prefatory material of Héli-senne's *Epistres* that – in this case at least – there was a delay between the writing of the work and its publication, supporting Broomhall's assertion that Héli-senne's works were not simply published as they were written, but by some other schedule decided by Janot. For, in the privilege to the *Epistres*, Janot also requests permission to publish Héli-senne's *Songe*: “Ledict suppliant ait recouvert deux petites copies composées

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<sup>8</sup> Broomhall 2002: 114.

<sup>9</sup> Broomhall 2002: 102.

par ma dame Hélisenne qui a composé les Angoisses D'Amours", "The said petitioner has collected two little copies composed by my lady Hélisenne, who [also] composed the *Angoisses D'Amours*" (*Epistres* 59).

Permission for both works was granted on 18 October 1539,<sup>10</sup> but the *Songe* did not appear in print until two years later. It is quite possible then that Hélisenne's work was serialised by Janot in this way to appeal to a loyal audience of readers of vernacular literature, always keen to read her latest literary offering. Diane Wood imagines the volumes on sale alongside one another in Janot's shop in the rue de Neuve Nostre Dame and on his stall in the Galerie des Marchands of the Palais de Justice, Deuxième Pilier in much the same way that modern bookshops group works according to their author.<sup>11</sup> We have seen that, although one of the most innovative printers of his day in his experimental use of typefaces and woodcuts, Janot's output was undoubtedly commercial, with small volumes aimed at a broad book-buying public. Hélisenne's work appears to have been printed in stages – roughly annually – which might suggest that it is aimed at Janot's regular clientele.

#### 4.1.2 The folio format

In a departure from his regular choice of format, Denys Janot printed Hélisenne's *Eneydes* as a large folio, which problematises any easy assumption that the book is aimed at readers of vernacular literature rather than the humanist community. Susan Broomhall notes that the choice of the size of a book was almost always down to the publisher or printer, and that this decision was of utmost importance since the format had the potential to direct a publication towards a certain type of audience.<sup>12</sup> Popular literature in the vernacular was almost exclusively printed in the smaller octavo, duodecimo or sexto-decimo form, for obvious reasons of portability and cost and, as already noted, the majority of works printed by Janot were in this smaller format. Scholastic or religious literature, intended to be used in libraries by scholars, was generally presented in folio form and, although some scholarly works were printed in a smaller size, it was generally reserved for those works considered too slight to publish in folio.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Wood 2000: 79.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Broomhall 2002: 110.

<sup>13</sup> Febvre and Martin 1997: 88-9.

It is somewhat surprising then that Hélienne's *Eneydes* was also printed in this larger size, particularly given that almost all female-authored works at this time were printed in one of the smaller formats.<sup>14</sup> The *Eneydes* is one of only three works published by Janot in the folio format; the other two are a translation of Giovanni Boccaccio's *Philocola* by Adrien Sevin – a novel on the loves and adventures of Floire and Blanchefleur – and Louis Meigret's translation of Polybius. And it is noteworthy that all three of the works that Janot should choose to print are translations into French. This not only stresses the importance of translation and the growing prestige of the vernacular in this period, but also reflects Denys Janot's appointment by François as the King's official printer of French language texts in 1543. The folio format sends the clear message that these works are of lasting value; that, like works of classical literature, they should be studied and preserved for posterity. This suggestion that the *Eneydes* and others like it are artefacts of scholarly merit and cultural value therefore moves us away from the idea of the broad audience of readers of vernacular literature we have supposed thus far.

There appears to be a tension, then, between the size of the book and the expectations the reader might have had of a female-authored work, published by a printer of popular literature such as Janot. We can see here the problem that faced Hélienne and Janot as they attempted to reach a broad audience and bridge the gap between the erudite scholarly literature of the humanist tradition and popular vernacular literature: it is impossible to find a format that does this. To appeal to a broad book-buying public a volume had to be small and inexpensive, but the *Eneydes* had to be a large and lavish folio to convey the prestige required to be considered worthy of a place in the intellectual institutions in which humanism thrived and which proved so influential to the way in which vernacular literature developed.

The tension between the materiality of the book and its intended audience raises a number of important questions. Who is responsible for these choices? Hélienne or Janot? How successful is this strategy? Do the tensions of the work pose problems for either market? As we move on to consider the rest of the prefatory material, further light can be shed on these questions. In particular, I will

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<sup>14</sup> On common trends in the production of female-authored works, see Broomhall 2002: especially 110-11.

suggest that aspects of the title page, privilege and *epistre dédicatoire* all reinforce the idea that both Janot and Hélisenne were attempting to reach as broad an audience as possible and bring the worlds of popular vernacular literature and humanism together, claiming a place for the *Eneydes* in both of those traditions.

#### 4.1.3 The title page

The importance of the title page almost goes without saying, as it is the first contact the reader has with the text. Although ignored by those who have previously studied the *Eneydes*, the title page immediately raises a number of critical issues that relate to the text, including the identity of the author, the nature of the translation, and what the reader can expect from it.

The history of title pages in general emphasises the particular need to place the *Eneydes* within the context of a developing and experimental print culture. Genette sees the title page as an ancestor of the modern publisher's epitext; that is, promotional material such as posters, press releases and so on.<sup>15</sup> The earliest title page documented in France dates from 1486 and its initial purpose was to protect the text from being soiled, since printed copies of texts were originally sold unbound. But, while these early title pages gave only a brief title printed on the top of an undecorated page,<sup>16</sup> by the first quarter of the sixteenth century printers were becoming aware of the page's greater potential,<sup>17</sup> evidently recognising it as the first contact the reader or potential buyer has with a book and, therefore, its essential role in establishing a relationship with them. Increasingly, then, the title page became a place of experimentation. As a result of this development, Stephen Rawles claims, the title page of almost any sixteenth-century book provides the most important evidence about it.<sup>18</sup>

If the function of the title page is thus to engage the reader (and to sell them the book), what does the title-page of Hélisenne's *Eneydes* promise? It reads as follows:

“Les quatre premiers livres des Eneydes du tresselegant poete Virgile, Traduictz de Latin en prose Francoyse, par ma dame Hélisenne, a la traduction desquelz y a pluralite de propos, qui par maniere de phrase y

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<sup>15</sup> Genette 1987: 62-3. Genette makes a further distinction here, dividing paratext into peritext (the information surrounding the text) and epitext (the information outside of the book).

<sup>16</sup> Chang 2001: 391.

<sup>17</sup> Febvre and Martin 1997: 83-7.

<sup>18</sup> Rawles 1976: 8.

sont adioustez: ce que beaucoup sert à l'elucidation & decoration desdictz Livres, digerez à tresillustre & tresauguste Prince François premier de ce nom invictissime Roy de France. De Crenne. Avec Privilege. On les vend à Paris, en la Rue neufve nostre Dame à l'enseigne saint Jehan Baptiste, pres sainte Geneviefve des Ardens, par Denys Janot”.

“The first four books of the *Aeneid* of the very elegant poet Virgil, translated from Latin into French prose by my lady Hélienne, to the translation of which many remarks are added, in the manner of *phrases*, which serve greatly the elucidation and decoration of the said books, dedicated to the very famous and very noble Prince François, first of this name, unconquerable king of France. De Crenne. With privilege. They are sold in Paris, in the Rue neufve nostre Dame, under the sign of Saint John the Baptist, near Saint Genevieve of Ardens”.

(*praef. i*)

The title page raises a number of critical issues that I will continue to discuss in more detail. The first of these is the identity of the author, which I suggest is problematised here by the separation of Hélienne and De Crenne. The second issue is the supplementation of the translation with additional material – the *phrases* – which raises questions of what translation means to Hélienne, how this relates to contemporary thought on translation, who the translation is aimed at and what purpose these *phrases* might serve. The third issue relates back to the discussion on Janot and the publishing context above by considering the implications of Janot’s appearance on the title page. What message does Janot’s name send out to the reader? Does it direct the work to a particular audience? Finally, I shall explore the issue of the dedication to François and the issues this, too, might raise.

The title page introduces the author of the work as “dame Hélienne”, which immediately raises the question of the author’s identity. It is essential to note that here on the title page Hélienne and De Crenne are separated; they are presented as two distinct units. Nowhere does the name Hélienne de Crenne appear. This complicates our thinking about Hélienne’s choice of pseudonym and the way in which she creates and presents her literary persona. Are the two names meant to be taken together as one distinct entity that has been disjoined? Or are there two different literary personas at play here in the *Eneydes*? If so, how are they different and what distinct function do they perform? If the title page is instrumental in shaping the reader’s perception of the text, what message does the separation of Hélienne and De Crenne send them?

Leah Chang, exploring the use of the same strategy on the title page of the *Angoysses*, rightly suggests that the title page becomes the site of a guessing game for the reader.<sup>19</sup> If we assume that De Crenne is patronymic, and refers to the estate of the author's husband, and that the pseudonym Hélienne is entirely fictional, is it possible that De Crenne represents the actual author here and "dame Hélienne" the persona she adopts? What is clear is that, in identifying so markedly the gender of the translator, "dame Hélienne", the title page immediately indicates that this is a significant and exceptional aspect of the translation that should set it aside from other translations and draw the reader in.

In addition to the author, the reader is told on the title page what to expect from the translation, namely additions to the translation in the form of *phrases*. These phrases appear at the end of each chapter, before the start of the next chapter. Occasionally they are recapitulative, but for the most part they are anticipatory summaries of what follows in the next chapter. From the very beginning then, the reader is given the impression that the translation will provide more than a rendering of Virgil's text. We are told that the phrases are included for elucidation and decoration. Reading this programmatically, the suggestion is that the reader can expect to find the translation improved in terms of both comprehension and aesthetics. Hélienne thus immediately indicates to her reader that her translation is not mechanical or slavish and simply imitating Virgil's *Aeneid*, but that it is creative and brings something new to Virgil's *Aeneid*. The title page is already giving an indication of what the process of translation means to Hélienne, what it should include and how it should relate to the original.

This raises a further critical issue, central to our understanding of how Hélienne relates to her contemporaries, namely how her view of translation engages or differs from the way in which translation is generally perceived in the sixteenth century. Here it is useful to return to Etienne Dolet's *La Maniere de bien traduire*, since, in the course of his treatise, Dolet comments explicitly on the introduction of extraneous material to a text by a translator.

Dolet's first precept, as noted above, is that the translator must understand the meaning of the text he is translating in order to render it accurately:

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<sup>19</sup> Chang 2001: 6.

“[...] il est besoing et necessaire à tout traducteur d’entendre parfaitement le sense de l’auteur, qu’il tourne d’une langue en autre. Et sans cela, il ne peut traduire seurement et fidelement”.

“It is essential and necessary for every translator to understand perfectly the meaning of the author that he is rendering from one language into another. Without that, he cannot translate accurately and faithfully.”<sup>20</sup>

Dolet’s stress on the need to produce a version faithful to the source text seems initially to suggest that his perception of what translation should involve is quite different from Hélienne’s. After all, how can her additions to the text fit into this model of fidelity? However, Dolet does allow room for the translator to act as interpreter in the text, particularly if there are any obscurities, insisting that “il le pourra rendre facile et du tout intelligible”, “he can make it easy and wholly intelligible”.<sup>21</sup> Hélienne’s treatment of the text does not seem so far removed from Dolet’s concept of the good translation, since the title page tells us that the *phrases* are, at least in part, intended for elucidation.

At the same time, the idea that the *phrases* are also intended for decoration seems to move us further away from Dolet’s ideal that licence should only be employed when necessary for clarification of sense. It is clear that what is being promised to the reader on the title page of the *Eneydes* is a translation that fits in some respects with contemporary thinking about what makes a good translation, whilst at the same time promising something new in terms of the addition of the *phrases*, and marking Hélienne as a creative translator.

The title page also introduces Denys Janot as the printer of the book. And the appearance of Janot’s name may immediately point the *Eneydes* towards an audience of readers of vernacular literature rather than a learned humanist audience, given that, as already discussed, this is Janot’s usual customer base. Furthermore, the commerciality of the work is laid out quite clearly on the title page, with Janot using it as an opportunity for self-promotion, as the reader is informed where they can buy his books.

By this point, Janot was at the height of his career in terms of the groundbreaking visual style of his books, through the use of woodcuts and Roman,

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<sup>20</sup> Dolet 1540: 13.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*



rather than Gothic, characters.<sup>22</sup> This style, according to Stephen Rawles, gained Janot a place among the printers of the “most modern outlook” of his time.<sup>23</sup> The appearance of Janot’s name on the title page would thus suggest that inside the book the reader would find the same distinctive and innovative use of illustration and typography for which Janot had become renowned. Here again, then, there appear to be several stakes at play. The title page presents us with a translation of Virgil’s *Aeneid* – a subject of interest to humanist scholars, particularly those wishing to compare it with their own translations, but also useful to the reader of vernacular literature unable to read the text in the original. Moreover, it identifies the work with an essentially popular printer, but one who is remarkable for the innovative way in which he presents his books.

The final noteworthy aspect of the title page is that it introduces the dedication of the translation to François. Given the perception of François as one of the founding fathers of humanism, and the subject matter introduced, the title page thus places the book within the humanist tradition and marks it as a contribution to the programme of preservation and dissemination of classical literature encouraged by François. It also marks the *Eneydes* as something considerably different to Hélienne’s other works, which all have other addressees. The *Angoysses* and *Songe* are both addressed “to all ladies”, while the *Epistres* is dedicated to Marguerite de Navarre.

But the dedication also raises the important question of who the translation is actually written for: Is it written for the King and simply put on sale to a wider audience? How do the two audiences relate? Are they in competition? Does the implicit audience take precedence over the explicit dedicatee in the text itself? Does the explicit dedication to François politicise the text in some way? Is the translation produced for the glory of France? These are all questions that will be answered more clearly when we turn to the *Epistre dédicatoire* and the text itself, and see that Hélienne creates different layers of meaning that provide distinct interpretative possibilities for the implicit audience (that combines humanists and readers of vernacular literature) and the addressee.

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<sup>22</sup> Rawles 1976: 31. Rawles notes that the period from 1540 onwards marks the most creative period of Janot’s career, since his economic stability gave him the opportunity to take the risk of publishing increasingly innovative books.

<sup>23</sup> Rawles 1976: 27.

#### 4.1.4 The privilege

Before moving on to Hélienne's *epistre dédicatoire*, I will spend some time discussing the request for a privilege, which immediately follows the title page. Overlooked by most critics,<sup>24</sup> I will suggest that the privilege should be central to our understanding of how we read the *Eneydes* and that it once again demonstrates the importance of paratexts and the need to consider all aspects of the *mise en livre*. The privilege was an official document granting a legitimate monopoly over a text – more specifically over its production and distribution – to a writer, bookseller or publisher. Privileges were issued by the royal chancery, the Parliament of Paris, or the Prévot de Paris, as in this request addressed to “Monsieur le Prevost de Paris, ou son lieutenant Civil” (*praef.* ii). Privileges protected a text for a limited period of time – usually three or five years, but occasionally up to ten – and promised prosecution of those who violated the terms of the privilege. Punishment might include confiscation of the illegal material, fines, and possibly legal costs arising if a case was brought to trial.<sup>25</sup> I will argue that the request for a privilege here emphasises the necessity of factoring in the role of Janot in Hélienne's *Eneydes* – which adds to the translation's complexity – and the role of the publisher more generally in the works of the early modern period.

The request for a privilege again underscores the commerciality of the text. It is not, however, as straightforward as giving a warning to other publishers against the illegal copying of the text. On another level it sends out a subtle message to the reader about the quality of the text. Janot clearly saw the potential for profit in the *Eneydes*, since he went to the expense of securing its protection, and it is important to note that not all of Janot's works were protected by such privileges. Rawles notes that, in the early stages of Janot's career, in 1534, only four of the thirteen books he published were protected by privileges, presumably because of the expense incurred to obtain them.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, privileges were not automatically granted to anyone with the money to pay. The onus was on the applicant to prove that their claim to ownership was justified and deserved; works had to be either new and never-before-printed, or significantly altered in some way. The privilege for Hélienne's *Eneydes* thus also assured the reader that they

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<sup>24</sup> Including Wood 2000, Scollen-Jimack 1982 and Worth 1984.

<sup>25</sup> For a full and detailed discussion of the workings of the privilege system in Renaissance France, see Armstrong 1990.

<sup>26</sup> Rawles 1976: 28.

were purchasing a work that was in some way different to other translations of the *Aeneid* of the same period and that was deemed worthy of protection.

Another important issue raised by the request for a privilege, which has implications for the way in which the whole work is read, is who has control over the text – the author or the publisher. In the 1960s, Roland Barthes, with *The Death of the Author*, initiated a challenge to previous assumptions about the role of the author in the formation of texts, exposing the notion of the author as the focus of creative influence as a relatively recent construct.<sup>27</sup> Barthes insisted instead that we should question the relationship between origination and ownership and the model of the text in which “the author is supposed to feed the book” and has the same relation with it that “a father sustains with a child”.<sup>28</sup> Roger Chartier sums up the problem being posed by Barthes when he reminds us that “authors don’t write books, they write texts”.<sup>29</sup>

Nowhere is this question of ownership more relevant than in the study of sixteenth-century texts, since the sixteenth century marks so unique a moment in publication culture, straddling scribal and print forms. As manuscript culture receded, the revolution brought about by evolving print culture and the subsequent wider dissemination of texts gave rise to a considerable degree of uncertainty with regard to intellectual ownership.<sup>30</sup> The situation was complicated by the lack of tight regulation concerning the granting of privileges: initially so many had been granted under such general terms that the situation was unmanageable.<sup>31</sup> It is important to note that authors, booksellers or publishers could all apply for the privilege for a given text. In this sense, the privilege cannot be seen as an early form of copyright, since it did not necessarily protect the author’s interests or guarantee the artistic integrity of the work.<sup>32</sup>

In the case of the *Eneydes*, the request for the privilege was made in Janot’s name, which might initially seem to suggest that Janot very much possessed textual control over *Hélisenne* and had the final say with regard to decisions made

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<sup>27</sup> Barthes 1967.

<sup>28</sup> Barthes 1967: 3.

<sup>29</sup> Chartier 2003: 47.

<sup>30</sup> For an overview of the development of this crisis of authority see Cynthia Brown, *Poets, Patrons and Printers: Crisis of Authority in Late Medieval France*, 1995.

<sup>31</sup> Rose 1993: 10. Rose notes that, in Venice, a decision was eventually made to revoke all existing privileges and start again with tighter regulations.

<sup>32</sup> There were a number of authors who did ensure the integrity of their works by securing privileges under their own name, but this was uncommon. See Rose 1993: 10 and Rawles 1976: 25.

concerning the text. As already noted, Janot was something of a technical innovator within the print trade, an artist working with the print form.<sup>33</sup> It seems, then, that we must exercise particular caution when discussing the material aspects of Hélienne's translation and bear in mind that the choices made may sometimes be those of the printer, rather than the author. This is a point of broader significance, since it applies to all early modern printed texts and indicates that we need to recognise that the texts of classical authors, as they have come down to us in printed form, have been shaped as much by their printers as by their translators.

Despite the fact that the privilege was requested in Janot's name, there is reason to believe that Hélienne was involved in the editing of her own texts. For example, a 1543 edition of her collected works was headed by the title:

*Les Œuvres de ma dame Hélienne qu'elle a puis nagueres recogneues et mises en leur entier le tout mieulx que par cy devant redigées au vray & imprimées nouvellement par le commandement de ladicte Dame.*

*The Works of my lady Hélienne that she recognised some time ago and put in their entirety, compiled accurately, better than before and newly printed at the request of said Lady.*

There is the suggestion here that Hélienne was an active participant in the publishing process and, moreover, the "commandement" seems to imply that Hélienne held a reasonable amount of sway with her publisher. In 1560, her *Œuvres* were reprinted by Etienne Groulleau and, even with this new printer, Hélienne still appears to be the driving force behind the revisions of her works, as they are advertised as "reveue et corrigé de nouveau par elle", "newly reviewed and corrected by her" (*Œuvres*, 1560, title page).<sup>34</sup>

It seems difficult, then, to determine exactly how much input Hélienne had in the publishing process and how much control Janot might have exerted over Hélienne's text. The request for a privilege in Janot's name clearly problematises the question of ownership of the text and adds an essential caveat to any suggestion of authorial intention in matters of presentation. We can reasonably assume that printer's influence did not spill over into the text itself, since it seems from Rawles' study that Janot's interests as a printer rested largely in the material

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<sup>33</sup> Rawles 1976: 13a.

<sup>34</sup> Despite Hélienne's apparent involvement here, Broomhall rightly adds a note of caution that such statements simply be marketing ploys designed to attract new sales of old texts. See Broomhall 2002: 104.

presentation of the work. Nevertheless, it remains important throughout to bear in mind the question the privilege raises and to at least consider whether the decisions that are made in the work can be attributed to Héli-senne or Janot.

## 4.2 Problematising the preface

This section discusses the *epistre dédicatoire*, which has previously been read as mere flattery of François, suggesting that Héli-senne took it as an opportunity to stake a place for herself as a serious participant in the humanist tradition who had a valid contribution to make to it. The specific contribution she offers here is to challenge Homer, and more implicitly Virgil, for their representations of the Trojan war. I will argue that this paves the way for a more thorough challenge of authoritative voices throughout the *Eneydes*. The *epistre dédicatoire* signals a digression in Book Two of the translation on the death of Hector that can, I will argue, also be read programmatically. Analysing this digression, I will demonstrate how é sets up a framework of veracity that is not as stable as it might appear and thereby initiates a much broader dismantling of authority and the notion of objective truth.

### 4.2.1 The *epistre dédicatoire*

An important guide to how we should read Héli-senne's translation is provided by the *epistre dédicatoire* to François I, which prefaces the translation. It is headed "A l'altissime Maïeste DU TRESILLUSTRE, TRESCHRESTIEN, ET TRESSACRE ROY DES FRANCOIS PREMIER DE CE NOM", "To the highest majesty of the most illustrious, most Christian and most sacred king of the *Francois*, the first of this name" (*praef. iii*),<sup>35</sup> and has traditionally been read by scholars in a reductive way, as an encomium to the king, perhaps in anticipation of patronage.<sup>36</sup> I will suggest, however, that such an approach fails to recognise the programmatic nature of the *epistre dédicatoire* and some of the critical issues that emerge from it, which are central to our understanding of the translation as a whole.

I will argue that Héli-senne's attitude to classical texts in general – and Virgil in particular – as texts that need to be rediscovered, aligns her firmly with the humanist movement of her day and François' patronage of it. And her position

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<sup>35</sup> I retain the upper case typography of the original to give an impression of the emphasis it places upon François' name and qualities.

<sup>36</sup> See Demats 1968: x; Scollen-Jimack 1982: 197 and Wood 2000: 136.

within this movement is strengthened by her use of the space in the preface to display her erudition and her knowledge of traditions in which Virgil might be situated. I will then explore how and why Hélienne chooses to focus her attention in the *épître dédicatoire* on the Trojan War and the death of Hector, suggesting that she is calling upon the long literary tradition of debate about the truth of the Trojan War and, by challenging Homer's account of it, styling herself as an active participant in this debate. Hector is central to how Hélienne tries to achieve this and does not serve simply to flatter François – who is supposedly a descendent of Hector's – as has been suggested.<sup>37</sup> In fact, I will argue that Hélienne's treatment of Hector might be seen, on a different level, as a contradiction of the King's own self-fashioning as an Aeneas figure, thus demonstrating that Hélienne is in an independent, autonomous author, keen to interrogate modes of representation. Finally, I will consider what Hélienne's focus on the truth of the Trojan War says about Virgil and the *Aeneid*, arguing that Hélienne implicitly criticises Virgil for his own position within this literary tradition and thereby sets up a challenge to his authority from the very beginning of the work.

At the beginning of the dedication, Hélienne, addressing the king directly, laments the inclinations of modern literature and the fact that stories from the past, from the ancient world, are increasingly being laid aside in favour of more recent tales:

“Combien que les oeuvres anticques, Roy treschrestien & prince tresmagnanime, soient assiduellement latitées & couvertes d'autres choses plus recentes: Toutesfois aucunes hystoires du temps preterit, ont esté de si supreme & altissime louenge, que plus meritent estre colloquées en sempiternelle memoire, que les modernes qui ne sont à preferer aux anticques”.

“Although ancient works, most Christian King and most magnanimous Prince, are continually hidden and covered by other more recent things, nevertheless, some stories from the past were of such supreme and high merit that they deserve to be gathered in eternal memory more than the modern ones, which are not to be preferred to the ancient.”

(*praef.* iii)

Hélienne's appreciation of classical literature, and her belief that it should be recorded in the collective cultural memory, suggest the same kind of zeal for the dissemination of Classics that François himself demonstrated, with his desire to

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<sup>37</sup> Demats 1968: x.

make texts more accessible. We can therefore see that, in her attitude towards the Classics, Hélienne is clearly aligning herself with the humanist movement and François' patronage of it.

Moreover, Hélienne reveals here a preoccupation with the idea of a quest for the rediscovery of the past, when she tells François that ancient works are "latitées", "hidden" and "couvertes", "covered" by more recent things (*praef.* iii). Her choice of vocabulary is very significant here. Hélienne's description of classical literature in terms of concealment or obscurity implies that she believes her project as a translator to primarily entail bringing ancient works into light, because they deserve to be recorded in eternal memory. The suggestion that classical works are "hidden" and "covered" may also hint at the historical-mindedness of Renaissance humanism that sought not just to rediscover classical texts, but to reinterpret them with a sensitivity to their original meaning.<sup>38</sup> We can, therefore, take this first sentence of the dedicatory letter as a programmatic statement of Hélienne's intent to preserve and disseminate Virgil's *Aeneid* to ensure its survival and possibly to also recover its meaning.

Among those ancient works that need to be preserved, Hélienne argues, the most pre-eminent place must be given to the "treseloquent", "very eloquent" poet Virgil, on account of his "stile heroique", "heroic style", which none could surpass or even equal (*praef.* iii). It is apparent then that Hélienne's admiration for the works of ancient authors lies in their style as much as their substance. As we shall see, the significance of this point emerges later in the dedicatory letter, where Hélienne suggests some dissatisfaction with the content of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Furthermore, this focus on Virgil's style also places Hélienne in the humanist tradition that saw the imitation of classical literature as key to both creating a prestigious vernacular literature to rival that of the ancient world and developing the French language to become an effective vehicle for that literature.

Hélienne's apparent admiration for the eloquence of Virgil might also be seen as programmatic of the style that Hélienne would adopt in her own translation. Much criticism levelled at Hélienne, by both her contemporaries and by modern scholars, has centred on her highly Latinate use of language. Yet, the admiration she expresses here indicates that her use of language is an attempt to

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<sup>38</sup> On the historical perspective that characterised Renaissance humanism, see Nauert 2006: 19-21.

reproduce the eloquent Virgilian style that she so admires, a point to which we will return below.

Hélisenne supports her praise of Virgil's eloquent style and her call for him to be given the most pre-eminent place in eternal memory, by calling on Propertius:

"[...] comme testifie Properce aucteur tressuffisant, disant à tous Poetes & hystoriographes Græcz & Romains, qu'ilz discontinuent l'escripre pour donner lieu à l'eloquence Latine de Virgile, comme à leur maistre & precepteur."

"[...] as Propertius, a most satisfactory author, testifies, telling all the Greek and Roman poets and historiographers that they should stop writing to yield to the Latin eloquence of Virgil, as to their master and tutor."

(*praef.* iii-iv)

This is a reference to Book Two of Propertius' *Elegies*, in which Propertius welcomes with acclaim the epic being written by Virgil, the *Aeneid*:

*me iuuet hesternis positum languere corollis,  
quem tetigit iactu certus ad ossa deus.  
Actia Vergilium custodis litora Phoebi,  
Caesaris et fortis dicere posse ratis,  
qui nunc Aeneae Troiani suscitât arma  
iactaque Lavinis moenia litoribus.  
cedite Romani scriptores, cedite Grai!  
nescio quid maius nascitur Iliade.*

"It delights me to languish set down among yesterday's wreaths, me whom the god has struck to the bone with his blow. Virgil is able to sing of Actium's shores guarded by Apollo and the brave ships of Caesar; he who now brings to life the arms of Trojan Aeneas and the walls laid out on the shores of Lavinium. Give way you Roman writers! Give way you Greeks! Something greater than the *Iliad* is being born."

(Prop. 2.34.59-66)

This passage is from poem 2.34, the epilogue to Book Two. Addressed to Propertius' friend Lynceus, a fellow poet, this is one of Propertius' longest elegies and also his most complex.<sup>39</sup> The poem begins by sketching the friendship between Propertius and Lynceus, with Propertius issuing a friendly warning to Lynceus to stay away from his love Cynthia, following his attempt to seduce her.<sup>40</sup> Propertius

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<sup>39</sup> I assume here the unity of 2.34 as a single poem, despite some suggestions to the contrary. For a full discussion see Stahl 1985: Chapter 7, who all convincingly argue for the single-poem reading.

<sup>40</sup> Prop. 2.34.1-24.



is tolerant of Lynceus' offence towards him, excusing it partly due to wine, but also because Lynceus has become a convert to his own erotic way of life and poetry, celebrating his move away from epic.<sup>41</sup>

At line 59, Propertius introduces Virgil in a passage celebrating his forthcoming *Aeneid*. Lines 63-4 clearly suggest that Propertius had a familiarity with the main theme of the *Aeneid*, although it was not yet finished, and the phrasing *Aeneae Troiani...arma* (63) and *Lavinis litoribus* (64) may even, as Hans-Peter Stahl suggests, indicate some knowledge of Virgil's proem.<sup>42</sup> Despite Propertius' apparent pleasure that his friend Lynceus is moving away from the epic genre, however, this passage is largely understood by scholars to be a genuine tribute to Virgil, in a spirit of due deference.<sup>43</sup>

Hélisenne's use of such a classical authority, rather than a more contemporary one, to uphold her assertions about the eloquence of Virgil, is significant. It suggests that, for Hélisenne, classical authors are the supreme authorities on issues of style and will lend more weight to her argument that, of all the classical authors who deserve a place in eternal memory, Virgil should be the foremost. Her argument is thus not left unfounded, but is supported by the testimony of a contemporary of Virgil who, even at that time, recognised and paid homage to the brilliance of his *Aeneid*. It is not only through the esteem in which classical authors are held by humanist scholars that the reference to Propertius lends authority to Hélisenne's statement, but through the fact that admiration for Virgil, and his *Aeneid* in particular, is so long held an opinion, dating back to the very time of its creation.

Furthermore, this reference to Propertius allows Hélisenne to demonstrate to her reader that she has knowledge of classical literature that reaches beyond Virgil, or at least has done her research in this area. This is particularly significant since it shows Hélisenne, at the earliest opportunity, proving her erudition to the reader and styling herself as a wide reader of the Classics. The preface clearly functions as an important space for carrying out this function, since the translation,

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<sup>41</sup> Prop. 2.34-25-58.

<sup>42</sup> Stahl 1985: 180.

<sup>43</sup> See for example Cairns 2006: 313 where Cairns insists that Propertius' account of the *Aeneid* is "accurate for its time, straightforward and highly laudatory".

by its very nature, allows less room for references to other works and other authors.<sup>44</sup>

More importantly, however, far from being an empty reference to Propertius simply for the sake of demonstrating her knowledge, this reference contains an important allusion that is central to our understanding of the *épître dédicatoire* and the translation more generally. When Hélienne recalls Propertius' instruction to Greek and Roman writers to make way for Virgil, she also implicitly recalls line 66, in which Propertius claims that Virgil's *Aeneid* is greater than Homer's *Iliad*, thus introducing the premise that Virgil is in competition with Homer. Virgil himself invited this kind of comparison, imitating the first seven lines of the *Iliad* in the first seven lines of his *Aeneid* and thereby styling himself as a new Homer. Thus the concept that the *Aeneid* is being hailed as something greater than the *Iliad* even before it has been completed indicates just how serious a challenge to Homer Virgil's epic represents.

By implicitly recalling Propertius' claims that Virgil's *Aeneid* is greater than Homer's *Iliad*, Hélienne introduces the notion of a challenge to the authority of Homer; a theme which, as will become apparent, plays a significant role in the dedicatory letter and subsequently the translation itself as Hélienne sets about trying to uncover the true story of the Trojan War. This challenge to Homer, I suggest, also sets up a way of reading the *Eneydes* as a challenge to literary authority more generally.

The tradition of challenging Homer, particularly with regard to his story of the Trojan War, extends far beyond Propertius and is, in fact, a longstanding subject of literary debate. Dio Chrysostom, for example, a Greek writer of the Second Sophistic, wrote a discourse maintaining that Troy was not captured.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, the late 2<sup>nd</sup> to early 3<sup>rd</sup> century author Philostratus criticised Homer's version of the events in his *Heroicus* – which tells of a vinedresser relating the conversations he has had with the ghost of Protesilaus (the first Greek killed at Troy) to a Phoenician traveller.

To challenge Homer's account of the Trojan War, these Homeric revisionist texts often took their lead from looking back to the pre-Homeric epic cycle – a collection of poems that provides our earliest literary evidence for the tradition

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<sup>44</sup> Hélienne does, on occasion, insert references to other sources in the translation itself, as we will see below and in the marginal glosses.

<sup>45</sup> Dio Chrys. *Or.* XI. Dio Chrysostom was writing in the late 1st to early 2nd century AD.

and includes the *Cypria*, the *Aethiopsis*, the *Little Iliad*, the *Iliou Persis*, the *Nosti* and the *Telegony*.<sup>46</sup> These poems are all lost, but are recorded through summaries and testimonies from the Ancient World and date back to the Archaic Age, when the tradition of the Trojan War was still a living one.<sup>47</sup> We can see then that Hélienne is engaging in a long tradition of literary debate and that, even from its earliest time, the story of the Trojan War was played out in competing versions. Furthermore, we can see from Propertius that the role of the *Aeneid* in relation to this tradition is a subject that was discussed from the very moment it was written and became public.

It is upon this part of the *Aeneid* – the Trojan War – that Hélienne chooses to focus in the *épître dédicatoire*, writing of Virgil's works:

“[...] la plus extollé est celle qui est intitulée, Les Eneydes, en laquelle sont narrées (en maniere d'un lamentable tragedie) les ruynes du tresfameux Ylion, ensemble les calamitez & misereres des tresillustres Troyens [...]

“[...] the most extolled is that which is entitled the *Aeneid* in which is recounted (in the manner of a lamentable tragedy) the ruins of most famous Troy and all the calamities and miseries of the most illustrious Trojans.”  
(*praef.* iv)

Hélienne thus initially represents the entire *Aeneid* as if it is the story of the fall of Troy, her emphasis on the tragedy of the Trojan War programmatic of the way in which she will present the translation. Her reading of the *Aeneid* might thus appear – to borrow the language of the Harvard School considered in Chapter One as an example of the situatedness of scholarly criticism – a ‘pessimistic reading’. As noted there, up until the 1960s and 70s the dominant reading of the *Aeneid* was as a celebration of the renewed power of Rome under the rule of Augustus. But new readings began to emerge in the 1960s, led by Adam Parry, which gained increasing acceptance in the United States and were commonly classed as the ‘Harvard School’ or ‘Pessimist School’. Parry argued that, alongside the glorification of Rome in the *Aeneid* and the sense of triumph, what is prevalent in some of the finest passages is a profound sense of loss<sup>48</sup> and the terrible price one must pay for the glory of Roman achievement.<sup>49</sup> And Hélienne certainly makes it

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<sup>46</sup> On the epic cycle and its influence on later versions of the story of the Trojan War, see Burgess 2001: 7-46.

<sup>47</sup> Burgess 2001: 7.

<sup>48</sup> Parry 1963: 111.

<sup>49</sup> Parry 1963: 120.

clear from the *epistre dédicatoire's* focus on the fall of Troy that her translation will place greater emphasis on loss and regret than on celebrating Rome's glory.

Despite the fact that the *Eneydes* is a translation of books One to Four of *Aeneid*, Hélienne makes no mention here of Aeneas, his flight from Troy or his eventual destiny as the founder of Rome. Similarly, there is no mention of the story of Dido and Aeneas. In fact, even when Hélienne does provide some hint that this is the story of Rome's foundation, there is still no mention of Aeneas' role; it is the nameless "tresillustres Troyens", "famous Trojans" who are credited with the building of famous cities, including the magnificent city of Rome (*praef. iv*). The fact that the fall of Troy supplants the story of the foundation of Rome in the *epistre dédicatoire* raises the important question of where Virgil's *Aeneid* fits into the Trojan War tradition.

It is at this point that Hélienne turns her attention to François, telling him how she decided to translate the first four books of Virgil's *Aeneid* with the intention of dedicating them to him (*praef. iv*). And at this point Hélienne's dedication to François does seem explicitly concerned with flattery, as she sets about a modest display of deference to the king:

"Mais depuis ceste chose premeditée, ay esté agitée d'une timidité extreme, qui me vouloit prohiber de donner principe à tant ardue enterprise, me remonstant que l'exiguité, debilité & ineptitude de mon stile, n'estoit apte à presenter à vostre sublime & exaltée excellence".

"But since I intended to do this thing, I have been troubled by an extreme apprehension, which wanted to stop me from beginning so arduous a task, reminding me that the meagreness, debility and ineptitude of my style was not worthy to present to your sublime and exalted excellence."

(*praef. iv*)

The anxiety experienced by Hélienne in light of the King's excellence is followed by a list of the qualities with which she believes him to be endowed: "cognoissnace hystoriable, viuacité de sens, souveraine eloquence, magnanimité de coeur, vie politique, & coustumes genereuses", "Historical knowledge, liveliness of mind, sovereign eloquence, magnanimity of heart, political life and generous customs" (*praef. iv*). Again, the address to François here seems purely encomiastic and is typical of what one might expect of a royal dedication.

This encomiastic reading is further strengthened when Hélienne draws the King's attention to the fact that she has inserted the lamentable death of Hector into the second book:

“La sublimité de vostre splendide esperit, pourra cognoistre aulcune choses seruans au propos y estre par moy adioustées, & par especial au Second liure: auquel est fait mention de la deplorable fin du tresprestant & magnanime Hector, de l'illustrité duquel vostre preclaire progeniture & tresanticque generosité a prins origine”.

“The sublimity of your splendid mind will be able to recognise some things that are added to the words here by me, and especially in the second book, where the deplorable death of most imposing and outstanding Hector is mentioned, from whose illustriousness your shining lineage and most ancient valour takes its origin”.

(*praef. v*)

Hélienne draws here on a long tradition of European monarchies claiming their descent from Troy,<sup>50</sup> by flattering François that he is a descendent of Hector, and that this descendancy confers upon him a certain amount of glory-by-association, Hector's “illustrité”, by extension, applying to him. Furthermore, Hélienne's insistence that François will recognise her additions to the book not only flatters François as an erudite reader undoubtedly familiar with the *Aeneid*, but also explicitly points out to the reader, as on the title page, that this is a creative translation with additions and is, in effect, a piece of self-selling rhetoric.

The remaining part of the *épître dédicatoire* is taken up with a discussion of the death of Hector. As we have seen, Hector is an important figure in relation to the King, and allows Hélienne to flatter François, but he is also clearly an

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<sup>50</sup> Almost all countries in western Europe have at some point derived their national consciousness from the historical myth of Trojan descent (Potter 1995: 18) and the Franco-Trojan myth in particular has a long history. It first appears in France in the seventh century in Pseudo-Fregedaire, in which a group of Trojans, having fled from Troy, settled in Gaul and elected a man named Francus – the son of Hector – as their king, who gave his name to their new kingdom. After his death, his people elected dukes to succeed him. At this point the myth was very much about creating a sense of national pride for the people and their elected representatives. As Asher puts it, it is all about aligning themselves with a glorious past: “Such an idea, putting the French, among others, on a level with one of the greatest civilisations and empires of the past, was plainly destined to be enthusiastically received” (Asher 1969: 409). It was not until the end of the fifteenth century, however, that the myth of Franco-Trojan descent was employed to support the concept of hereditary monarchy, when Francus was presented as the founder of the dynasty of the kings of France in the *Annales et croniques* of Nicole Gilles published in 1492. This transferral of the myth of descent from the service of the common people to its ruling house was, according to Jacques Poujol, not instigated by the kings of France themselves, but by the chroniclers of the Dukes of Bourgoigne, who used Trojan legends to exalt their masters (Poujol 1957: 902).

important figure in the Trojan tradition, and, as such, allows Hélienne to outline her own position within this tradition.

Hélienne immediately outlines that her intention is to tell the true story of the death of Hector:

“[...] ay accumulé toutes les forces de mon esprit, pour manifester l’occision du predict vertueux Hector, (qui du monde estoit l’honneur, lumiere & renomée) avoir esté perpetrée par la trahyson detestable, adominable & execrable du trop superbe Achilles”.

“I gathered together all the strength of my spirit to show that the killing of the aforementioned Hector (who was the honour, light and renown of the world) was perpetrated by the detestable, abominable, and execrable treason of most arrogant Achilles.”

(*praef. v*)

By setting up this heavily emotive pro-Hector, anti-Achilles dichotomy – reinforced by the strong and emotive adjectival triplets ascribed to each one – Hélienne is able to amplify the glory that she attributes to François’ ancestor and at the same time begin her self-positioning in the literary debate over the Trojan War.

Hélienne’s need to rehabilitate the character of Hector comes, she argues, from the fact that Hector’s killer, Achilles, has been wrongly extolled by Homer in his *Iliad*. In no uncertain terms, Hélienne argues that Homer’s work is untruthful, labelling it both “fictions poetiques”, “poetic fictions”, and “artificielles & coulourées mésonges”, “false and coloured lies” (*praef. v*). Homer’s untruthfulness is, Hélienne argues, on account of his bias towards the Greek nation (*praef. v*). For Hélienne, then, the obscurity of classical literature, of which she wrote at the beginning of the *epistre dédicatoire*, not only comes from its displacement in favour of more recent literature, but the “poetic fictions” of authors such as Homer. Her quest, therefore, is not just to rediscover the past and bring it to light, but to rediscover the true past. Thus Hélienne commences the challenge to Homer alluded to in her reference to Propertius.

It is important to note here that, while Homer’s story of the Trojan War had been preserved in other texts throughout the Middle Ages, it was only in 1354 that Petrarch rediscovered a manuscript of the text itself and became the first European in almost a millennium to acquire a copy of Homer’s *Iliad*.<sup>51</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio then had his Greek tutor Leontius Pilatus translate it – albeit somewhat

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<sup>51</sup> On Petrarch’s copy of the *Iliad*, see Pertusi 1964: 73-111.

infelicitously – into Latin (though, even in translation, it did not become widely read).<sup>52</sup> This and subsequent Latin translations of the *Iliad* were often subsumed into broader collections of works intended to form the complete Trojan saga.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, it was to be some two decades after the works of Latin authors (such as Virgil, Livy, Ovid, Horace and Lucretius) emerged from the printing press that the *edition princeps* of Homer’s *Iliad* first appeared in 1488. Although we might attribute the belated printing of Homer in part to the need to create new fonts and diacritical marks, it is likely a result of the fact that the Greek-reading audience remained much smaller than the Latin-reading audience.<sup>54</sup> Significantly, no French translation of the *Iliad* was published until that of Hughes Salel in 1545. We have no evidence to suggest that Hélienne knew any Greek, so it is likely that Hélienne encountered Homer either in Latin translation, or through a vernacular text that made reference to it.

To counter Homer’s “fictions poeticques”, Hélienne says that she will present the opinions of some “auteurs auctenticques”, “reliable authors” (*praef. v*), who, in contrast to Homer, tell the “veritable narration”, “true story” and are “dignes de credence”, “worthy of belief” (*praef. v*). These authors are Dictys of Crete and Dares of Phrygia, whom I discussed in Chapter Three as the authors of Homeric revisionist fiction that might also be classed as *Anti-Aeneids*.

As noted above, both Dares and Dictys enjoyed immense popularity throughout the Middle Ages,<sup>55</sup> arguably because of both their claims to autopsy – Dictys alleges to have taken part in the war on the Greek side and Dares on the Trojan – and the rationalism of their accounts.<sup>56</sup> It is initially Dares’ and Dictys’ claims to autopsy that Hélienne draws on to support her claims for their veracity over Homer:

“[ilz] ont redigé en escript tout ce qu’ilz veirent & entendirent des gestes des Troyens & des Græcz, durant le siege de Troye, comme ceulx qui y estoient assistans: & le Græc Homere estoit absent, car depuis la destruction d’icelle fut sa naissance.”

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<sup>52</sup> On Leontius Pilatus’ translation, see Sowerby 1997: especially 56-60.

<sup>53</sup> For a comprehensive survey of Latin translations of Homer in the Renaissance and their reception, see Pertusi 1964: 521-9.

<sup>54</sup> Solomon (2007: 516), in his analysis of the reasons for the lack of interest in Homer, proposes the idea that literacy in Greek would have posed more of a barrier than the technical difficulties of printing the language.

<sup>55</sup> Griffin 1907.

<sup>56</sup> The gods do not appear personally in either account and the heroism of the protagonists is reduced to human scale. See Merkle 1994: 184.

“They put into writing everything they saw and heard of the Trojan and Greek deeds during the siege of Troy, as those who were assisting there; and the Greek Homer was absent, for his birth was after the destruction of this place.”

(*praef. v*)

In addition to these claims, Hélienne also makes reference to the pseudo-documentary prologues attached to Dictys' and Dares' work, which Stefan Merkle classifies as an essential part of the *Beglaubigungsapparat* (authenticating mechanism) of the texts. The prologues outline elaborate stories pertaining to the rediscovery of the text, which lend it an amount of seemingly corroboratory historicity, and Hélienne repeats these stories here. The first, relating to Dares, is that his work was discovered by chance in Athens by its translator, Cornelius Nepos, who then also wrote the prefatory letter telling of its rediscovery (*praef. v*). The second is that Dictys' work was discovered, again by chance, near Knossos and was presented to the governor, Eupraxides – who advised that it should be translated from Phoenician into Greek – and then sent to Nero in Rome (since he had an interest in Trojan history) before finally being translated into Latin by Septimius (*praef. v*). The details of the rediscovery of the texts recounted in the prologues and retold here by Hélienne are of questionable relevance in the context of the *épître dédicatoire*, but seem designed to contribute to what Roland Barthes calls the “reality-effect”,<sup>57</sup> and further support Hélienne's claims for the their reliability. By attempting to prove the veracity of these anti-Homeric accounts, Hélienne underscores her praise of Hector and justifies the need to put the record straight with regard to his death. In so doing, she not only increases the glory of Hector, but also that of François by association. At the same time, Hélienne delineates quite clearly her own position within the debate on the Trojan War and Homer's account of it, declaring herself decidedly anti-Homeric.

Towards the end of the *épître dédicatoire*, Hélienne's dedication comes full circle as she explicitly recalls the initial imagery of ancient works being “hidden” and “covered”, by telling François that Dares and Dictys have brought the story of the Trojan War into the light:

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<sup>57</sup> Barthes 1989: 141-8.



“Voila doncques, Noble Prince, comme la pure verité de l’histoire des Troyens (qui d’illustrissime noblesse sont la vraye Scaturie) vint en lumiere”.

“See then, noble Prince, how the pure truth of the history of the Trojans (who are the true source of most illustrious nobility) comes to light”.  
(*praef. vi*)

For Hélienne, Dares and Dictys were involved in the same strategy of which she now considers herself part – of rediscovering the classical past and bringing it from obscurity into light. For them, too, the quest is not just to rediscover the past, but the true past. Hélienne emphasises that she herself is engaging in this very same task, adding that she has investigated the history of the Trojans “avec extreme diligence”, “with extreme diligence”, in order to “extirper toutes aultres opinions fabuleuses à ce contraires”, “eradicate all other fictional opinions contrary to this” (*praef. vi*).

By stressing both the painstaking research she has undertaken to find out the truth about the Trojan War, and the similarity of her project to that of Dares and Dictys, Hélienne references the longstanding debate concerning the veracity of Homer and, in addition, styles herself as an active participant within it. However, neither Hélienne’s flattery of François nor her challenge of the Homeric tradition are as straightforward as they may at first appear. Firstly, Hélienne’s flattery of François through association with Hector warrants further examination on account of the connotations of defeat and death inherent to the story of Hector. Secondly, Hélienne’s challenge of Homer has to be considered within its context – within the preface to a translation of the *Aeneid* – and we must therefore ask what it tells us about Virgil.

The dedication of the *Eneydes* to François and the explicit flattery apparent in the *epistre dédicatoire* raise an important question about how François as the explicit addressee relates to the implicit audience we have already identified on the basis of the publisher and format of the book. The *epistre dédicatoire* effectively introduces a new audience in addition to the popular and intellectual markets at whom we have already assumed the translation is aimed, and this complicates further the problem faced by Hélienne and Denys Janot when determining the most suitable format. If the book is dedicated to the King, then obviously the lavish folio format seems entirely appropriate. A smaller volume, though evidently more commercial, might not be considered worthy of presentation to the King. This gives

us a further indication that, in terms of the material presentation at least, Héli-senne is faced with competing demands from her audiences.

It is essential to question, however, whether these competing demands spill over into the text itself. On the one hand, a consideration of how national identity was constructed in this period suggests that the sixteenth-century French reader would have been considerably invested in the way in which the King was represented, on account of the centrality of the monarchy to the genesis of French identity in this period, as argued by David Potter:

“In social and cultural terms, then, the century from 1460 to 1560 was an immensely varied and constructive period, witnessing the prodigious reconstruction of French society, the beginnings of new problems and the crystallisation of national identity around the essentially traditional notion of loyalty to the King.”<sup>58</sup>

If François is an essential facet of how the nation perceives of itself, then it follows that flattery of the King might also reflect well upon the nation and appeal to the general reader, as well as to François.

On the other hand, it is noteworthy that the time in which Héli-senne writes is by no means the finest hour of François’ reign. There were mounting social tensions in France and public opinion was beginning to shift as people became increasingly dissatisfied with François’ foreign policy and the increase in taxation that they were suffering as a result of his continued campaigns.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, François had recently suffered defeat in the Italian Wars and, in particular, at the Battle of Pavia, against Charles V in 1525. Wishing to install himself as the new Holy Roman Emperor, François had marched his army upon Pavia – occupied at the time by imperial forces – but was forced to withdraw and, having been taken prisoner, was sent to Madrid. Imprisoned there, François was forced to sign the Treaty of Madrid, renouncing all French claims to Italy. The defeat was made particularly humiliating for François since, in return for his own freedom, he was forced to hand over his two sons as prisoners.<sup>60</sup> In 1527, François attempted yet another invasion of Italy, but was again defeated and this time forced to sign the

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<sup>58</sup> Potter 1995: 28.

<sup>59</sup> For a full survey of the socio-historic climate and public opinion of François during his reign, see Potter 1995: Chapters 5 & 8.

<sup>60</sup> Middlebrook 2001: 1133.

Treaty of Cambrai.<sup>61</sup> Such overt flattery of François at a moment when his popularity had suffered a significant decline might then run the risk of alienating at least some of the broad readership to which Hélienne hoped to appeal.

Hélienne's flattery of François might also have posed a potential problem for her self-fashioning as an erudite woman and professional writer who was not attached to a court. In order to align herself with the humanist scholars of her day, Hélienne would have had to display a reasonable amount of intellectual autonomy, to prove that she could be successful on the merit of her work alone, without *needing* to flatter the King and without the need for royal patronage. And Hélienne might well be stressing this independence and autonomy in the phrase that follows from the end of the *epistre dédicatoire*:

“Et si tant de beatitude me succede, que de vostre serenité elle soit aulcunement favorisée, i'estimeray ce mien petit labour, une supreme félicité, outre laquelle riens en ce monde ne desire”.

“And if so much blessing befalls me, that [my work] is at all favoured by your serenity, I will consider my little labour a great happiness, besides which I desire nothing else in the world.”

(*praef.* v)

Hélienne's insistence that she wants “outre laquelle riens” could easily be read in two ways here. On the plainest level, it functions as a genuine appeal to François for approval, without ulterior motive, and also serves as a display of supposed modesty, perhaps intended to emphasise the merit of the work even further. Marianna Mustacchi and Paul Archambault insist that the dedication of the *Eneydes* to François is either an appeal for patronage or a sign of an existing client-patron relationship.<sup>62</sup> However, as Wood notes, there is no evidence that the *Eneydes* even reached the King's hands, let alone record to suggest that there was any official patronage between the two.<sup>63</sup> As I have already observed, as a *careeriste* author working with a publisher, Hélienne would have less need of patronage to support her literary pursuits.<sup>64</sup> This insistence that she does not want anything from

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<sup>61</sup> The terms of this treaty were the same, save for the fact that Burgundy, which François had previously been forced to give up, was returned to him.

<sup>62</sup> Archambault and Mustacchi 1991: 99.

<sup>63</sup> Wood 2000: 165 n. 20.

<sup>64</sup> Genette notes that while the dedicatory letter sometimes counted among an author's source of income in the early modern period, professional writers often made money through the direct sale of their own copies, with a private inscription, or the lump-sum sale of the work to a publisher, or payment by the piece for a serialised project (See Genette 1997: 119).

François might therefore be a subtle prompt from Hélienne to her reader that she is a professional author, who is able to sustain herself through her literary activity and not a dilettante.

In a similar manner, at the end of the *epistre dédicatoire*, Hélienne presents another statement directly to François which, although it could undoubtedly be taken at face value, could also be interpreted as a statement of her independence:

“[...] l’elucidation desquelles choses (comme ie puis coniecturer) vous sera acceptable; & soubz ceste esperance imposeray fin à ceste epistre”.

“The elucidation of these things will, as far as I can conjecture be acceptable to you and in this hope I will conclude this letter”.

(*Praef.* vi)

At first, this reads as a straightforward statement of deference, just as we might expect in a dedication to a monarch. At the same time, however, Hélienne’s *hope* that François will find the work *acceptable* once again serves to remind the reader that Hélienne occupies a reasonably autonomous position in relation to François. Unlike his court poets, Hélienne is under no obligation to write something that is pleasing to François.

There are, moreover, some decidedly more problematic aspects of Hélienne’s dedication of the *Eneydes* to François. Foremost of these is the nature of the association being made by Hélienne between François and his “glorious” ancestor Hector. Hélienne’s praise of Hector is clearly intended to reflect well on François as one of his descendants. To a large extent, as we have seen, this is successful, as Hélienne argues that the Dictys and Dares – whose Aeneas is considerably nobler – are to be believed above Homer. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Hector is defeated: however noble Hector is and however positively Hélienne presents him, all versions end the same way, with the defeat and death of François’s ancestor at the hands of a foreign enemy. As already mentioned, François had very recently suffered defeat in the Italian Wars, and this might well have resonated in the mind of the reader.

In this vein, it is important to note that, in the works of other authors, it is only in eulogising François after his death that we find him being associated with Hector. Jean Bouchet, a friend of François’ sister Marguerite de Navarre, wrote a poem to François two years after his death, entitled *Description du tresillustre & tresredoubté Prince des Gauls*. In it he writes of François: “Il estoit grande comme

venant d'Hector".<sup>65</sup> In this context, after François' death, the reference to Hector seems entirely more appropriate.

Furthermore, as Marian Rothstein notes, the scrutiny of the humanist reconstruction of the classical past had, by the early sixteenth-century, begun to cast doubt over the notion of the French nation's Trojan origins and, by the 1540s, the political impetus of such notions was generally understood.<sup>66</sup> At the same time, new links were fashioned between France and Greek, often including the idea that the French language was descended from Greek rather than Latin, a movement that Claude-Gilbert Dubois terms *Celt-hélénisme*.<sup>67</sup> The obvious advantage of *Celt-hélénisme*, in light of the imperial ambitions of France, was the political value of avoiding the competing Italian claims to Trojan origins.

During his lifetime, François was linked with various mythological and historical figures besides Hector, both in literature and in art, whose associations perhaps seem less problematic since they did not suffer defeat or death in war. One such example is a colossal bronze statue of the King in the guise of Mars. Designed by Benvenuto Cellini, the statue was intended to form the centrepiece of a fountain depicting four female figures who represented the Arts, Letters, Liberality and Music, that was never realised. Such depictions were clearly intended to bestow glory – and indeed a hint of divinity – upon François. Significantly, a competing myth of national descent proposed that François and the French were not descended from Hector, but from Hercules<sup>68</sup> and it is tempting to suppose that this might have been a more apt association at this moment in François' reign, since it again omitted the motif of defeat.

Significantly, François himself, in his own writings, made no mention of Hector at all and instead chose to liken himself to Aeneas. We find this self-identification laid out by François in the *Epistres* exchanged between François, his sister Marguerite de Navarre and their mother Louise de Savoie. These intimate verse letters are occasional pieces, often sent with a gift, which, according to Leah Middlebrook, accounts for their more spontaneous, less polished tone in

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<sup>65</sup> Bouchet 1550: 26-26v.

<sup>66</sup> Rothstein 2006: 735.

<sup>67</sup> Dubois 1970: 87.

<sup>68</sup> Potter 1995: 21.

comparison with the other works composed by the family.<sup>69</sup> *Epître* 13, written by François to Marguerite around 1527, provides our example.

In this consolatory letter, François encourages his sister, recently married to Henri de Navarre, to accept her new life, exiled from himself and their mother. Middlebrook argues that François' main concern in this poem is not the welfare of his sister, but the public face of the family unit, which needs to be seen to be operating in perfect accord.<sup>70</sup> For her, the poem serves as a reminder to Marguerite of her position within the tripartite body of the family – the self-styled “trinité des Angoulême” – and as a subtle threat that her protests against her removal to Navarre are jeopardising her position within it.<sup>71</sup> This concept of the trinity was central to the huge corpus of literary and visual imagery supporting François and his reign.<sup>72</sup> Embraced by Louise, François and Marguerite, this highly symbolic construct – which found expression in both iconography and literature – essentially promoted the idea that the three of them were one soul contained in three distinct incarnate bodies. François represents the chosen Son, Louise the semi-divine Mother and Marguerite the intercessor, the family saint.<sup>73</sup> The system of representation was used to justify François' ascent to the throne and continually invoked, as required, to strengthen his position and consolidate his power.<sup>74</sup> François' self-inscription as an Aeneas figure comes then as he attempts to explain to Marguerite his own position within the trinity:

“Mais quelle exemple à moi sera propice  
Pour declarer quel est le myen office?  
Vien doncque, Enée, qui portes le pitié  
En secourant paternelle amytié  
Portans les ans lesquelz t'avoient faict naistre  
Dessus ton col, te donnant heureulx estre”. (*Epître* 13, 33 - 38).

“But what example is fitting for me  
to declare which is my office?  
Come then Aeneas, you who bear the pity  
by rescuing fatherly friendship,

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<sup>69</sup> Middlebrook 2001: 1110.

<sup>70</sup> Middlebrook 2001: 1125.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> For a full discussion of the huge range of rich symbolism associated with François, see Anne-Marie Lecoq's excellent survey, *François Ier Imaginaire: Symbolique et politique à l'aube de la Renaissance française* (1987).

<sup>73</sup> Middlebrook 2001: 1124.

<sup>74</sup> Middlebrook (2001) provides an excellent overview of the changing use of the trinity at various periods during François' life and career.

carrying the years which fathered you,  
giving you a happy existence, upon your back.”<sup>75</sup>

Aeneas works so effectively as a model for François here because of the piety that he shows towards his father, mirroring François’ own filial devotion to his mother. And this is significant because, as Middlebrook convincingly argues, it is Louise, the *Madame Mère du Roi* that holds all the authority in the trinity and plays a pivotal role in controlling the symbolism that so effectively upholds the power of her son.<sup>76</sup>

It was not uncommon for the rulers of the sixteenth century to identify themselves with Aeneas as François does here: Henry VIII and Charles V both did the same.<sup>77</sup> And the reader would almost certainly have recognised the Aeneas that François invokes not just as the pious son who carries his father on his back, but as the empire-builder too. François’ identification with Aeneas would surely have had a particular resonance then, bringing to mind his own imperial ambitions and his continuing desire to install himself as Holy Roman Emperor.

As already mentioned, Aeneas and his empire are entirely absent from the *épître dédicatoire*. Given François’ self-inscription as an Aeneas figure, we might then consider the dedication, at least in part, as an intentional comment on this, recognising that Héloïse’s association of François and Hector is in dialogue with François’ own self-fashioning.

Just as there is a certain multilayeredness in the dedication to François, Héloïse’s treatment of Virgil in the *épître dédicatoire* is no more straightforward and demonstrates how she has set up a framework in which classical authors are authorities to be simultaneously revered and challenged. If we return to Héloïse’s praise of Virgil at the beginning of the *épître dédicatoire*, we note that, while Héloïse’s praises Virgil’s eloquent style, the same cannot be said for his substance. In her allusion to Propertius, Héloïse uses her praise of Virgil to introduce the theme of challenging Homer, but this praise (and, in fact, any mention) of Virgil ends there.

Furthermore, if we examine more closely Héloïse’s allusion to Propertius, we can see that it is not actually as laudatory as it may first appear. Hans-Peter Stahl convincingly argues that it is erroneous to take Propertius’ admiration of

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<sup>75</sup> François I, *Épîtres* 13.33-38.

<sup>76</sup> Middlebrook 2001: 1111.

<sup>77</sup> Middlebrook 2001: 1133.

Virgil at face value, claiming instead that it is expressed with a hint of irony.<sup>78</sup> He reminds us that, throughout books One and Two of his *Elegies*, Propertius insists on the “artistic and human inadequacy of epic”,<sup>79</sup> bringing into question why scholars take his assessment of Virgil to be an exception to this rule. Thus, if we accept Stahl’s argument, Hélienne’s reference to Propertius has even more substance, because it not only challenges the authority of Homer, but also subtly alludes to criticism of Virgil. And we cannot dismiss it as an insight of modern scholarship that might not have been evident to a Renaissance readership, because the argument comes from the text itself. For example, when Propertius writes that “something greater than the *Iliad* is being born”, a look back to how he has presented the *Iliad* thus far in the *Elegies* reveals this to be faint praise indeed. For at 1.7.3, Homer was described as a poet whose works are partly forgotten, and at 1.9.11 Propertius criticised the *Iliad*’s thematic focus on “uncivilised war”. Again, we cannot be sure whether Hélienne’s reference to Propertius indicates direct engagement with his work. Nevertheless, his *Elegies* were widely-read by the sixteenth century, particularly in humanist circles, and it is perfectly plausible that a reader with a good knowledge of them might have recognised the potential for reading *nescio quid maius nascitur Iliade*, in the light of the other *Elegies*, as less acclamatory than it appears out of context.<sup>80</sup>

It is apparent that by focussing the *epistre dédicatoire* on the death of Hector and the fall of Troy, and how they are dealt with in the literary tradition, rather than about Aeneas and the founding of Rome, Hélienne tacitly highlights the way Virgil treats the subject in the *Aeneid*. The very lack of discussion of Virgil’s position in the debate leaves the reader immediately questioning where Virgil fits into this longstanding tradition, and this clearly implies criticism of Virgil for suppressing the tradition of the competing accounts of the Trojan War, the death of Hector and, subsequently, the truth of the story. By claiming to have found the “pure verité” of the Trojan War in Dictys and Dares, and thus setting up a standard against which to measure the veracity of all other accounts, Hélienne is implicitly calling for the reader to judge Virgil against this very same standard.

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<sup>78</sup> Stahl 1985: 180.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> On the circulation and reception of Propertius during the Renaissance, see Gavinelli 2006: 399-416.



#### 4.2.2 The death of Hector: The programmatic digression

As noted above, the *epistre dédicatoire* anticipates and draws especial attention to the digression on the death of Hector in Book Two of Hélienne's translation. This is the only instance in which Hélienne deviates at significant length from Virgil's *Aeneid* and, for this reason, it requires close examination for what it reveals of Hélienne's project. Since Hélienne draws attention to it in the *epistre dédicatoire*, we should see the digression as performing a similar programmatic function and therefore warranting analysis alongside the other prefatory material. In this section I argue that the digression underscores many of the aspects of Hélienne's project that were outlined above: the need to rediscover the classical past; the search for the truth of the Trojan War and the challenge to Homer's lies; and the need to meet competing demands of the king, the reader of vernacular literature and the humanist scholar. However, I will suggest that the framework of veracity that Hélienne set up in the *epistre dédicatoire* – in which Dares and Dictys are at one end of the scale and Homer at the other – is undermined here, or at the very least becomes less certain. I will show how the structure of the digression and its layout on the page, as well as the dubious nature of the authenticating strategies of the Dictys prologue, lead us to question whether we really are meant to accept Dictys as the most credible author, and what implications this has for Virgil's place within the Trojan tradition, as well as Hélienne's own place.

The digression on the death of Hector is introduced in Chapter 9 of Book Two of Hélienne's *Eneydes* and forms the main body of Chapter 10, inserted at the point in which Virgil, too, writes of the dead Hector. In Book Two of the *Aeneid*, Hector's shade appears to Aeneas in his sleep, telling him that Troy has fallen and encouraging him to take the *penates*, flee and establish a new city:

*hostis habet muros: ruit alto a culmine Troia.  
sat patriae Priamoque datum: si Pergama dextra  
defendi possent, etiam hac defensa fuissent.  
sacra suosque tibi commendat Troia penatis;  
hos cape fatorum comites, his moenia quaere  
magna pererrato statues quae denique ponto*

“The enemy has our walls: Troy is falling from its uppermost heights.  
Enough has been given to your fatherland and to Priam: if Troy could be  
saved by a right hand, this one would have been its defence.  
Troy commends to you her sacraments and penates;  
take them as companions to your fortunes, seek great walls for them

which you will finally build after much wandering over the sea.”  
(*Aen.* 2.290-295)

Hélisenne begins the translation of this episode in the same way: Aeneas tells how Hector appeared to him in his sleep, his body still bearing the signs of being dragged behind the chariot, and, just as in the *Aeneid*, Aeneas laments as he remembers Hector as a fearsome warrior (II, f. xxxv, r). However, it is here that Hélisenne moves away from translating Virgil. Rather than continuing with Hector’s words to Aeneas, it is at this point that Hélisenne chooses to interrupt the narrative with a discussion of the various versions of Hector’s death found in different authors. Aeneas is mournfully remembering the prowess of Hector, saddened by the sight he now sees in his dream, and the next chapter simply begins with the anticipatory *phrase*:

“Des opinions diverses, touchant l’homicide perpetré à la personne du tres magnanime Hector, par le faulx traditeur Achilles” .

“The diverse opinions concerning the murder committed against the most magnanimous Hector, by the deceitful traitor Achilles.”  
(II, f. xxxv, v)

Here Hélisenne introduces the digression that she had announced to the reader in the *epistre dédicatoire*. As already suggested, the figure of Hector allows Hélisenne to negotiate her position in relation to her addressee, François, and her wider audience, whilst also placing herself within the literary tradition of debate about the Trojan War and the veracity of Homer. The reader might expect then that this digression, which promises more detail on the varying accounts of Hector’s death, will further elucidate how and where Hélisenne positions herself in relation to this tradition.

The four authors whose accounts Hélisenne presents are Dares of Phrygia and Dictys of Crete (those who were already discussed in the dedicatory letter), then Guido delle Colonna (hitherto not mentioned) and finally Homer. The third author, Guido delle Colonna – or Guyon de Coulomne as he is known in French to Hélisenne – was an early thirteenth-century Sicilian writer who wrote an account of the Trojan War in Latin entitled *Historia destructionis Troiae*.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> There is some debate among scholars as to whether Hélisenne would have read this in Latin, or had access to a French translation. See Demats 1968: xi; Demats dismisses the idea that Hélisenne may have been working with a translation. Cf. Wood 2000: 166 n.27.

What Dares, Dictys and Guido all have in common is that their accounts of the death of Hector are all markedly pro-Hector and anti-Achilles. In Dares' account, Hector is taken unaware by Achilles and killed as he is despoiling Polypoetes of his arms:

*Hector Polypoetem ducem fortissimum occidit: et cum spoliare coepisset, Achilles supervenit. Fit pugna major, et clamor ab oppido et a toto surgit exercitu. Hector Achillis femur sauciat. Ille dolore accepto, magis eum persequi coepit, nec destitit nisi occideret.*

“Hector killed Polypoetes, the bravest leader, and when he began to despoil him Achilles caught up. A great fight happened and shouting arose from the town and whole army. Hector wounded Achilles' leg. That one, having been wounded, began to pursue him all the more and did not stop until he had killed him.”<sup>82</sup>

The second version cited by Hélienne, that of Dictys, also rests upon the insidious nature of Achilles, who unfairly ambushes Hector as he is fording a stream:

*Igitur Achilles paucis fidis adiunctis secum, insidiatum propere pergit, atque hostem securum sui praeuortit : tum ingredi flumen occipientem, circumuenit : ita eumque et omnes qui comites regulo, dolum huiusmodi ignorauerant, ex improuiso interficit.*

“Achilles, therefore, joined by a few faithful comrades, hastened to lay an ambush and anticipated them unaware of him. Then as they were trying to cross the river he surrounded them: thus he spontaneously killed him and all those accompanying him, who were unaware of trickery of this sort.”<sup>83</sup>

Guido of Colonna provides Hélienne's third account of Hector's death – this time mortally wounded by Achilles as he is valiantly carrying a Greek king he has injured back to his tent.<sup>84</sup>

Hélienne provides only a brief summary of each version, but the focus is entirely on the underhandedness of Achilles' actions. In the version by Dares, Achilles is described as a “faulx traditeur”, “a false traitor”, (II, f. xxxv, v). Similarly, in the Dictys version Achilles' actions are labelled “execrable trahyson”, “execrable treason” (II, f. xxxv, v) and the exact same word is used again of Achilles' actions in the account by Guido of Colonna (II, f. xxxvi, r).

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<sup>82</sup> Dares Phrygius, *De Excidio*, chapter 24.

<sup>83</sup> Dictys Cretensis, *Ephemeris*, 3.15.

<sup>84</sup> Guido delle Colonna, *Historia*, 4.25.

Somewhat anachronistically, Achilles is criticised for failing to live up to the ideals expected by the chivalric code, alleging that he is “desgarny de franche chevalrie, non demonstrant urbanité ne cortoisie”, “stripped of bold chivalry, showing neither urbanity nor courtesy” (II, f. xxxvi, v). By judging his behaviour against this more contemporary standard, Hélienne thus raises the intensity of the accusations of cowardice made against him in the mind of the reader. Furthermore, the Hector/Achilles dichotomy is underscored by Hélienne’s use of extremely loaded language: Hector is “preux”, “valiant”, while Achilles is the “traditeur”, “traitor” (II, f. xxxvi, v).

The fourth and final version of Hector’s death that Hélienne’s discusses – that told by Homer in the *Iliad* – differs considerably from the previous three because it is the only version in which Hector is not taken unawares by the treachery of Achilles.<sup>85</sup> In this account, Hector, having left the walls of Troy and engaged in a fight with Achilles, is presented as the weaker opponent: “[...] il le trouva de si excessive force, qu’il ne pouvoit alencontre de luy resister”, “He found him of such excessive force that he could not resist against him” (II, f. xxxvi, r).

Hélienne quickly dismisses this account, since it is “n’est digne de croire”, “not worthy of credence” (II, f. xxxvi, v), claiming that Homer always favoured the Greeks and attributed more glory to “trahistre Achilles” than to “tresillustre Hector”. It is clear that Hélienne is repeating here the language of the *epistre dédicatoire*, in which she had already outlined her own pro-Hector stance and her disbelief of Homer’s account of the story.

Hélienne appears here to be drawing heavily on material she found in Jean Lemaire de Belges’ *Les Illustrations de Gaule et singularitez de Troye*.<sup>86</sup> It is beyond question that Hélienne has worked closely with Lemaire’s *Illustrations*, but Diane Wood is right to indicate that Hélienne does not simply reproduce Lemaire’s presentation of the Dares and Dictys account as they are.<sup>87</sup> Hélienne’s third account, that of Guido delle Colonna, is not found in Lemaire’s *Illustrations* and even when she follows Lemaire most closely, seemingly paraphrasing his retelling of Dictys’ account, Hélienne adds small but significant modifications, as apparent in the passages below. First, Lemaire’s account tells the story as follows:

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<sup>85</sup> Here it is Athena who deceives Hector into thinking that Deiphobus has come to his aid. Hom *Il.* 22.337.

<sup>86</sup> Demats 1968: x1.

<sup>87</sup> Wood 2000: 139.

“Et ainsi que le preux Hector qui de tel aguet ne se donnoit garde, passoit un fleuve à gué, Achilles qui lespioit de pied coy, se rua luy par grande impetuosité, sans lescrier aucunement, et le fait environner et circonuenir de toutes pars”.

“And while valiant Hector, who was not preparing himself for such an ambush, was fording a river, Achilles who spied him silently, threw himself on him with great impetuousness, without crying out at all, he had him surrounded and encircled on all sides.”<sup>88</sup>

Hélisenne recalls Lemaire’s account almost word for word:

“Ainsi que la fleur de la noblesse Hector (qui de ceste detestable & execrable trahyson ne se donnoit garde) passoit ung fleuve à guay, lors Achilles, l’espiait stimulee de quelque furie infernale, avec inique deliberation se vint iecter sur luy par impeteuse ferocité, sans qu’il aduertist aulcunement, & le fait circonuenir & environner de toutes pars”.

“While the flower of nobility, Hector, (who was not preparing himself for this detestable and execrable treason) was fording a river, then Achilles, spying him and stimulated by some infernal fury, with wicked intent came, by impetuous ferocity, to throw himself upon him, without warning him at all, and had him surrounded and encircled on all sides.”

(II, f. xxxv, v)

We can see that Hélisenne adds emotive details here that serve to emphasise the nobility of Hector and the treachery of Achilles. So, Lemaire’s “preux” Hector becomes “fleur de la noblesse”. Similarly, “grande impetuosité” is no longer enough to describe the baseness of Achilles’ actions, which are now ascribed to “furie infernale” and “inique deliberation” as well. Hélisenne thus takes some licence with her source material, manipulating it to emphasise further the nobility of Hector (and subsequently François) and the falseness of Homer’s account. What is significant about Hélisenne’s borrowings from Lemaire’s *Illustrations* is, that, as Marian Rothstein points out, by the 1540s the reliability of Lemaire’s Trojan history had been called into doubt because of scepticism about the French myth of Trojan descent upon which it insisted.<sup>89</sup> Hélisenne thus explicitly draws on a text which, by some of her readers at least, may have been considered unreliable.

It is significant that Hélisenne also looks outside of Lemaire’s *Illustrations* for her third account, since Guido is the only one of the authors whom she cites to explicitly address Virgil’s position in the Trojan tradition. Lemaire only mentions

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<sup>88</sup> Lemaire *Illustrations*, 2.19

<sup>89</sup> Rothstein 2006: 735.

Guido in passing, as an example of a “bad author” whose account was full of “fables artificielles”, “artificial fables”.<sup>90</sup> So why, since Lemaire describes Guido thus, in terms similar to those with which she discredited the “artificial and coloured lies” of Homer in the *epistre dédicatoire*, does Hélienne choose to include Guido’s account among the “authentic authors” of the Trojan War story? In part, the answer must lie in the fact that, in the prologue to the *Historia*, Guido attacks Homer for inventing much of his material and altering the truth of the Trojan War. In declaring himself anti-Homeric, Guido automatically, for Hélienne, earns himself a place among the more truthful authors. More significantly, however, Guido also berates Virgil in his prologue for being “unwilling to depart from the fictions of Homer”.<sup>91</sup> As I have argued, in the *epistre dédicatoire* Hélienne implicitly criticises Virgil for his suppression of the truth of the Trojan War, or at least his suppression of the fact that there are competing versions. Therefore, by including an account which directly challenges Virgil’s position in relation to the literary debate about Troy, Hélienne reinforces this line of criticism.

Having recounted the versions of all four of her sources, Hélienne then takes a new direction, not previously expressed in the *Epistre dédicatoire*, and makes a claim for the preference of one account above the others – that of Dictys. To the detriment of Homer, she says:

“ie diz que par raisons biens apparentes, nous debuons prester foy indubitable aux aultres aucteurs, Et par especial à la narration de Dictis de Crete”.

“I say that, for reasons quite apparent, we should have unquestionable faith in the other authors and especially the narration of Dictys of Crete.”  
(II, f. xxxvi, v)

Hélienne’s justification for privileging this account above all others is also presented with the same ostensibly scholarly reasoning with which she insisted upon the veracity of Dictys’ and Dares’ accounts in the *epistre dédicatoire*:

“[...] estoit present en la bataille des Graecz, militant soubz ung des roys de Grece nommé Ydomeneus, qui est occasion principale, parquoy il est facile à iuger son dire estre veritable”.

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<sup>90</sup> Lemaire *Illustrations* 1.4.

<sup>91</sup> Guido *Historia* 3-4.

“He was present in the battle of the Greeks, fighting under a king named Idomeneus, which is the principal reason for which it is easy to believe his words to be true.”

(II, xxxvii, r)

On the surface, Hélienne’s strategy here seems to be quite transparent. Dictys, Dares and Guido cannot all be telling the true version of the story – although they can all be more truthful than Homer – and thus Hélienne has to opt for one version above the others. It is somewhat unusual, however, that Hélienne opts for Dictys since, for the most part, although assigning him some credibility, writers throughout the Middle Ages and up until this point almost exclusively chose Dares’ *De Excidio* as their preferred account.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, if we examine the layout of the digression on the page, Hélienne’s privileging of Dictys is not so straightforward, since there seems to be a curious mismatch between what Hélienne is claiming and the way in which it is presented.

The main body of the Hector episode, Chapter 10, is divided by subheadings. In each case, the first line of the paragraph is capitalised and larger than the main body of the text, making it extremely prominent. There are three of these headings, each introducing a different author’s version of Hector’s death, with the first line printed in upper case letters for added emphasis. First we have Dares: “SELON LA NARRATION DE DAYRE DE [...]” (II, f. xxxv, v), then Guido delle Colonne: “GUYON DE COULOMNE DESCRIPT D’AUL[...]” (II, f. xxxv, v), and finally Homer: “LE POETE HOMERE LE NARRE AULTRE[...]” (II, f. xxxvi, r). It is important to note that Dictys is not given his own heading. Instead, his account is buried beneath Dares’ heading and revisited again beneath Homer’s; at first glance, he is missing from the page completely. This raises the important question of why Hélienne would choose to privilege Dictys’ account in the text, but not on the page.

A similar disparity is discernable in the length of each version of the story in the text and the space they are afforded. Dictys’ narration takes up one small paragraph of less than half a page. The section under Homer’s heading, on the other hand, takes up over two full pages. It is significant that the account given the least credence by Hélienne is conversely the one dwelt upon at greatest length.

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<sup>92</sup> Kem 1994: 16.

Likewise, if we turn back to the *epistre dédicatoire* for a moment, the order in which we were first introduced to the different accounts belies the level of veracity they are assigned later in the text. Hélienne begins with the false account – Homer’s – before establishing the other true accounts of Dictys. There are, in fact, two references to Homer and his account of the Trojan War before Dictys and Dares are even mentioned by name:

“[...] ay accumlé toutes les forces de mon esprit, pour manifester l’occision du predict vertueux Hector [...] avoir esté perpetrée par la trahyson detestable, abhominable, & execrable du trop superbe Achilles: Lequel n’estoit en exercice militaire au prince Hector equiparable, combien que le grand Græc Homere avec ses fictions poeticques s’efforce de l’extoller”.

“I gathered together all the strength of my spirit to show that the killing of the aforementioned Hector was perpetrated by the detestable, abominable and execrable treachery of arrogant Achilles, who is no match for Hector in military exercise, although the great Greek Homer tried to extol him with his poetic fictions”.

(*praef. v*)

“[...] ay bien voulu reduire en memoire les opinions d’aulcuns auteurs auctentiques: lesquelz parlant avec veritable narration, confondent les vaines & inutiles propositions d’Homere”.

“I wanted to commit to memory the opinions of some authentic authors who, speaking with true narration, reveal the vain and futile propositions of Homer”.

(*praef. v*)

So it is evident, despite Hélienne telling the reader that Homer is not at all credible, that he has much more of a presence both earlier in the *epistre dédicatoire* and here in the digression than the other authors to whom the reader is supposedly meant to give more credence.

We must employ a touch of caution here, and remember that we cannot possibly ascertain whether Hélienne herself or Janot had the final say with regard to the layout of the page. Even so, as discussed above, Rawles is careful to note that what Janot is interested in is not the content of the books – so long as they are likely to sell – but the aesthetics, the “marks on paper”.<sup>93</sup> I can propose no discernible reason why Janot would make such an intervention in the text itself and insist upon adding headings in the upper case at this point (and this point

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<sup>93</sup> Rawles 1976: 69.



alone) in the *Eneydes*. Therefore, since the headings are not separate, but a part of the narrative itself, it seems reasonable to assume they are Hélienne's own, especially since, in omitting Dictys, they also reflect his cursory treatment in the text.

The privileging of Dictys as the most credible account is also problematised by the dubious nature of the authenticating strategies provided for Dictys' *Ephemeris*, which Hélienne outlined in the *épître dédicatoire*. Karen Ni-Mheallaigh has recently demonstrated how certain aspects of the *Beglaubigungsapparat* of the prologue simultaneously undermine the authenticity of the *Ephemeris*, with the author inviting complicity on the part of the reader.<sup>94</sup> The first example cited by Ni-Mheallaigh – the ambivalence of Nero – is particularly relevant here, as it is one of the authenticating strategies upon which Hélienne relies in the *épître dédicatoire*. Here Hélienne states that Dictys' text came to light during Nero's reign (*praef.* v). And as Ni-Mheallaigh suggests, the historicity of the figure of Nero lends credence to the text's claims. Furthermore, Nero is an ideal figure to be implicated in the rediscovery of an ancient text, given his enthusiasm for relics, particularly those relating to the Trojan War. Yet, at the same time, as both Ni-Mheallaigh and Merkle point out, Nero is a figure who is notoriously gullible, characterised by Tacitus as an *incredibilium cupitor*, a lover of the incredible.<sup>95</sup> The knowing reader may, in particular, be reminded of an instance in which Nero, in his enthusiasm for Trojan relics, was fooled by a man named Bassus into sending men to search for a cave containing the treasure of Dido, which did not exist, as narrated by Tacitus at the beginning of *Annals* 16.<sup>96</sup>

Thus, by actively encouraging the reader to speculate as to the veracity of the document, the figure of Nero may serve to simultaneously support and undermine the authentication offered by the preface. Tacitus' *Annals* appear to have been well-known to the humanists of the sixteenth-century: Peter Burke notes that four editions were printed in the second half of the fifteenth century and a further thirteen in the first half of the sixteenth.<sup>97</sup> They were not translated into French until 1582 and seldom alluded to in vernacular literature, and therefore

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<sup>94</sup> Ni-Mheallaigh 2008.

<sup>95</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 15.42

<sup>96</sup> Nero might well have had good political reasons for his willingness to accept Bassus' story. See Braund 1983.

<sup>97</sup> Burke 1966: 137.

would only have been accessible to a Latin-reading community.<sup>98</sup> It is possible then that the notions of Nero's enthusiasm for Trojan relics and gullibility would still have currency in Héli-senne's day, even if not for a broad readership.

Ni-Mheallaigh notes further potential for ambivalence in the claim that Dictys' journal was originally written in Phoenician, before being translated into Greek.<sup>99</sup> While this adds a certain amount of corroboratory historicity,<sup>100</sup> it may also, just like the Nero reference, raise alarm bells in the mind of the knowing reader, who knew from Plato's *Republic* of the proverbial "Phoenician lie".<sup>101</sup> Again, Héli-senne includes this supposed authenticating-strategy in the *épître dédicatoire*.

Ni-Mheallaigh insists that the undermining of Dictys' veracity is intentional, claiming that the translator's display of anxiety concerning authenticity at the end of the prologue is self-revealing.<sup>102</sup> Dares' *De Excidio*, on the other hand, does not appear to function on the same level, since Ni-Mheallaigh suggests that the letter prefacing the text, although similarly sensational in its claims to veracity, invites no such complicity, stating, "If the Dares text is ironic, it looks like this is by accident rather than design".<sup>103</sup> Héli-senne's claim for the veracity of Dictys, over and above that of Dares, is even more significant and puzzling then, given the self-revealing nature of its *Beglaubigungstrategien*.

Is there any sense, however, that this is how Dictys and Dares were viewed in the sixteenth century? Belief in Dictys' and Dares' accounts of the Trojan War over that of Homer was unfaltering throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>104</sup> However, it is important to note that it is precisely during the era in which Héli-senne was writing, the sixteenth century, that doubts began to creep in over the authenticity of their accounts. Nathaniel Griffin notes only the "occasional voice of dissent" and provides only two examples.<sup>105</sup> The first of these is Juan Luis Vives, who, in his 1531 *De tradendis disciplinis* dismisses the accounts of Dictys and Dares *figmenta eorum qui de bello famosissimo voluerunt ludere*, "figments of those who wanted to

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<sup>98</sup> On the eventual reception of the *Annals* in the vernacular, see Salmon 2002: 42-3.

<sup>99</sup> Ni-Mheallaigh 2008: 7.

<sup>100</sup> Ni-Mheallaigh (2008: 6) argues that the Phoenician script is one of the details contributing towards a cumulative 'reality-effect' and is also an attempt to avoid the anachronism of the use of Greek language in pre-Homeric literature.

<sup>101</sup> On Plato and the Phoenician lie, see Gruen 2011: 121. Plato's *Republic* was often referred to in ethical and political works in sixteenth-century France (See Lebègue 1954: 331-52).

<sup>102</sup> Ni-Mheallaigh 2008: 9.

<sup>103</sup> Ni-Mheallaigh 2008: 13.

<sup>104</sup> Griffin 1907: 16.

<sup>105</sup> Griffin 1907: 16 n. 16.

play with the most famous war”.<sup>106</sup> The second example cited by Griffin is Wilhelm Xylander’s correction to the eleventh-century historian Georgius Cedrenus’ history of the world, in which Xylander insists, contrary to Cedrenus, that Dictys and Dares’ accounts are untrue.<sup>107</sup> This example postdates Hélienne’s *Eneydes* however, being published in 1565. Nevertheless, both these examples point to a rupture in the unfaltering belief that prevailed through the Middle Ages. The scholar Frederic Clark underlines this growing distrust among sixteenth-century scholars by citing more examples of those who attempt to discredit Dares’ account in particular, including the Portuguese humanist Gaspar Barreiros and the French humanist Joseph Scaliger.<sup>108</sup>

We can undoubtedly link this shift in the sixteenth century to the critical scrutiny of the humanist enterprise that, as we noted above, also now doubted the Trojan origins of the Franks. However, I would suggest more specifically that the context of a relatively young but evolving print culture might give us some indication as to why the long-held adherence to the accounts of Dictys and Dares was beginning to be challenged. As already discussed, the act of *mise en livre* meant that printers, writers and readers were all becoming increasingly aware of the role of paratext and its ability to shape a reader’s perception of the text. In this context of an increasingly textually-aware culture, particularly with regard to the power of paratext, it is perhaps not surprising that the prologues of Dares and Dictys were more closely scrutinised and brought into question.

We cannot ever be sure that Hélienne recognised the ambiguity of the authenticating strategies of Dictys’ work, or even that the reader would have understood them in this way. Nevertheless, the way in which the accounts are privileged in length and presentation, and the fact that Dares is usually preferred over Dictys in terms of authenticity, gives us some cause for concern about whether Hélienne really intends for us to accept her insistence that Dictys presents the “pure verité” of the Trojan War. The obvious question this concern raises is why Hélienne would undermine the framework of veracity, and the challenge of Homer, that she created in the “epistre dédicatoire”.

In part, we might ascribe Hélienne’s privileging of Dictys to the way in which she negotiates her position in relation to François and her implied audience.

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<sup>106</sup> Juan Luis Vives *De trad. discipl. V.*

<sup>107</sup> Wilhelm Xylander *Annot. in Cedrenum* 67.

<sup>108</sup> Clark: 2011.

Once again here we might discern Hélienne asserting her intellectual independence since, in the privileging of Dictys, Hélienne favours adherence to a version that is neither wholly pro-Trojan, nor pro-Greek and thus cannot really be understood to be celebrating François' Trojan heritage.

Wood, attempting to explain Hélienne's treatment of the Hector episode, insists that "national pride favoured the adherence to pro-Trojan legends, to the detriment of Homer, who was considered to be pro-Greek."<sup>109</sup> The obvious problem with this is that Dictys, who we learn in the prologue to the *Ephemeris* took part in the Trojan War on the Greek side as the correspondent of King Idomeneus of Crete, cannot possibly be considered to be pro-Trojan. Wood is quite right, however, that Dictys' treatment of the death of Hector is pro-Trojan, or at least pro-Hector. Dictys' Achilles is deceitful and underhanded, killing Hector not in a fair fight but in an ambush. In addition, Stefan Merkle uses this episode to show that the label pro-Greek cannot successfully be applied to the *Ephemeris* either.<sup>110</sup> He persuasively argues that Achilles' severity at this point is part of a gradual decline of character that is intended to reflect the loss of moral integrity of the Greeks more generally.<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, despite the moral decline of the Greeks, Dictys does not conversely offer any moral redemption of the Trojans. At the beginning of the *Ephemeris*, whereas the Greeks are a peaceful nation, the Trojans are presented as Barbarians who, by the end of the account, are no better than they were at the beginning.<sup>112</sup>

While it could be argued that Hélienne is trying thus to maintain a rather neutral position here, we cannot and should not lose sight of Hélienne's preoccupation with finding the truth of the Trojan War and engaging in this tradition, given that this was so central a part of the *épître dédicatoire*.

In the digression, by making a claim for adherence to Dictys' version of the events, Hélienne shows that the truth of the Trojan War is a slippery and elusive concept. The framework of veracity that she creates in the *épître dédicatoire* no longer stands up to scrutiny if we accept that Hélienne is deliberately playing with the idea of truth by inscribing some doubt into the account that she

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<sup>109</sup> Wood 2000: 137.

<sup>110</sup> Merkle 1994: 187.

<sup>111</sup> Merkle 1994: 194: Merkle suggests that Dictys' intention in demolishing the moral superiority of the Greeks is ethical, that is, to comment on the way in which human character is affected by war.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

proclaims the most credible. While it might still be clear that Homer is a purveyor of “poetic fictions”, the reader is left unsure of where to look for the truth.

Although the line between truth and fiction becomes blurred here, the reader is still invited to question where Virgil fits into all of this. His voice is entirely absent from the digression, which is surrounded by his narrative of the fall of Troy, but stands distinctly separate from it. Thus, we can still read the digression as implicit criticism of Virgil: both of his suppression of the competing traditions and of his disengagement with the quest to find the truth of the Trojan War. In a similar manner, the reader is also left to wonder where Hélienne – whose position in the *épître dédicatoire* had seemed so clear – now fits into the Trojan tradition and how her contribution to it stands up against the framework of veracity that she had previously so clearly delineated.

### **4.3 Beyond the preface: encountering the text**

This section moves on from the preface of the *Eneydes* to the translation itself, which begins with a biography on Virgil. Here I propose some emendations to Diane Wood’s reading of the text and consider the breadth of the Virgilian tradition that Hélienne encounters when she undertakes her translation of the *Aeneid*. I then consider the wealth of woodcuts that illustrate the volume, suggesting that their arrangement points to a lack of collaboration from Hélienne and raises again the issue of authorial control in the printing of early modern books.

#### **4.3.1 *La vie du poete Virgile***

The first chapter of Hélienne’s *Eneydes* is, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, not the start of her translation of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, but yet more prefatory material in the form of a biography on Virgil. A thorough examination of the content of this biography and Hélienne’s choice to include it brings out her concerns and interests as a writer and a humanist and illustrates the range of material with which she engages. Moreover, it reinforces the suggestion that the *Eneydes* is written with an audience of both humanist scholars and readers of vernacular literature in mind.

The tradition of *Vitae Virgilianae* (*Lives of Virgil*) dates back to Antiquity, the oldest extant being the *Vita Suetoniana-Donatiana*, a fourth-century reworking

of the *Life* contained in Suetonius' *De Poetis* by Donatus.<sup>113</sup> Later *Vitae* from Late Antiquity are supposed to have derived from the fourth-century *Vita Suetoniana-Donatiana*, including the *Life* at the beginning of Servius' commentary on Virgil.<sup>114</sup> As with the case of Servius, almost all *Lives* in Late Antiquity were scholastic and exegetical, placed at the beginning of works of Virgil or commentaries on them, a use which continued in the Middle Ages.<sup>115</sup> The *Lives* were often placed at the front of works, either in an *accessus ad auctorem* or more commonly (following the model of Servius and Donatus) as part of the preface of the work. We can see then that by incorporating her *vie du poete* with her translation, Hélienne is following a long tradition of closely linking biographies of Virgil with his text.

To comment effectively on Hélienne's particular treatment of the *Vita Virgiliana*, we first need to briefly examine what the *Lives* traditionally contained. The *Vita Suetoniana-Donatiana*, from which most antique *Vitae Virgilianae* derived included the following details: Virgil's family background; his date and place of birth; his pregnant mother's dream which portended his greatness; his early life at Cremona and Milan; his move to Rome; his appearance and character; his early poetry; how he composed; his fame and the response of his contemporaries; his death; the posthumous publication of the *Aeneid*; his critics, and an analysis of his *Eclogues* including the contents and the metre. While the Middle Ages saw the continuation of this largely "historical" tradition, they also saw the introduction of new material into the *Vitae* as a result of changing ideas about Virgil. By the twelfth century, perception of Virgil had shifted considerably as his knowledge of words, nature and human beings were now seen as supernatural and Virgil was characterised as a necromancer or sage, with a magical-scientific knowledge. Up until this point, the view of Virgil had been relatively fixed; he continued to enjoy the preeminent place in the curriculum that he had enjoyed throughout antiquity and his works were seen as a repository of knowledge and wisdom: he was considered, as Jan Ziolkowski puts it, "the poet and scholar par-excellence".<sup>116</sup> It seems that it was this wisdom, together with the tendency to interpret his works allegorically that gave rise to the supernatural characterisation of Virgil,

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<sup>113</sup> Stok 1994: 16. It is also thought that St Jerome's *Vita Hieronymiana* derived from Suetonius.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Ziolkowski 2008: 825.

particularly the perceived prophetic quality of his fourth Eclogue believed to have prophesied the birth of Christ.<sup>117</sup>

In the *Vitae Virgilianae* anecdotes began to appear that confirmed this supernatural reputation, recounting legends of Virgil's ability to control the natural world and protect people with the use of his magical-scientific knowledge. The legends told of his construction of buildings, gardens, baths, and statues with magical qualities. Particularly common were the talismanic bronze figures or automata that he fashioned to bring protection to a particular city or region.<sup>118</sup> Many of the legends were set in Naples, which led Comparetti to suggest that they had grown out of ancient Neapolitan folklore (linked to Virgil's long stay at Naples and his tomb there) and had spread from there throughout Europe.<sup>119</sup> This view has been successfully challenged by scholars, most recently Ziolkowski, who has shown that the Neapolitan legends only appear in a Neapolitan source as late as the fourteenth century; that their earliest documentation points to literary creation by the literati of the 12<sup>th</sup> century not folkloric oral tradition; and that some early legends associate Virgil with Rome rather than Naples.<sup>120</sup>

Hélisienne's *vie du poete* includes both some of the earlier biographical details of the late-antique tradition and the later medieval legends. Her biography begins with the details that were found in the *Vita Suetoniana-Donatiana* and its subsequent reworkings. These include details of Virgil's cognomen, Maro (listed by Hélisienne as an alternative to Virgil: "Aultrement estoit nommé Maro", "He was otherwise known as Maro"); place of birth (Mantua); his education at Cremona; his subsequent move to Milan and eventually Rome. Most of what Hélisienne selects to tell us here is the supposedly historical material, presented in a factual way and related briefly, but she also picks up on the etymological explanation of Virgil's name, retelling in some detail the story found in the *Vita Suetoniana-Donatiana* of the dream of Virgil's mother:

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<sup>117</sup> For a full discussion of the perceived qualities that earned Virgil a reputation as a magician see Wood 1983. For a discussion of the allegorical interpretation of Virgil's works, see Comparetti 1872: chapters 7 and 8.

<sup>118</sup> For a full discussion of the legends associated with Virgil see Ziolkowski and Putnam 2008: 825-1024, Stok 1994 and Comparetti 1872: Part Two.

<sup>119</sup> Comparetti 1872: 340.

<sup>120</sup> Ziolkowski and Putnam 2008: 825. Fabio Stok (1994:18) had already rejected Comparetti's argument, proposing the same point about the literary rather than oral origins of the legends: "In reality we are dealing with a literary creation of the feudal-courtly renaissance of the eleventh and twelfth centuries".

“Et fut nommé Virgile pour ce mot Latin Virga, qui en nostre vernacule<sup>121</sup> & familiere langue Francoyse signifie verge: Car sa mere estant grosse de luy & parvenue à la proximité d’enfanter, songea qu’elle produiroit une verge qui s’exalteroit iusques à l’altitude du ciel qui denotoit l’excellente sublimité d’iceluy”.

“And he was named Virgil after the Latin word *virga*, which in our vernacular and familiar French language means rod: For his mother, when she was pregnant with him and came close to giving birth, dreamed that she produced a rod that reached as far as the sky, which denoted his excellent sublimeness”.

(I. f. i. r)

Hélisenne’s decision to include the etymology of Virgil’s name over all the other details found in the *Vita Suetoniana-Donatiana*, such as his appearance and character, or how he composed, is noteworthy for its inherent appeal. Dream literature was an incredibly popular genre throughout the Middle Ages and continued to flourish in the sixteenth century.<sup>122</sup> This is attested by the popularity of Hélisenne’s own allegorical dream sequence, *Le Songe*. At the same time, etymological study was still prized in this period as a scholarly activity. Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologiae* circulated widely through the Middle Ages and, having first appeared in print in 1472, was reprinted in a further ten editions by 1500.<sup>123</sup> As Ann Moss suggests, etymology was as important for humanists as it was for their Renaissance predecessors.<sup>124</sup> We can see then, in this one small detail of Hélisenne’s *vie du poete* elements of both popular and more scholarly appeal.

The largest section of the *vie du poete*, however, is concerned with Virgilian legends, in which Hélisenne recounts nine anecdotes that characterise Virgil as a necromancer. The way in which Hélisenne introduces these legends may give us at least some indication of the climate in which they were written and the approach she takes to them. After outlining Virgil’s education and early life, Hélisenne tells us: “il fut tres perit<sup>125</sup> & sçavant en philosophie naturelle, & souverain Nigromantien: Car par ses ars nigromnatiques il fit choses admirables”, “he was very skilled and

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<sup>121</sup> I propose the reading “vernacule” contra Wood who has “macule”. See Wood 2000: 142.

<sup>122</sup> On the continued popularity of dream literature in sixteenth-century France, see Wood 2000: 17 and Melehey 2010: 53.

<sup>123</sup> Barney 2006: 27.

<sup>124</sup> Moss 2003: 18.

<sup>125</sup> Wood (2000:142) reads “petit & sçavant”. I propose the emendation as it concurs with Hélisenne’s frequently-used technique of linguistic reduplication, in which two semantically close words are used where one would suffice. Furthermore, the image of Virgil as “petit” contradicts the image found in the *Vita Suetoniana-Donatiana*: *corpore et statura fuit grandi*, “he was large in body and stature” (8). The use of the word “perit” to convey this meaning in the sixteenth century is attested in Huguet’s *Dictionnaire de la langue française du XVIe siècle*, s.v. “perit”.



knowledgeable in natural philosophy, & was an excellent necromancer: for through his necromantic arts he did admirable things” (I, f. i. r). The reference to Virgil’s knowledge of natural philosophy here plays down the supernatural element, endowing him with a kind of scientific rather than superhuman knowledge. On the one hand, this points to the possible origins and development of these legends. On the other hand, we might see this as a kind of rationalising strategy by Hélisenne, an attempt to historicise the rather more legendary elements of her biography of Virgil.

We need not search too far for Hélisenne’s sources for the legends she recounts, since she explicitly names her source for at least two of her legends as Alexander Neckam. Neckam was a twelfth-century English scholar from St Albans who studied and taught at Paris. He wrote works on theology, grammar and natural history and Hélisenne tells us that it is his *De naturis rerum*, an enormous manual of what was known of natural science in the twelfth century, upon which she draws. Although we know that the *De naturis rerum* was reprinted many times in the sixteenth century,<sup>126</sup> we cannot say with any certainty whether Hélisenne engages directly with Neckam or whether the legends she borrows from him come to her second-hand. Jean Lemaire de Belges includes the same legends in his *Illustrations*, which we know Hélisenne had access to since she draws on it in her digression on the death of Hector. It is possible then that the legends may have come to Hélisenne via Lemaire. Nevertheless, it is significant that Hélisenne cites Alexander Neckam as her source by name.

The first legend recounted by Hélisenne is that of the “mouche d’arain, qui de la cité expulsoit toutes les aultres mouches”, “the bronze fly which drove all other flies out of the city” (I, f. i. r), which, we are told, Virgil constructed in Naples. What is interesting about this first deed of Virgil is the plain way in which it is presented. Hélisenne offers no guide as to how to read this feat; there is no indication as to the credibility of the story whatsoever. Are we to suppose from this that Hélisenne believed the legends? Or that she wanted the reader to believe them? Or that she leaves the reader to make up his or her own mind?

The question of the credibility is somewhat problematic and a consideration of the broader context in which the legends can be read offers little resolution. Diane Wood suggests that Hélisenne includes the legends because of

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<sup>126</sup> Wood 2000: 143.

their “wide dissemination and acceptance as literal truth”.<sup>127</sup> This seems to be based on Comparetti’s seminal study of *Virgil in the Middle Ages*, which failed to grapple seriously with questions of credibility and the complicated way in which the Virgilian legends were understood and used.<sup>128</sup> In response to Comparetti, John Webster Spargo offered a more thorough review of the question of credulity and his comments on the Virgilian legends in the sixteenth century are particularly enlightening in terms of understanding the context in which Hélienne writes. Spargo shows that the scholars of the sixteenth and seventeenth century had “mixed feelings” about the Virgilian legends told by their predecessors, some accepting their validity without question, others viewing them with ridicule.<sup>129</sup> The real issue for these authors was not whether Virgil was a necromancer or whether the earlier accounts of the legends were true, but rather the much bigger issue of whether it was acceptable for a man of intelligence to hold a belief in the supernatural.<sup>130</sup> Nevertheless, Spargo demonstrates that the perpetuators of these Virgilian legends during the sixteenth century were often “the very persons and works responsible for the most advanced thought of the Renaissance”.<sup>131</sup> It is important then that we keep an open mind with regard to the issue of credibility as we go on to look at the rest of the legends recalled by Hélienne.

The second legend Hélienne recounts is also Neopolitan and is told in considerably more detail than the first, including a source for this story. This is the legend of the butcher’s where “le chair se pouvoit conserver sans pourriture”, “the meat could be kept without rotting” (I, f. i. r). Hélienne offers this summary, before elaborating at length as follows:

“Et ad ce propos Alexandre surnommé nequam ou le mauvais, recite au livres des natures des choses, qu’en la boucherie de Naples les chairs ne pouvoient estre de corruption preservées, à quoy remedia Virgile par sa prudence & subtilité: Car avec la supreme vertu d’aulcunes herbes

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<sup>127</sup> Wood 2000: 141.

<sup>128</sup> The least favourable criticism comes from Rand who says, “[...] an eminent Italian authority has grossly exaggerated medieval credulity and misinterpreted the spirit in which the romance of Virgil was fashioned”, Rand 1930: 37.

<sup>129</sup> For a full discussion see Spargo 1934: 286-294.

<sup>130</sup> Spargo 1934: 275. Fabio Stok’s 1994 article *Virgil Between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* shows, even as early as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, scholars were already grappling with these concerns, outlining four different solutions used to try to differentiate history from Virgilian legend.

<sup>131</sup> Spargo 1934: 367.

preservoit les chairs d'estre corruptibles, les entretenans recentes & fresches, & de tresbonne saveur l'espace de cinq ans".

"And on this subject Alexnader Neckam, or the bad, tells in his books on the nature of things that in the butchers of Naples the meats could not be kept from decomposing, which Virgil remedied with his wisdom and cleverness: for with the supreme virtue of certain herbs, he kept the meats from being perishable, keeping them new and fresh and tasting excellent for five years".  
(I, f. 1r)

The fact that Hélienne chooses to cite her source here is surely significant and is perhaps an attempt to lend more authority to the legend that she relates. Whether it does actually add any credibility is difficult to say, but it certainly gives the impression that Hélienne has done some research and that this legend, at least, has not come to her through oral tradition but is based upon a literary source and a well-known one at that. However, there is also a possibility that Hélienne's naming of Neckam as her source might well be a kind of distancing strategy, a way of disassociating herself from the credibility of the tale of the magical butcher's by telling it through someone else's voice. Again, there is no real guidance in the text itself to take the reference either way.

The third legend recounted is also found in Neckam's *De naturis rerum* and although Hélienne does not cite him here as a source, the detail she includes is much the same. In this story Virgil delivers Naples from a deadly plague caused by a great number of leeches by means of "une sangsue d'or, laquelle il iacula dedans ung puy", "a golden leech which he threw in a well" (I f. 1r). As in Neckam's account, after many years the leech is drawn up as work is carried out on the well, only for the plague to resurface and the leech to be once again thrown down the well to put a stop to it. Again, Hélienne offers no comment on the credulity of the story, and her presentation of it seems straightforward as she says that it is a feat "de grande admiration digne", "worthy of great admiration" (I, f. i. r). Once again, there is no authorial comment here as to whether Hélienne believes this legend or expects her reader to.

Neckam is mentioned once again by name as the source of the fourth and fifth legends which lose the geographical specificity of the first three legends and which appear not to be talismans that protect people, but creations for the poet to enjoy. These two similar creations are a garden with no walls "sinon l'aer qui estoit immobile & palpable", "but the air which was still and tangible" and a bridge of air,

“par lequel il se transporoit par tout ou il apiroit aller”, “by which he took himself everywhere he wished to go” (I, f. i. r). The sixth and seventh legends, which are not found in Neckam, are also recounted very briefly and do not explicitly appear to have any talismanic property attached to them. They are an automated stone bell tower which moved “au mouvement des cloches estans dedans icelle”, “to the movement of the bells which were inside it” and a garden “en l’interiorité duquel ne pluvoit jamais”, “inside which it never rained” (I, f. i. r-v).

The eighth legend is that of Virgil’s construction of “les baings desquels sont narrées choses merveilleuses & incroyables”, “the baths concerning which wondrous and incredible things are told” (I, f. i. v). Here, I propose an emendation of Wood’s reading which suggests “des biens desquels sont narrées choses merveilleuse & incroyables”,<sup>132</sup> partly on the grounds of determinacy (since the expression seems rather vague in comparison with Virgil’s other feats), and more pressingly on the fact that therapeutic baths are a recurring feature of the tradition of Virgilian legends. The twelfth century British author Gervase of Tilbury includes a description of baths constructed by Virgil in the city of Naples that are able to cure all manner of diseases in his three-part encyclopaedia of marvels entitled *Otia imperialia*.<sup>133</sup> They are also very briefly alluded to by Neckam not in the *De naturis rerum*, but another poem *De laudibus divinae sapientiae*, *On the Praises of Divine Wisdom*, where Neckam writes *Bathoniae thermis vix praefero Virgilianas*, “I hardly prefer the baths of Virgil to those of bath”.<sup>134</sup> The “incroyables” here is important, as it is the only explicit reference Hélienne makes to the credibility of the legends. It is quite possible that, in conjunction with “merveilleuses”, “incroyables” marks the stories associated with the baths as so wondrous that one might not believe them, but there is implicitly a notion of doubt here. This is the only clue Hélienne gives us as to how to read the legends, offering for the first time a brief hint of scepticism, which – combined with her rationalising introduction to Virgil the necromancer and her citing of Neckam – might suggest an attempt to bring a detached sense of scholarly intellectualism to these popular legends.

The ninth and final legend is the most detailed. Here, Virgil’s assistance is brought to the people of Rome where he builds a temple full of statues bearing the

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<sup>132</sup> Wood 2000: 142. Wood translates the line as “marvellous and incredible things that are narrated”.

<sup>133</sup> Neckam, *Otia imperialia* 3.15

<sup>134</sup> Neckam, *De laudibus divinae sapientiae* 271.

names of various Roman provinces. Each statue has a bell around its neck and should any revolt occur in that particular province, the statue would move automatically, thus ringing the bell and alerting the priest so that rebellion could be reported to the emperor and swiftly quelled. Here, once again, we are back where we started, with no explicit naming of a source and no indication as to how to read the legend.

It is important to note the extent to which the notion of Virgil as a necromancer took on a life of its own, outside the works of Virgil, with books devoted exclusively to the Virgilian legends.<sup>135</sup> Freestanding *Vitae Virgilianae* enjoyed wide circulation in various vernacular languages throughout the early modern period.<sup>136</sup> Significantly, Spargo documents the existence of an anonymously-authored chapbook in circulation in France during the sixteenth century entitled *Les faictz merueilleux de Virgile*.<sup>137</sup> The very nature of a chapbook - cheaply produced and aimed at a common audience - attests to the currency of the Virgilian legends in more popular literature as well as the more scholarly texts discussed by Stok. These books contained little - if any - mention of Virgil's credentials as a poet and it is possible that the common reader of the sixteenth century French chapbook on Virgilian legends would have known Virgil the necromancer better than Virgil the poet. We can see then how Hélienne's inclusion of a *vie du poete* might appeal to readers of popular literature too, introducing Virgil to them in the form they know him best.

After Hélienne has related all of these legends, she returns at the end of the chapter to the ancient biographical material, providing a list and brief summary of Virgil's works, and more details found in the *Vita Suetoniana-Donatiana*, including his age at death, place of death, place of burial and the reign during which he lived (I, f. i. v). Hélienne's arrangement of material seems to be significant. Choosing to end her *vie du poete* with the kind of traditional 'historical' biography with which she begun and gives us a sense once more of the scholarly nature of her project as she had described it in the title of her work.

But how does all of this compare with what Hélienne's contemporaries are doing and what does it say about her translation? I have already noted that Lemaire's *Illustrations* also made use of the Virgilian legends, but it is important to

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<sup>135</sup> Spargo 1934: 235.

<sup>136</sup> Ziolkowski 2008: 828-9.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

take into account that Lemaire's was a very different kind of project. Lemaire's *Illustrations* was a prose account of the Trojan legends that made no claim to be a translation. Neither Octovien de Saint-Gelais nor Louis des Masures, Hélienne's contemporary translators include any biography of Virgil in their works. This sets Hélienne apart and further underscores her popular appeal as she consciously follows in the footsteps of Lemaire and not Octovien, whose work we know she is familiar with. While we might detect some traces of a critical approach in the way in which Hélienne presents and retells the Virgilian legends, as outlined above, we see in her *vie du poete* neither the kind of anxiety Fabio Stok describes in the work of humanist scholars who attempted to differentiate history from Virgilian legend,<sup>138</sup> nor any real sense of the mixed feelings attributed to them by Spargo.<sup>139</sup> Instead Hélienne brings a long-established tradition to the enterprise of translation and consciously marks her *Eneydes* as distinct from her predecessor Octovien's and, at the same time, incorporates her translation into a broader popular tradition of Virgilian legend. By engaging with so diverse a range of material, Hélienne continues to appeal to a broad readership and showcases her knowledge of the rich traditions of Virgilian legend and biography.

#### 4.3.2 Woodcuts

The study of representations of Virgilian subject matter has tended to focus on the reception of Virgilian themes in painting and neglected the role of graphic arts (drawing, printmaking, lithography and so on). Those studies that there have been are often limited to cataloguing the number of illustrations and make little attempt to analyse the subject or the style.<sup>140</sup> However, illustrations that accompany a text are an important part of the interpretative process and are consequently an essential tool in our understanding of the author's or publisher's intention and the reader's reception of the text. It is therefore necessary to consider the woodcut illustrations that accompany the *Eneydes*, as well as the text itself, examining how they are used and suggesting how they might have been received. I begin by providing an overview to give a sense of the wealth of the illustrations in the *Eneydes* and how they contribute to the novelistic feel of the text, before examining where they are placed, showing that while they sometimes correspond closely to

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<sup>138</sup> Stok 1994.

<sup>139</sup> Spargo 1934: 268.

<sup>140</sup> On the dearth of criticism on Virgilian subjects in the graphic arts, see Suerbaum 2008: 7.

the text, at other times they are misplaced. Arguing that the woodcuts are not designed specifically for this text, I will suggest that they are copies of illustrations from an earlier German edition of the complete works of Virgil, which accounts for their medieval feel. Finally, I will suggest that, although the original German woodcuts were designed for both educated and uneducated readers, their inclusion within the *Eneydes* would have posed problems for both humanist and more heterogeneous readers, given the lack of refinement in both their finish and their placement within the text.

Hélisenne's *Eneydes* is a lavishly illustrated folio, featuring 41 woodcut illustrations over its 204 pages, depicting scenes from the *Aeneid*.<sup>141</sup> A number of the illustrations are repeated within the work – in one case three times – and yet, despite these duplications, the total number of different blocks used still amounts to 30. This is particularly significant when we compare the *Eneydes* with other near-contemporary translations. Although illustrated editions of the complete works of Virgil had been in print since 1502,<sup>142</sup> the first translation of the *Aeneid* into French by Octovien de Saint-Gelais, first printed in 1509, contained only twelve woodcuts across all twelve books.<sup>143</sup> Louis des Masures' translation of Books One to Four of the *Aeneid*, which was printed in 1542 by the Lyons printer Jean de Tournes, contained only four illustrations. By the time his complete translation of all twelve books was published in 1560, only eight woodcuts were added, so that each book was now headed by a woodcut that epitomised the text that followed. It is apparent then that the *Eneydes* is much more densely illustrated than these other translations.

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<sup>141</sup> This figure does not include the stock images found at the beginning and end of the text, such as the printer's *colophon* (printing mark) depicting a pot of thistles. For a full list detailing the content of each woodcut see Appendix A.

<sup>142</sup> Rabb 1960: 187: Rabb identifies the volume printed in 1502 by Johann Grüninger in Strasbourg as the first illustrated edition of the complete works of Virgil. For a more comprehensive discussion, see also Suerbaum 2008.

<sup>143</sup> Octovien de Saint-Gelais, 1509: 3, 46, 64, 83, 107, 130, 152, 172, 197, 223, 249, 273.

The woodcut illustrations are placed at fairly regular intervals throughout the four books of the *Eneydes* and always come at the beginning of a chapter and after the introductory *phrase*. For the most part, they seem to engage fairly closely with the text, depicting in detail the event or events described in the chapter that follows. For example, at the beginning of Chapter Three of Book One (*EN* fol. 5r), in which Héli-senne translates *Aeneid* 1.65-75, where Juno urges Aeolus to whip up a storm to shipwreck the Trojans, the woodcut at the beginning of the chapter clearly illustrates this scene (fig. 1.).

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**Figure 1: Juno asks Aeolus for help, (I, f. iv, r), Bibliothèque nationale de France.**

In the foreground of the illustration we see the Trojans on a storm-tossed sea. To the right, Neptune is forced to cede to Aeolus' dominion, since Jupiter has granted him the power to calm or agitate the waves of the sea through his winds (*Aen.* 1.65-6). In the top right of the illustration the anthropomorphic face of one of these winds blows down upon the sea, stirring it up. To the left, on land, stand a male



and female figure intended to represent the gods responsible for the storm, Juno and Aeolus, their crowns marking their divinity.<sup>144</sup>

Other illustrations, however, fit less closely with the content of the chapter they precede. This is particularly evident in the case of some of the repeated illustrations. For example, the woodcut discussed above that was used in Chapter Three of Book One also appears at the start of Chapter Five of Book One. In the later chapter, translating *Aeneid* 1.94-123, Hélienne tells of how, in the midst of the storm, Aeneas prays for death and yet the Trojan ships continue to be tossed by the winds before that of Orontes sinks. Clearly the woodcut is used here as a generic representation of the storm-tossed Trojans, yet the precise detail of the illustration in this instance no longer corresponds with the detail of the text. Juno and Aeolus are less relevant here than they were in Chapter Three and, while we may suppose that the figure in the boat at the centre of the illustration is a desperate Aeneas, there is no suggestion of the sinking ship of Orontes that has lost its helmsman.

A similar example of the use of repeat illustration can be seen at Chapter Ten of Book Three, where the woodcut used is a repetition of that at Chapter Two of Book Three. In its first appearance, the woodcut links closely to the text. Here, after sailing to Thrace and beginning to build a city there, Aeneas prepares a sacrifice and pulls up myrtle and cornel shoots to wreath the altars (*Aen.* 3.19-26). As he does so, blood drips from the stems and a cry is heard from beneath the ground (*Aen.* 3.27-40). Hélienne ends the chapter here and in the next continues with Virgil's story that the voice is that of Polydorus, who tells Aeneas that the shoots have grown from the sharp points of the weapons that murdered him after he was sent to Thrace by Priam (*Aen.* 3.41-6). The woodcut at the start of this chapter illustrates in details several elements of the narrative (fig. 2).

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<sup>144</sup> The labels above the heads of Juno and Aeolus are left blank, suggesting this block may be unfinished. See below for more on the finish of the illustrations.

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**Figure 2: The arrival at Thrace and the story of Polydorus, (III, f. liii, r), Bibliothèque nationale de France.**

The land is labelled 'Tracia' (Thrace) at the top right; Aeneas stands in the centre; before him are shoots growing from the ground; in the background the walls of a city; to the right a sacrificial altar and before it a bull; just left of centre, before the shoots, lies the body of Polydorus and above him a Trojan woman pouring out an offering. But when the same woodcut appears later at Chapter Ten it is somewhat out of context. In this chapter the Trojans make offerings and celebrate games at Actium as Héli-senne translates Virgil's *Aeneid* 3.263-288. It appears that the woodcut from Chapter Two is being used here as a generic scene of sacrifice. There is, however, some correspondence between the text and the illustration, since Virgil's Aeneas tells specifically of fires lit on altars (*Aen.* 3.279) and games celebrated on the shore (*Aen.* 3.280) and the woodcut clearly depicts a burning altar and a shoreline. But it is, nonetheless, evident that the illustration is used merely for its thematic similarity, in so far as it depicts offerings being made at an altar. It is clear then from these two examples that the illustrations are not always carefully chosen to match the text.

This becomes all the more apparent when we look at other woodcuts that seem entirely inappropriately placed. Chapter Twelve of Book Two of the *Eneydes*, which corresponds to *Aeneid* 2.298-335, tells of how Aeneas climbs to the roof of Anchises' house and, seeing the devastation around him, prepares for battle, before

Panthus arrives and tells him that the city is lost. Rather curiously, the woodcut at the beginning of this chapter (fig. 3) does not depict this scene, but instead illustrates a scene from later in Book Two. The woodcut shows a labelled Helen, in the centre, who appears to be crouching; to the left, Juno, brandishing a sword; to the right, Neptune brandishing a trident; and in the centre Venus and Aeneas. This scene clearly depicts *Aeneid* 2.559-620, translated by Hélienne in Chapter 21 of Book Two, in which Aeneas, thinking of his own family, catches sight of Helen hiding at the temple of Vesta and thinks of killing her. Venus then appears and stops him, telling him that it is not Helen who is to blame for the destruction of Troy, but the gods, revealing to him a vision of the gods that includes Neptune shaking the foundations of the city with his trident and Juno, sword in hand, destroying the ships.

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**Figure 3: Venus rebukes Aeneas as he plans to kill Helen, (II f. xxxviii, v), Bibliothèque nationale de France.**

In addition to the unusual choice of placement for these woodcuts, it is important to note that some do not even depict events within Books One to Four at all, but later books of the *Aeneid*, clearly demonstrating that they were not

produced specifically for the *Eneydes*, but for a previous edition of the *Aeneid*, presumably of all twelve books, and reused. A clear example is provided by the illustration in Chapter Nineteen of Book One. In this chapter, which corresponds to *Aeneid* 1.450-495, Aeneas and Achates arrive at the temple of Juno and Aeneas studies the depictions of the Trojan war that adorn the temple. The woodcut at the beginning of this chapter (fig. 4), however, clearly depicts not the temple of Juno at Carthage, but the temple of Apollo at Cumae, where Aeneas, following his father's instructions, meets the Sibyl at the start of Book Six (*Aen.* 6.1-55).

The temple of Apollo is clearly labelled as such in the woodcut, as are the figures of Aeneas, Achates and the Sibyl. Furthermore, the friezes depicting episodes from the Trojan war are clearly visible on the walls on either side of the temple. It seems then that the illustration has been chosen simply because it depicts a temple, irrespective of the finer detail.

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**Figure 4: Aeneas at the temple of Apollo, (I, fol. xvi, v), Bibliothèque nationale de France.**

A second example of an illustration from outside the scope of Books One to Four can be found in Chapter Seventeen of Book Two of the *Eneydes*, which corresponds to *Aeneid* 2.469-506. In this chapter Pyrrhus breaches the door of the

palace, allowing the Greeks to storm through and slaughter many Trojans, which culminates in the murder of Priam. The woodcut at the start of this chapter, however, clearly depicts scenes from Book Nine of the *Aeneid*, which recounts the Rutulian attack on the Trojan ships, the story of Nisus and Euryalus and the victories of Turnus (fig. 5).

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**Figure 5: Nisus, Euryalus and Turnus, (II, f. xliii, v), Bibliothèque nationale de France.**

The image on the left of the woodcut is somewhat unclear, but seems to show a figure brandishing a sword and stealing into a tent, and it is reasonable to assume that this depicts part of Nisus and Euryalus' raid on the sleeping Rutulian camp (*Aen.* 9.314-449). In the centre is a labelled Euryalus, which suggests that the murky figure on the left is probably Nisus. Euryalus is depicted plunging his sword into the neck of a figure behind a table bearing a drinking vessel, which clearly identifies him as Rhoetus, the Rutulian who crouches in fear behind a large wine-jar (*Aen.* 9.345-6). In the foreground of the block, to the right, Turnus kills an unlabelled Trojan figure. Thematically, the image is appropriate since it depicts death in battle, but the detail is less appropriate in this context. While we might draw similarities between Pyrrhus and Turnus, as both are Greeks who bring

about great losses among the Trojans, the story of Nisus and Euryalus has no counterpart in Book Two and bears little relevance to the content of the chapter that follows on from the breaching of the palace. Both these examples, then, seem to further confirm that the illustrations have not been chosen with care and thoughtfully placed, but rather are decorative elements designed to increase the aesthetic appeal of the text.

The use of woodcuts and their placement throughout the text raise a number of questions about the production of the *Eneydes* and the significance of the illustrations. Since they were procured from elsewhere, rather than commissioned specifically for this text, from where did the woodcuts originate? Who chose which illustrations to include and their position within the text?<sup>145</sup> Given the way in which the illustrations are placed, it seems unlikely that they were chosen by Hélienne. But did she have any input in the illustration process, or were they chosen instead by someone else? The printer, Denys Janot, perhaps? Or someone from his workshop? Does the inclusion of illustrations of events outside of Books One to Four indicate a limited knowledge of the text on the part of the person who chose them, or an economic decision to make the best use of the woodcuts available to them? Wood goes as far as to suggest that the whole project of the *Eneydes* may have been conceived by Janot in an attempt to maximise his profits by reusing woodcuts from his collection.<sup>146</sup> It seems unlikely, however, that Janot – whose collection included over nine hundred blocks – would have commissioned a translation simply to make use of these thirty blocks. What is clear is that the use of illustrations in the *Eneydes* appears to be more decorative than significant to the text, which further complicates our understanding of the relationship between the text and the *mise en livre*.

While the woodcuts cannot thus contribute to our understanding of what Hélienne tries to achieve in her rendering of Virgil's text, they are nevertheless important to our understanding of the work as a whole. The woodcuts offer us a further indication of the possible strategy of the publisher – and how this compares to Hélienne's own strategy – as well as the way in which the *Eneydes* might have been received. There are two particular reasons why the importance of the woodcuts should not be neglected. Firstly, Denys Janot's extensive use of

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<sup>145</sup> On the often complex relationship between designer, woodcutter and printer and the difficulty of ascertaining their respective involvement in the process, see Hind 1963: 29-32.

<sup>146</sup> Wood 2000: 64.

woodcuts was groundbreaking in French publishing. Between 1534 and 1535 only six of Janot's publications included illustrations and only one original woodcut was produced for him. In 1536, however, Janot acquired 40 original new woodcuts and thus began a period of heavy illustration that marked Janot's distinctive style and made him one of the most "modern" and "innovative" printers of his day.<sup>147</sup> Secondly, as already noted, the *mise en livre* is part of the process of mediation between text and interpreter and the woodcuts are a key part of this interpretative strategy. As Craig Kallendorf notes in his overview of Virgilian illustration from the Renaissance to the present, studies of the variety of interpretations of the *Aeneid* throughout the centuries have, for the most part, been restricted to verbal constructs such as prefaces, commentaries on the text and other written paratextual elements, at the expense of pictorial constructs:

"[...] I know of only a handful of efforts to analyse the artistic interpretation of the *Aeneid* on the most basic level: the pictures that accompany the printed texts on which our modern understanding of the poetry is based. [...] My underlying premise is that the same sorts of problems that have recently bedevilled interpretations constructed in words also affect how we should be dealing with visual responses to a text".<sup>148</sup>

An examination of the woodcuts of the *Eneydes*, part of the visual paratext, reveals a construction of the intended audience just as much as the text itself and allows us to consider how the illustrations might have shaped that audience's response to the text. It is therefore important to consider the content and style of the illustrations and I will begin by closely examining one of the woodcuts of the *Eneydes*, before comparing it with a woodcut from a near-contemporary French translation of the *Aeneid* by Louis des Masures.

The following woodcut (fig. 6) is from the start of Chapter 27 of Book One and depicts a number of scenes from the end of Book One, with the central focus being the banquet held for Aeneas and the Trojans in Dido's palace. It is, in many ways, typical of the woodcuts from the *Eneydes* in terms of both content and style and affords an examination of some of the key recurring features.

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<sup>147</sup> Rawles 1976: 27.

<sup>148</sup> Kallendorf 2001: 122.

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**Figure 6: Dido's banquet for Aeneas and the Trojans, (I, f. xxiii, v), Bibliothèque nationale de France.**

The first thing to note about this woodcut, as with many of the woodcuts from the *Eneydes*, is that it does not depict a single moment in the text. Instead, upon closer examination, it takes the viewer through a series of events, following the sequence of the narrative through the grouping of labelled figures. While the main focus is the feast in the palace of Dido, the block, in fact, takes us through all the events from this point right to the end of Book One. To the right of the scene Achates, the figure on the ship, loads Ascanius with royal gifts ready to take back to the palace, as instructed by Aeneas (*Aen.* 1.643-656). To the top right, however, Venus spirits away Ascanius so that Cupid can take his place and thereby, disguised as Ascanius, make Dido fall in love with Aeneas (*Aen.* 1.656-94). In the centre of the picture, Achates has arrived back at the palace accompanied by a small winged Cupid who carries the royal gifts (*Aen.* 1.695-6). To the left of the picture we move to the end of Book One, where the banquet begins. Dido and Aeneas are at the centre, surrounded by all the luxuries of the feast, as described at *Aeneid* 1.695-702: a table loaded with food, baskets of bread (to the right) and a servant pouring water (in front of the table). To the left, a minor figure, Bitias – to whom Dido offers the wine-cup after she has performed a libation to the gods (*Aen.* 1.736-739) – is labelled. Next to Bitias stands the musician Iopas with his lyre (*Aen.* 1.740-1). The serial presentation of the various scenes does not seem particularly intuitive, in



that the narrative sequence runs from right to left, rather than left to right, which might seem more appropriate given that it would match the way in which we read text.

In terms of style, the costumes of the figures and their surroundings are distinctly medieval, and the robes worn by Dido and Aeneas suggest the sixteenth-century court far more than the ancient world. Moreover, the leaded glass window of Dido's banquet hall looks very much as though it belongs in the postclassical buildings of medieval Europe rather than an exotic ancient Carthaginian palace. Humanist scholars had been studying ancient ruins for generations,<sup>149</sup> and although excavations did not begin at Carthage until 1857,<sup>150</sup> the early moderns had at least some idea of how different ancient cities looked from those of their own day. Yet, we see here little attempt by the artist to recreate the ancient world, but rather an attempt to recast the textual scenes of the *Aeneid* in an image of the Middle Ages.

The key question here then is how consistent this aesthetic is with other contemporary representations of the classical past. Scholars such as Roberto Weiss and Edwin Panofsky have proposed a periodisation of early modern European art, with particular reference to the representation of the ancient world, that – on the most basic level – sees the medieval artist as concerned with content over form and the Renaissance artist as finally bringing together form and content.<sup>151</sup> The medieval artist tended to “appropriate the other and make it their own”,<sup>152</sup> thus representing ancient Greece and Rome in their own cultural terms. In response to this, and influenced by the work of humanist scholars, Renaissance artists sought to reverse this process of appropriation and represent the past on its own terms, stressing its otherness and attempting to remove all traces of their own culture from their representations of the past. While claims of universal validity for stylistic periods should always be treated with caution and this neat periodisation

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<sup>149</sup> Monuments of the city of Rome had been studied extensively by Cola di Rienzo and Giovanni Dondi in the fourteenth century and Poggio Bracciolini and Flavio Biondo in the fifteenth, who used written sources to help elucidate the remains. For further discussion, see Moatti 1993: 25-52.

<sup>150</sup> The first excavations at Carthage were led by the French archaeologist Charles Beulé, who published his findings in *Fouilles à Carthage* (1861).

<sup>151</sup> Weiss 1969: 1-30; Panofsky 1960. For the application of this construct of periodisation to illustrated editions of Virgil, see also Kallendorf 2001 and Rabb 1960. Rabb notes that this periodisation only works for Northern European illustrations of Virgil and that for Italian illustrators of the Middle Ages the reverse was true; their emphasis was on form over content, until the Renaissance brought about the integration of these aspects.

<sup>152</sup> Kallendorf 2001: 123.

clearly oversimplifies the development of early modern art, it is nevertheless apparent that the woodcut illustrations of the *Eneydes* seem stylistically to belong more closely to the Middle Ages than the Renaissance in which they were produced.

The medieval feel of the woodcuts from the *Eneydes* becomes all the more apparent when we compare them to those that appear within Louis des Masures' *Les quatre premiers livres de l'Eneïde*, published by Jean de Tournes less than ten years later in 1552. The woodcut at the start of Book Three of the *Eneïde* (fig. 7) clearly shows the significant difference in style from the earlier woodcuts of the *Eneydes*.

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**Figure 7: The arrival at Buthrotum and the story of Polydorus, *Les quatre premiers livres de l'Eneïde*. Lyons, Jean de Tournes, 1552 (Book Three, fol. H7r), Bibliothèque nationale de France.**

Like the woodcuts of the *Eneydes*, this block brings together several episodes from the text. Since there is only one illustration at the beginning of each book of the translation, each woodcut attempts to epitomise the contents of the book that follows. This block, then, serves to illustrate the various sacrifices and warnings that occur in Book Three of the *Aeneid* and direct the Trojans' course. In the foreground, on the left the Trojan women surround the altar, presumably as they

carry out the funeral rites for Polydorus (*Aen.* 3.62-8); on the right, Aeneas holds the stem of myrtle that drips with Polydorus' blood (*Aen.* 3.27-9). In the middle ground Helenus and Andromache welcome the Trojans as they arrive at Buthrotum (*Aen.* 3.293). In the background, the erupting Etna pours out smoke from the left of the picture, as the Trojans are forced to spend a night in its shadow (3.570-588).

If we compare this woodcut to those of the *Eneydes*, the image from the *Eneïde* is clearly more refined and cut with more precision and detail. Technically it is more accomplished in terms of shading, texture and perspective, which generally gives it a more realistic, less stylised feel. The most distinctive difference, however, is that here the emphasis is clearly on the style of the illustration; on form as well as content. There is a clear effort on the part of the artist – presumed to be Bernard Salomon<sup>153</sup> – to represent Virgil's world on its own terms. The loose flowing garments worn by the Trojan women are in a more immediately recognisable classical style than those worn by the characters in the *Eneydes* woodcuts. Similarly, the architectural detail of the scene, including the altar at which the Trojan women place their offerings and the Corinthian-style capital of the column that holds the architrave of the temple building behind it, aims to recreate a realistic classical scene. In some ways, the artist here employs greater licence than the artist of the woodcuts from the *Eneydes*, since there is no mention of any kind of temple building in the text at this point. Virgil gives us little detail about the city that Aeneas founds in Thrace and how far advanced the beginnings of this city are, stating only that altars have been built for Venus and the other gods for the *coeptorum operum*, 'the works begun' (*Aen.* 3.20) and that more altars are set up in honour of Polydorus (*Aen.* 3.63). The temple building that stands behind the altar, then, is from the imagination of the artist; an attempt to envisage and fashion for the reader a more complete picture of what this city founded by Aeneas might have looked like. The artist thereby presents the reader with a vision of a classical past distinct from his own world, preserving the 'otherness' of antiquity and attempting to envision the past on its own terms.

The *Eneïde* woodcut is arguably more difficult to read than those of the *Eneydes*, since the artist does not attempt to convey pictorially as much of the narrative as possible, but rather is more selective. Furthermore, since the

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<sup>153</sup> Mortimer 1986: 174.

characters are not labelled, the reader cannot rely so heavily on the woodcuts to follow the narrative. In this context, the woodcuts from Louis des Masures' translation seem more decorative than explanatory.

The difference between the woodcuts of these two near-contemporary editions raises several interpretative questions. Why do the woodcuts from the *Eneydes* aesthetically evoke the Middle Ages? Do they have a didactic function or are they merely intended to decorate the text? What do they imply about the intended reader of the *Eneydes*? An examination of the origins of these woodcuts provides a useful starting point for understanding some of these issues.

The most influential early illustrated edition of Virgil was that of the complete works of Virgil, *Publii Virgillii Maronis Opera*,<sup>154</sup> printed in Strasbourg in 1502 by Johann Grüninger. This edition is remarkable in the history both of illustrations of Virgil and of early book printing due to the number of woodcuts contained in it and its significant influence on later printed editions. It contains 214 original woodcuts across the 450 pages of the folio. As Rabb notes, this is particularly noteworthy since it was produced at a time during which the art of woodcutting was still in its experimental stages.<sup>155</sup> The blocks from the edition were copied in Italy and France and remained popular for half a century.<sup>156</sup>

We cannot be sure who produced the woodcuts, and a volume as heavily illustrated as this would probably have required the skill of several artists to draw the scenes and several cutters to cut them.<sup>157</sup> We know, however, from the title above the first of two introductory poems at the beginning of the work, that the whole project was overseen by the lawyer and humanist scholar Sebastian Brant:

*Publii Virgillii Maronis opera cum quinque vulgatiis commentariis:  
expolitissimisque figures atque imaginibus nuper per Sebastianum Brant  
superadditis [...].*

“The works of Publius Virgilius Maro with five vulgate commentaries: with most refined images and illustrations added recently by Sebastian Brant.”  
(*Opera* fol. A5v.)

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<sup>154</sup> Hereafter *Opera*.

<sup>155</sup> Rabb 1960: 187.

<sup>156</sup> For a fuller sense of the importance of the woodcuts from this edition and their influence on subsequent illustrations, see Freund 1937: 687; Kristeller 1888: 32-4; Zabughin 1923: 389-90.

<sup>157</sup> Mortimer 1986: 160.

Brant was trained in classics and law at the University of Basel and, while practising law in his native city of Strasbourg, continued his work as a classical scholar. In addition to his work with Grüninger on the *Opera*, he also wrote a number of original Latin poems, including the satirical poem for which he was most renowned, *Das Narrenschiff*. In his address to the reader, the second introductory poem of the *Opera*, Brant gives us some idea of the collaborative way in which the woodcuts were produced and his particular involvement in the process, writing: *has nostras quas pinximus ecce tabellas*, “behold these pictures which we have painted” (*Opera* A6r.).

When we compare the woodcuts of the *Eneydes* to those from the Grüninger-Brant edition, the influence of the earlier German edition is clear. In fact, *all* of the *Eneydes* woodcuts – with the exception of the frontispiece – appear to be reproductions of the earlier edition, albeit smaller, of poorer quality and often with the images reversed.<sup>158</sup> We can see the resemblance to the Brant woodcuts particularly clearly in the respective representations of a passage from Book Four of the *Aeneid*, in which Dido, having confessed to Anna her love for Aeneas, visits shrines and makes sacrifices to win the gods’ favour:

*principio delubra adeunt pacemque per aras  
exquirunt; mactant lectas de more bidentis  
legiferae Cereri Phoeboque patrique Lyaeo,  
Iunoni ante omnis, cui uincla iugalia curae.  
ipsa tenens dextra pateram pulcherrima Dido  
candentis uaccae media inter cornua fundit,  
aut ante ora deum pinguis spatiatur ad aras,  
instauratque diem donis, pecudumque reclusis  
pectoribus inhians spirantia consulit exta.*

“First they visit shrines and seek divine approval among the altars;  
and they slaughter chosen sheep according to custom  
to law-giving Ceres and Phoebus and father Lycaeus,  
and Juno, above all, who is responsible for marriage ties.  
Most beautiful Dido herself, holding the bowl in her right hand,  
pours the libation between the horns of a white cow,  
or walks to rich altars before the faces of the gods,  
and celebrates anew the day with gifts, and gazing at  
the opened chests of animals, she consults the quivering entrails.”

(*Aen.* 4.56-64)

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<sup>158</sup> For a full list of the *Eneydes* woodcuts and the corresponding original image in the Brant edition from which they are copied, see Appendix B.

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**Figure 8: Dido and Anna visit shrines and make sacrifices, *Opera*. Strasbourg, Johann Grüninger, 1502, (*Aeneid* Book Four fol. 211r), Bibliothèque nationale de France.**

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**Figure 9: Dido and Anna visit shrines and make sacrifices, (IV, f. lxxx, r), Bibliothèque nationale de France.**

The woodcut from the *Eneydes* (fig. 9) is clearly a poorer copy of the woodcut from the 1502 *Opera* (fig. 8). Both illustrations have the same characters in the same positions and stances in the same surroundings: Dido is depicted both examining the entrails upon the altar to the left and pouring libations on the cow that stands in front of her; Anna looks on from the left; to the right of Dido stands a male figure, possibly a priest or a soothsayer.<sup>159</sup> Then, to the right of the Brant illustration, the artist recreates what the text omits, imagining Aeneas and Ascanius exploring the city with their fellow Trojans, unaware of the Queen's burning passion, while Dido and Anna seek the favour of the gods. The artist behind the *Eneydes'* woodcut copies the scene almost exactly, though with one fewer companion for Aeneas and Ascanius, no windows in the shrine or temple, no city dwellers in the background and a cruder representation of the city itself.<sup>160</sup> The medieval style of building and costume is retained, as is the serial presentation. Some of the detail of the original image has been omitted and the lines of the woodcut are clearly less finely cut, but there is no doubt that it is a copy of that from the famous Grüninger-Brant edition.

It is not at all uncommon to find repetition of woodcut illustrations in early printed works, since blocks could yield a large number of impressions if printed with care and thus were often passed from one printer to another.<sup>161</sup> (Though this is clearly not the case here, since there are significant differences in both content and quality between the two.) Not all repetitions were the result of buying or borrowing, however. The copying of blocks was also common, ranging on a scale from emulation or derivation to direct copying. Several different techniques were employed for producing and copying blocks. The artist would either draw the design onto the surface of the block ready to be cut, paste a drawing or impression on paper onto the surface of the block, or transfer a drawing on paper onto the block.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> This seems likely to be a reference to Virgil's *heu, vatum ignarae mentes!* "Alas, the unknowing minds of seers" (*Aen.* 4.65), where he implies that the soothsayers Dido and Anna visit imagine they are ensuring Dido's happiness when they are actually contributing to her self-destruction.

<sup>160</sup> Janot also adds a frame to the woodcut made from stock pieces borrowed from his previous works. According to Stephen Rawles' catalogue, which collects together the various frames and compartments used by Janot, the side pieces were first used in 1540 (Rawles 1976: 117); the head-piece 1542 (p. 122); and the tail-piece 1541 (p. 125). The woodcuts of the *Eneydes* employ a number of different side-pieces, head-pieces and tail-pieces in various combinations.

<sup>161</sup> Hind 1963: 14.

<sup>162</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the detail of each technique see Hind 1963: 17.

A large number of the illustrations from the *Eneydes* – particularly those from Books One and Two – are the same as those from the Grüninger-Brant edition, but printed in reverse.<sup>163</sup> For example, if we look at the Brant original (fig. 10) upon which the aforementioned illustration of Dido's banquet for Aeneas (fig. 6, above p. 9) was based, we can see that the copy is in reverse.

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**Figure 10: Dido's banquet for Aeneas and the Trojans, *Opera*. Strasbourg, Johann Grüninger, 1502, (*Aeneid* Book One fol. 151r), Bibliothèque nationale de France.**

It is quite common to see repetitions of woodcut illustrations in reverse, since this was the most straightforward way of making a copy.<sup>164</sup> The artist would simply follow the lines of an impression made from the original woodcut, copying them directly onto the block. When cut and placed face down on the paper, the block would thus leave an impression in reverse to the original impression. This method of copying explains why the series of events in many of the blocks, such as those discussed above (figs. 6 and 9) seem to read chronologically the wrong way round. The fact that some of the images are not in reverse might imply that either

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<sup>163</sup> For a full list, see Appendix B.

<sup>164</sup> Hind 1963: 17.



there were several artists working on the same set of blocks but using different techniques to copy the originals, or that Janot had acquired different sets of *Aeneid* illustrations and put them together.

The fact that the woodcuts from the *Eneydes* are based upon originals that are in a Northern humanist style, rather than Italian, explains their medieval feel and their emphasis on content over form. In the next section, I will examine the intended audience of the original Strasbourg edition, to cast further light on why they are included within the *Eneydes*.

The Grüninger-Brant folio presents the texts of the *Eclogues*, *Georgics* and *Aeneid*, surrounded by the five commentaries of Servius, Donatus, Cristoforo Landino, Antonio Mancinelli and Domicio Calderino. The inclusion of the up-to-date commentaries of Italian humanists,<sup>165</sup> as well as the more common late antique commentaries of Servius and Donatus, made this edition of the complete works of Virgil *avant-garde* in both its newness and its breadth.<sup>166</sup> This meant that the commentary was a particularly useful piece of humanist scholarship for those interested in reading Virgil in depth and suggests that the work was very much aimed at a scholarly audience.

However, Brant's address to the reader – the second of the introductory poems that precede the text and commentary – suggests that he envisioned a broader audience that might also include the unlearned, and this is where, he explains, the pictures are particularly useful:

*charas tu quoque habere velis  
has tibi nemo ante hac tam plene ostenderit usquam.  
Nemo tibi voluit pingere Virgilium.*

“You also want to have delights.  
No-one before this has ever offered you these so plainly.  
No-one wanted to paint Virgil for you”.

(*Opera*, fol. A5v<sup>o</sup>.)

This notion of a different audience for the woodcuts than for the detailed commentaries accompanying the text is made even more explicit in the verse with which the work ends:

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<sup>165</sup> Landino's commentary was first published in 1478, Mancinelli's in 1490 and Calderino's in 1499.

<sup>166</sup> Kallendorf 2001: 124.

*Virgilium exponant alii sermone disertio  
Et calamo pueris tradere et ore iuuet.  
Pictura agresti voluit Brant atque tabellis  
Edere eum indoctis rusticisque viris.  
Nec tamen abiectus labor hic: nec prorsus inanis.  
Nam memori servat mente figura librum*

“Let others explain Virgil in eloquent discourse  
And let it delight them to hand him on to boys with the pen and by mouth.  
Brant wanted to publish him in simple pictures and drawings  
For unlearned and rustic men.  
This is not, however, a lowly task: nor is it utterly vain.  
For the picture keeps the book in the mindful mind.”

(*Opera* fol. 33v)

Brant proposes then that the illustrations are explanatory; the uneducated reader’s understanding of the narrative could be aided by the pictures. The serial presentation of scenes and labelling of figures certainly seem to point to this didactic function. Yet Brant is keen to point out that the images are not just for the *indocti*, but the educated reader too, as the last two lines suggest. For the *docti*, Brant suggests, the illustrations can function as a sort of *aide-memoire*, reinforcing key points within the text and fixing them in the mind. Brant thus envisions the edition as a tool for the dissemination of Virgil that aims to provide common cultural ground for the learned and unlearned, embodying what Patterson calls “an anti-elitist ethics of reproduction”.<sup>167</sup>

The central question that arises from this is: are the woodcuts from the *Eneydes* used with the same goal in mind? Are they included as a further attempt to bring together two potential audiences of Virgil’s *Aeneid*? Furthermore, how successful might they have been in this respect?

As already suggested, the size of the folio certainly seems to suggest that Janot had one eye on scholarly appeal for the *Eneydes*. But how well would the woodcuts that illustrated the text – seemingly behind the times in terms of style and less refined in execution than contemporary Italian representations – suit this demographic? I would suggest that, in terms of the level of detail and the erudition behind them, the woodcuts from the *Eneydes*, like the Brant originals on which they were based, would certainly intellectually engage a responsive reader already familiar with the text of the *Aeneid*. A closer examination of some of the reworkings will show how they appeal to a sense of shared knowledge between the artist and

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<sup>167</sup> Patterson 1987: 93.

the reader.

The following woodcut from the very beginning of Book One, which depicts pictorially Virgil's *proem*, demonstrates clearly the multiple layers of interpretative possibility within each illustration. A river running across the picture separates the characters on either side of it. All of the characters in the picture are labelled. To the right of the picture, Virgil sits at a desk, next to a Muse. In the foreground, we see a representation of the judgement of Paris, with a scorned Pallas and Juno standing behind Venus, who is accepting the golden apple from Paris. Still on this side of the river, to the left of the picture, Hebe kneels before a crowned Jupiter, while Ganymede is carried off by an eagle overhead. On the far side of the river, the city of Carthage stands in the background, and in front of it, the three fates: Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos.

**This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.**

**Figure 11: The supporters and enemies of the Trojans, (*EN* fol. 2r), Bibliothèque nationale de France.**

The first thing to note about this woodcut is the attention to detail. The characters are clearly identifiable by the labels above their heads, and yet each one is still carefully given the attributes for which they are known. Venus has a small

blindfolded Cupid who is depicted shooting Paris in the back; Pallas holds a shield and Jupiter a sceptre; the fates are engaged in their customary task of spinning. This level of detail shows the extent to which the Brant woodcuts, and their subsequent imitations, attempt to represent pictorially as much as possible of both the text itself and a broader sense of the mythology behind it. The story of Ganymede is mentioned only fleetingly in the *Aeneid* and in somewhat elusory fashion as one of the causes of Juno's anger towards the Trojans:

*necdum etiam causae irarum saevique dolores  
exciderant animo: manet alta mente repostum  
iudicium Paridis spretaeque iniuria formae,  
et genus invisum, et rapti Ganymedis honores.*

“And the causes of her anger and bitter sorrows  
had not yet passed from her mind: the judgement of Paris remained,  
stored deep in her heart and the injury done in the spurning of her beauty,  
and her hatred of the race, and the privileges of stolen Ganymede.”

(*Aen.* 1.25-8)

The story of Ganymede alluded to here is that Jupiter caused Ganymede to be carried off by an eagle to become his cup-bearer in heaven, thereby replacing Juno's daughter Hebe. The story is fully recounted here in the illustration, in more detail than in the text itself. Virgil's mention of the *rapti Ganymedis honores* assumes a knowledge of the mythology on the part of the reader and the woodcut assumes that same knowledge. Since Hebe is not even mentioned by name in the *Aeneid* itself, only those already familiar with the story would understand who Hebe is and why she belongs in the picture. Thus Brant, and the artist who here imitates him, asserts his own membership in the learned community by displaying his erudition and, in so doing, invites the reader to recognise his own membership in that community if he is able to recognise and understand all of the elements within the picture and how they relate to the text. The status conferred by the knowledge of the detail thus becomes a Bourdieuvian kind of “symbolic capital”.<sup>168</sup>

Furthermore, Theodore Rabb's analysis of the original Brant woodcuts has demonstrated that Brant's illustrations might appeal to an educated reader not only in their precision and erudition, but also in their sophisticated allegorical representation of the story of the *Aeneid*.<sup>169</sup> Rabb convincingly argues that it is

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<sup>168</sup> On the notion of symbolic capital, see Bourdieu 1998: 47-52.

<sup>169</sup> Rabb 1960: 190-2.

possible to read this particular picture, which appears at face value to be a representation of the proem of the *Aeneid*, on a deeper level as an allegory of “the triumphs and the tragedy of the Trojans”, insisting that allegory is part of Brant’s technique.<sup>170</sup> For Rabb, the river divides the supporters of the Trojans from their enemies; on the one side we see those who have brought the Trojans glory, on the other, the causes of their downfall. Virgil appears as the immortaliser of the Trojans, the person who brought them eternal glory by telling their story, and the muse his inspiration. Venus is their greatest supporter and the judgement of Paris shows one of the reasons why. The image of Jupiter and Hebe depicts a time when all was well for the Trojans before they incurred the wrath of Juno. On the other side of the river Ganymede, the Fates and the city of Carthage all represent individual elements that brought about death and destruction for the Trojans. Since this woodcut comes right at the beginning of Héli-senne’s translation, the reader would need to already have some knowledge of the story to recognise and understand the image on this allegorical level.

I have suggested up to this point that the Brant woodcuts, and subsequently the copies of them in the *Eneydes*, may be sophisticated in terms of content, but less so stylistically. This might seem especially true by the time of publication of the *Eneydes*, when the medievalism of the woodcuts (particularly the anachronistic costumes and architecture) would have been even more distinct from the increasingly “realistic” tradition of Italian illustration with its focus on perspective and the proper treatment of anatomic detail. However, stylistically, the images are not so firmly linked to the medieval tradition as might be supposed. One of the devices for showing movement – a technique that marked the shift from medieval stiffness to Renaissance “realism” – was to attempt to convey violent motion in one part of the picture so as to bring it to life.<sup>171</sup> Turning back to the woodcut from the *Eneydes* depicting Dido and Anna making sacrifices (fig. 9), we can upon closer inspection see that the headdresses worn by both Dido and the *vates* are flying up as if stirred by the wind. Elsewhere, in the woodcut from Book One that depicts the storm at sea (fig. 1), the artist illustrates individual drops of rain falling from the clouds and the yardarm of the ship at an angle as if buffeted by the winds. These

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<sup>170</sup> Rabb 1960: 192.

<sup>171</sup> Rabb 1960: 195.

subtle touches lend great expression to the woodcuts and alleviate the feeling of medieval stiffness.

It is clear then, that the images in the *Eneydes*, reworked from those of the Grüninger-Brant *Opera*, are not just for the *indocti*, but would also appeal to an erudite audience. There is an active intelligence behind the illustrations – in terms of both detail and allegory – that challenges the responsive reader who engages with the text. The detail and pictorial allusions constitute a relationship between the artist and the reader able to detect them; they become layers within the interpretative process. Moreover, though clearly not as refined as those from the Grüninger-Brant edition, the woodcuts can also be appreciated aesthetically in terms of their attempts to convey movement.

Yet, the idea that the woodcuts from the *Eneydes* might appeal to an educated audience is clearly made problematic by the fact that they are occasionally mistakenly placed. Any reader with a knowledge of the text would immediately recognise the misplacement of the temple of Apollo in Book One. Moreover, given that this is such a large and lavishly illustrated folio, which according to Broomhall sold for the relatively expensive price of four soldz,<sup>172</sup> the finish of the woodcuts does not reflect the quality that the reader might expect. Aside from the unfinished labels, as seen above the heads of Juno and Aeolus in the Book One storm woodcut (fig. 1), there are some mistakes introduced in the copies which do not occur in the Grüninger-Brant edition, such as the misspelling on the label above Iris' head in the woodcut at the end of Book Four depicting Dido's death scene (IV, f. xcix, v).<sup>173</sup> In terms of the engagement of the educated reader, it seems likely that the poor finish of the woodcuts and their occasionally unusual placement might detract from some of the more sophisticated ways in which they might appeal.

Equally, the very same problems might preclude the usefulness of the illustrations for an uneducated audience. For anyone unfamiliar with the *Aeneid*, the mistaken placement of several of the woodcuts might seriously impair their didactic function and actually confuse rather than help to elucidate what is going on in the text. Similarly, I would suggest that the counter-intuitive flow of the narrative from right to left in the pictures might also be less helpful to a reader

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<sup>172</sup> Broomhall 2003: 110.

<sup>173</sup> The woodcutter appears to have cut an 'AT' at the beginning, before attempting to correct it with an 'I'.

struggling to follow the text. Finally, the lack of labels identifying the characters by name – arguably the key didactic device – would make the images particularly difficult for the uneducated reader to interpret.

Based on the illustrations of an extremely influential earlier edition, the woodcuts of the *Eneydes* represent Virgil's *Aeneid* in the imagery of the Middle Ages, disregarding some of the developments of more contemporary art. The original woodcuts, designed – at least in part – to help disseminate classics, aimed to make Virgil's works a common cultural experience for the educated and uneducated reader alike. The woodcuts of the *Eneydes* include all the erudition of the original illustrations upon which they are based, but are presented in such a way that they fail to engage on either a didactic or more sophisticated level. This illustrates to us, arguably more than anything else in the *Eneydes*, that the translation is not just a straightforward communication between Hélienne and the reader.

#### **4.4 *Mise en prose***

In the final section of this chapter I consider Hélienne's prosification of the *Aeneid*, since this is obviously one of the most distinguishing features of her translation. Gérard Genette offers a sophisticated analysis of what is at stake in the prosification of a text. Much more than simple diversification, he argues, prosification poses the translator with a dilemma, namely how to render the poetic figures in such a way as to not clash with the surrounding prosaic discourse.<sup>174</sup> One can either analyse the images (in which case the translation becomes more like commentary) or find a prose equivalent.<sup>175</sup> Finding a prose equivalent involves a process of transfiguration: the disfiguration of poetry and the refiguration as prose. The result of this process, according to Genette, is the "prose poem".<sup>176</sup>

What is striking about Hélienne's translation is that it displays an abundance of elements that seem to result from this project of transfiguration, such as Latinate language, reduplication, unusual word order and the abundance of adjectives and adverbs. Valerie Worth, however, noted that these elements cannot simply be considered part of the act of prosification, by studying the language of

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<sup>174</sup> Genette 1997: 223.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

Hélisenne's *Eneydes* in comparison with Virgil's *Aeneid* and noting that Hélisenne deliberately enhances the Latinate quality of her translation.<sup>177</sup>

Given that Worth has treated the subject at length, let us consider a brief example. In Book Two of Virgil's *Aeneid*, before the Trojans take the wooden horse into Troy, a terrible portent occurs as twin serpents from the sea seize Laocoon and his two sons and kill them (*Aen.* 2.195-227). Virgil describes the Trojans' reaction to this event as follows: *tum uero tremefacta nouus per pectora cunctis insinuat pauor*, "Then indeed a strange fear steals through each trembling heart" (*Aen.* 2.228-9). In her *Eneydes*, Hélisenne translates these lines as: "Et à l'heure perplexité et doubte nouvelle, vint noz angustiez cueurs exagiter", "And then fear and strange doubt came to trouble our afflicted minds" (II, f. xxxiii. v). It is significant that Hélisenne introduces into the texts two Latinate words ("angustiez" and "exagiter"), neither of which are suggested by the Latin itself. This supports Worth's argument that Hélisenne is deliberately enhancing the Latinate quality of her translation.

Worth then offers a convincing suggestion as to why Hélisenne does this, arguing that Hélisenne is attempting to distinguish the language of her translation from the everyday language of vernacular prose, producing a suitably elevated register to convey "the stile heroique" of the "treseloquent poete Virgile".<sup>178</sup> While Worth's hypothesis about Hélisenne's use of language is highly plausible, I would suggest that there may be a supplementary function and that is that by using language remote from the everyday vernacular, Hélisenne is able to subtly underscore the fictionality of her text. It is important that we bear this in mind in the course of the following chapter, in which explore the concepts of truth and fiction more thoroughly through the figure of Dido.

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<sup>177</sup> Worth 1984: 271.

<sup>178</sup> Worth 1984: 272.



## Chapter Five: Deconstructing Dido, constructing Héli-senne

Dido has always played a central role in the reception of the *Aeneid*. Even in antiquity, Ovid insisted in his *Tristia* that the story of Dido and Aeneas was the most well-read part of Virgil's epic<sup>1</sup> and Macrobius stressed in his *Saturnalia* the popularity of Dido's story for performance.<sup>2</sup> While the story of Dido, then, has always been integral to the way that the *Aeneid* has been received, it is also the part that has undergone the largest number of transformations and enjoyed an itinerary all of its own.<sup>3</sup> This chapter will consider Héli-senne's Dido in the light of some of those transformations and examine how Héli-senne provides her own transformation of Virgil's tragic queen.

Ovid offers a four-line summary of *Aeneid* 1-4 in his *Metamorphoses* that neatly encapsulates two of the principal (but by no means only) ways in which the figure of Dido has been received:

*excipit Aenean illic animoque domoque  
non bene discidium Phrygii latura mariti  
Sidonis; inque pyra sacri sub imagine facta  
incubuit ferro deceptaque decipit omnes.*

"There Sidonian Dido welcomes Aeneas into her heart and home and is unable to bear the departure of her Trojan husband; she fell upon a sword, on a pyre fashioned in semblance of sacred rites and deceived, she deceives all".

(Ovid *Met.* 14.78-81)

Ovid's *deceptaque decipit* conflates the complex series of events that forms the basis of Virgil's narrative of the story of Dido and Aeneas into what Desmond calls "a sort of epigrammatic summary".<sup>4</sup> It is a summary that defies the ambiguity and

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<sup>1</sup> *Et tamen ille tuae felix Aeneidos auctor  
contulit in Tyrios arma virumque toros  
nec legitur pars ulla magis de corpore toto  
quam non legitimo foedere iunctus amor.*

"And yet the blessed author of your *Aeneid* brought arms and the man to Tyrian couches, and no part of the work is more well-read than the love consummated in an illegitimate union" (Ovid, *Trist.* 2.533-38).

<sup>2</sup> *nec minus histrionum perpetuis et gestibus et cantibus celebretur*, "nor is she extolled less continuously in the movements and songs of performers" (Macrobius, *Sat.* 5.17.5).

<sup>3</sup> John Watkins (1995: 6) effectively summarises the fortunes of the Dido story as follows: "As medieval and Renaissance commentators, allegorists, editors, homilists, storytellers, poets, painters, illustrators and tapestry-makers judged Dido's abandonment, diverse and often competing notions of what constituted Virgilian writing developed. By the late sixteenth century, imitations of her tragedy responded not only to Virgil's text but to the long history of its cultural reception".

<sup>4</sup> Desmond 1994: 35.

complexity of Virgil's *Aeneid*, removing both the divine intervention and the human emotion, and thus reducing it to a story of one woman who dupes others and is herself duped. This double status of Dido as both victim and perpetrator of lies is, according to Margaret Ferguson, the reason her story resonates so strongly, and has become a focus for enduring debate about history and fiction, masculine and feminine roles, and licit and illicit sexual behaviour.<sup>5</sup> As we have already seen, these are exactly the same issues that lie at the heart of Héli-senne's literary endeavours. This chapter will therefore consider the way in which Héli-senne's Dido enacts various uncertainties created throughout the *Eneydes* about truth and fiction and the role of writers in creating authoritative histories. It will also consider this unstable representation of Dido in relation to her appearance throughout Héli-senne's corpus: how she contributes to Héli-senne's fashioning as a learned female author who both challenges claims to textual authority and defends herself and others she believes to have been unfairly maligned.

## **5.1 Dido and the construction of Héli-senne's persona**

Dido is a central figure in Héli-senne's entire corpus, appearing in three of her four works. She not only appears as one of the central protagonists in the *Eneydes*, but also helps to create Héli-senne's literary persona across her works, both directly and by influencing the original characters upon whom that literary persona is based. I therefore begin this chapter by exploring Héli-senne's use of Dido as a key allegorical figure for her own self-fashioning as a female writer trying to establish herself in the masculine field of letters. I then discuss the centrality of the story of Dido to the works Héli-senne published prior to the *Eneydes*, in which she figures as an inspiration for the creation of original characters, an exemplum for characters within the works and the implied reader, and the model for Héli-senne's own persona.

### **5.1.1 "Exerceant oeuvres viriles": Dido and the female writer**

As a woman who performs masculine roles, Dido transgresses the boundaries of normative gender categories in the epic world.<sup>6</sup> Thus the parallels with Héli-senne's own situation, as a woman attempting to establish herself as a humanist scholar,

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<sup>5</sup> Ferguson 2003: 1.

<sup>6</sup> For a succinct overview of the normative gender categories of epic, see Keith 2000: 1-7.

are immediately apparent. Recognising this, Hélienne uses Dido throughout her corpus, exploiting her in various generic contexts to explore the issues of gender, authority and writing that constitute the central concerns of her own work. Hélienne goes further, however, by associating herself with Dido in the process of creating her own literary identity, and this self-styling provides further rich ground for the exploration of her central literary concerns. Let us begin then by considering some of the more immediate points of correspondence between Hélienne and Dido that are apparent in Hélienne's epistolary works.

In her eighth *epistre familière*, Hélienne cites Dido as a positive exemplum of constancy, whose behaviour the addressee is encouraged to emulate. The addressee is a young woman, a friend named Clarice who, despite pressure from her parents, is reluctant to put an end to the relationship with her current lover in order to marry the stranger they have chosen for her. Hélienne urges the woman to follow the example of Dido, who she recalls as a paradigm of steadfastness amidst difficult circumstances:

“[...] T'esforceras d'estre semblable à celle à qui la magnanime constance, fut occasion de changer son nom primitive, qui estoit Helisa, mais subsequment appelé fut Dido, qui en langaige Phenicien est interpreté comme Virago, exerçant oeuvres viriles”.

“Force yourself to be like that one, whose outstanding constancy was the reason for changing her original name, which was Elissa, but was subsequently called Dido which in the Phoenician language means virago, exercising manly tasks”.

(*Epistres*, 95)

Hélienne's intricate and complex use of Dido as an exemplum throughout her corpus and its implications will be discussed further below, but the key point of interest for us here is Hélienne's reference to the etymology of Dido's name. Diane Wood suggests that this is little more than a showcase of erudition, forming part of a “compendium of classical literature”.<sup>7</sup> But, while I would agree that Hélienne makes the most of every opportunity to display her erudition and thorough knowledge of classical literature, I would suggest that, in light of how Hélienne explicitly presents her own literary activity as an *oeuvre virile*, we must consider her reference to the etymology of Dido's name as a significant signposting of the

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<sup>7</sup> Wood 1992: 126.

role Dido plays in the development of Héli-senne's authorial persona and the way in which Héli-senne interrogates gender roles throughout her work.

Modern scholars have suggested that the name Dido probably derived from an African word for "wanderer",<sup>8</sup> based on a historical account of Dido contained in surviving fragments of the Greek historian Timaeus of Tauromenium. Timaeus wrote that Dido was called Elissa in the Phoenician language, but Dido by the Libyans, on account of her wanderings.<sup>9</sup> The late antique commentator Servius, however, claimed that Dido was the Punic equivalent of the Latin *virago* and that she was called this on account of her manly act of throwing herself onto a funeral pyre.<sup>10</sup> Virgil uses both names to refer to Dido in the *Aeneid* and may have been aware of both possible etymologies, although it is uncertain.<sup>11</sup> What is clear is that, throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, Servius' explanation remained well-known and was often cited.<sup>12</sup>

Héli-senne does not simply outline the etymology of Dido's name, but rather takes care to demonstrate its fittingness by explaining to Clarice the exact nature of Dido's *oeuvres viriles*. She informs Clarice that, despite the adversity that Dido faced (namely, losing her husband Sychaeus), she nevertheless achieved the remarkable – and unmistakably masculine – feat of establishing a new city, and a noble one at that:

"Certainement estoit celle que l'adverse fortune ne pouoit aulcunement superer: car à l'heure que icelle instable la vouloit totalement prosterner en permettant la mort immaturé de son fidele mary, Ceste Dido fist grande demonstrance de sa vertu: car tout ainsi qu'apertement l'on voit la splendeur des astres, durant l'obscurité nocturne, pareillement elle estant succumbée en la calamité de tenebreuse infortune, fist apparoir la reluisance de sa magnanimité, de telle sorte que par elle fut construite & edifiée la noble cité de Carthage".

"Certainly it was she whom adverse fortune could not at all conquer: for at the time when this changeable [fortune] wanted to utterly lay her low by allowing the premature death of her faithful husband, this Dido gave a great

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<sup>8</sup> For a thorough discussion of the various etymological explanations for the name of Dido, see Davidson 1998: 68 and Hexter 1992: 348.

<sup>9</sup> Timaeus, *FGrH* 566, frag. 82.

<sup>10</sup> Serv. *A.* 1.340.

<sup>11</sup> Hexter 1992: 348. Hexter suggests that Iarbas' reference to Dido as *errans* at *Aeneid* 4.211 may point to an awareness of the supposed Phoenician etymology and Venus' *dux femina facti* at 1.364 to the *virago* etymology.

<sup>12</sup> For a general overview of the influence and authority of Servius, see Wilson-Okamura 2010: especially 31-33. On the influence of Servius' gloss on the etymology of Dido, see Hexter 1992: 348-50.

demonstration of her virtue. For, just as one sees plainly the stars during the darkness of night, likewise she, having succumbed to the calamity of shadowy misfortune, made manifest the splendour of her magnanimity with the result that the noble city of Carthage was constructed and built by her".

(*Epistres* 95-6)

It is significant to note that the Dido Hélienne presents here is one whose virtue, and in particular her constancy, is inextricably bound up with her masculine activity: her construction of the famous city of Carthage is the manifestation of her virtue. Furthermore, the emphasis is not only on Hélienne's devotion to Sychaeus and grief at his death, but her accomplishments as a city builder and ruler once bereft of him.

Just as Hélienne's excursus on Dido's name and its supposed Phoenician etymology strongly underscores Dido's status as a *virago* (a woman who accomplishes manly tasks), so Hélienne presents herself in her literary activity as a *virago*, too – forced to defend her incursion into the masculine field of letters. In classical literature the word *virago* was used to denote a woman who displayed the qualities of a man, yet it was almost exclusively reserved for goddesses or female warriors.<sup>13</sup> By the early modern period, however, the use of the word had broadened considerably in its scope. In her discussion of the social roles available to women in Renaissance Europe, Margaret King defines a *virago* as a woman who engaged in any type of public activity usually restricted to men, including warriors, queens, patrons, scholars and writers.<sup>14</sup> As already noted, not only was it rare for a Renaissance woman to adopt such a role, but she could expect to face fierce criticism as a result of her incursion into the masculine public sphere.<sup>15</sup> Ann Jones, for example, notes the way in which women writers were often forced to demonstrate "propitiatory obedience" to the expectations put on them, to defend themselves against attacks on their "still unusual and suspect ambition to contribute to a culture still produced almost entirely by men".<sup>16</sup> In other words, even when subverting the expectations of their gender, some women felt the need to at least appear to comply with them.

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<sup>13</sup> Women given the label include Juturna, the sister of Turnus (*Aen.* 12.468), Polyxena (*Sen. Ag.* 668 and *Diana (Stat. Theb.* 11.414).

<sup>14</sup> King 1991: xiv.

<sup>15</sup> On the rarity of women writers in sixteenth-century France, see above. It was common for women writers of the period to defend themselves in their prefaces in anticipation of criticism for rejecting traditional female pursuits. See further Butterworth 2011: 217.

<sup>16</sup> Jones 1987: 40.

In her *Epistres invectives* we find Hélienne adopting just such a defensive stance regarding her masculine pursuit of literary publication, defending herself (and thereby women writers more generally) against misogynist detractors. The focus upon gender in the argument between Hélienne and her detractors is most keenly felt in her fourth invective letter, in which she creates a reader named Elenot who has criticised her *Angoysses*. In this letter, Hélienne responds to Elenot's criticism and offers a heated defence of female intellect:

“Et parlant en general tu dis que femmes sont de rudes & obnubilez esperitz: parquoy tu concluz, que aultre occupation ne doibvent avoir que le filler: Ce m'est une chose admirable de ta promptitude, en ceste determination. J'ay certain evidence par cela (que si en ta faculté estoit) tu prohiberois le benefice literaire au sexe femenin: L'improperant de n'estre capable des bonnes lettres. Si tu avois esté bien studieux en diversitez de livres, aultre seroit ton opionion”.

“And speaking in general terms you say that women have crude and ignorant wits: whereby you conclude that they should have no occupation but spinning. It is an admirable thing to me, your haste, in this conclusion. I have good reason to believe that (if it were up to you) you would deny writing to the female sex, accusing them of being incapable of writing well. If you had been better read, your opinion would be different”.

(*Epistres* 150)

Hélienne clearly delineates here that writing is considered a male prerogative, unsuitable for women. Her reference to spinning as a role considered more appropriate to this gender is particularly significant, since it is *the* archetypal pursuit suitable for women in the Renaissance. It powerfully conveys the limits imposed upon them, as argued by King: “The mention of spinning alerts us to the obdurate substratum of Renaissance thinking about women: their role is to reproduce, their home is their fortress and their prison, their destiny is endless worth with needle and spindle”.<sup>17</sup> The association between spinning and a woman's virtue dates back to antiquity<sup>18</sup> and Rebecca Langlands has noted the fact that Virgil himself exploits the concept in the *Aeneid*, where at 8.401-13 he likens Vulcan's rising in the early hours to make new armour for Aeneas to a widow determined to remain *univira*, rising to spin wool to support her family.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> King 1991: 188.

<sup>18</sup> On spinning as the archetype of a virtuous woman's work, see Stewart 2003, Williams 1958 and Larsson Ioven 1998.

<sup>19</sup> Langlands 2006: 87 n. 30.

By emphasising in this fashion the way in which, as a writer, she defies traditional expectations of proper feminine behaviour, refusing to spin and refusing to adopt a more traditional mode of feminine discourse, Hélienne thus styles herself as a *virago*. Moreover, in the creation of misogynist critics, Hélienne demonstrates the way in which she, like Dido, is faced with adversity but nevertheless is determined to continue her *oeuvres viriles* and follow her own course, which exceeds the limitations expected of her gender.

Hélienne also interrogates here the perceived moral subversiveness of the *virago*, as we shall see. Her reference to Dido as one who exercises *oeuvres viriles*, and her self-casting in the same role, imply a knowledge of the concept that, as Joan Kelly puts it, “only as *viragos*, as exceptions to their sex, could women aspire to the Renaissance ideal of man”.<sup>20</sup> However, it also displays a keen awareness of the subversive threat to the social order posed by such gender-crossing. Wood notes how those women who stepped outside of their roles – particularly in an arena as public as the publishing of their own writing – were liable to be accused of immodesty at best, if not complete immorality.<sup>21</sup> As already noted, some contemporary responses to Hélienne’s writing voiced such concerns. Gabriel de Puy-Herbault, for example, considered Hélienne’s *Angoysses* among the most dangerous books of the day because of its immoral focus on adulterous love and its potential to incite other women to indulge their own sexual desires.<sup>22</sup>

Hélienne creates in her second *épître invective* a response from her husband that mirrors Puy-Herbault’s reaction. Having attacked her husband in the first invective letter for his credulity, since he believed her detractors when they alleged that her *Angoysses* was the record of her own adultery rather than a fictional novel (*Epistres* 125-131),<sup>23</sup> she presents in the second letter her

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<sup>20</sup> Kelly 1982: 8.

<sup>21</sup> Wood 2000: 73.

<sup>22</sup> De Puy-Herbault 1549: 28-9. De Puy-Herbault’s *Theotimus* took the form of a Latin dialogue between two male characters, Theotimus and Nicolas. Discussing the danger posed by immoral texts and their influence upon female readers, Nicolas lists specific examples of such books, including Hélienne’s *Angoysses* and Boccaccio’s *Fiametta*, asking: *Quid Helisennae, quid Flammetae ignibus impudentibus?* “What is more shameless than the flames of Hélienne? What more shameless than the flames of Fiametta?” (*ibid.*).

<sup>23</sup> “Tu t’es rendu credule à ceste ignorante generation servile: laquelle croyant, t’a donné occasion d’une mentale sollicitude, dont n’a esté en ta faculté te liberer: Parquoy la precipiteuse charge de ton cueur, à telle ymagination t’a conduit, que tu as estimé cela (que pour eviter ociosité j’ay escript) eust esté par moy composé, pour faire perpetuelle commemoration d’une amour impudicque”, “You have made yourself credulous to this ignorant servile lot, and believing them has given you cause for a mental concern, from which you are not able to free yourself. The hasty judgement of your heart has thereby led you to such imagination that you have considered that it (the work which I

husband's response. In the first letter Hélienne strongly refutes such allegations and denies any immorality on her part, insisting that her decision to write was based entirely on a desire to avoid inactivity and that the adulterous affair recounted in the *Angoysses* is entirely fictional.<sup>24</sup> But, despite Hélienne's insistence that such accusations are false, the second letter shows that her husband remains unconvinced: "En tes angoisses tu ne doibs croire que ceste simulation aye tant d'efficace, qu'elle puisses tes abhominables vices latiter", "You must not believe in your *Angoysses* that this trick will be so successful that it will be able to hide your detestable vices" (*Epistres* 135).

Hélienne's assertion of the fictionality of the *Angoysses* not only avows her status as an imaginative writer, as Timothy Reiss suggests,<sup>25</sup> but also challenges the notion that a woman who engages in a masculine pursuit is necessarily immodest. Hélienne thus, defying expectations in terms of activity, attempts to demonstrate what Jones calls "a propitiatory obedience" to expectations in terms of morality. This is reinforced and expressed more explicitly by the Dido exemplum, in which Dido's *oeuvres viriles* do not call into question her virtue at all, but are, as we have seen, the manifestation of it.<sup>26</sup>

We can already see, in this briefest of examples, that Hélienne creates strong associations between herself as a writer and the figure of Dido: both are women who undertake *oeuvres viriles* in the face of adversity. Just as Dido builds a new city for herself and her followers, so too Hélienne is attempting to carve out textual territory for herself and the women she attempts to defend.<sup>27</sup> Ann Jones, in her study of sixteenth-century women writers, persuasively argues that, upon recognising that they did not have an authorising place in any existing literary

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wrote to avoid idleness) had been composed by me to commemorate eternally an illicit love" (*Epistres* 125-6).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Reiss 2003: 428.

<sup>26</sup> Jerry Nash suggests a similar argument, but presses it even further, suggesting that Hélienne may even be inviting the reader to see the masculine activity of women as godly. See Nash 2000: 382. His argument rests on the fact that Dido's other name, Elissa, seems to be derived from the Hebrew words "el" (a god) and "ishshah" (woman), possibly recalling some Phoenician myth in which Dido was a divinity or at least a godlike woman. Although Nash makes astute observations about the biblical nature of Hélienne's defence of her own writing in the *Epistres* (see, for example, Nash 1997: 379-410), I would contend that there is no suggestion that Hélienne has any knowledge of the etymology of Elissa and, were this the case, this would surely be the ideal opportunity to display it.

<sup>27</sup> On the importance of the relationship between space and gender in Helisenne's works, and particularly the idea of the spatial limitation of women as a metaphor for male dominance, see Winn 1985: 1-13, O'Brien 1999: 27-34 and Hodges 2006: 1-16.



community and in the face of the aggressive male efforts to exclude or suppress them, these women were forced to create their own authorising place, hence the creation of female literary salons in Lyons, Poitiers and Paris.<sup>28</sup> Hélienne's reference to Dido's *oeuvres viriles* shows us that, in assuming a role traditionally reserved for men, she creates a literary space in which women can engage in masculine pursuits, despite the adversity they might face, without compromising their virtue or encouraging others to do so. It is also a space in which women can display their erudition – with discussions, for example, on the etymology of classical names – without suggesting a similar threat to social order. Dido's influence on Hélienne's self-fashioning is, however, not limited to the fact that they are both *viragos*, nor is it fully accounted for by this explicit reference to Dido in the *Epistres*: it is much more pervasive and complex, as we will see in the following section.

### 5.1.2 Dido, Hélienne and the Dame d'Eliveba

In her persuasive thesis on Hélienne's *Angoysses*, Janine Incardona makes some astute observations on the centrality of the story of Dido and Aeneas to the creation of characters in the *Angoysses* and in particular draws convincing parallels between the protagonist Hélienne, the Dame d'Eliveba and Dido.<sup>29</sup> I would further suggest that the author's adoption of the name of her principal protagonist as her pseudonym indicates that we must consider Dido central to the creation of the author's own literary persona as well of that of her characters, as underscored by Dido's appearance in three of Hélienne's four published works. A brief exploration of some of these parallels, beginning with Dido and the Dame d'Eliveba, will help to explain the way in which the relationship between Dido and Hélienne is constructed.

In Book Two of the *Angoysses*, Hélienne's lover Guenelic teams up with a companion, Quezinstra, to search for her after she has been locked up in the chateau of Cabasus by her watchful and jealous husband. And during the course of their many adventures as they search for Hélienne, the two arrive at the port of the beautiful city of Eliveba, ruled by the equally beautiful Dame d'Eliveba. A strong parallel with the story of Dido and Aeneas is already quite apparent: male

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<sup>28</sup> Jones 1990.

<sup>29</sup> Incardona 2004.

strangers arrive on the shores of a land ruled by a female. Upon arrival, Guenelic and Quezinstra contemplate the greatness of the city with its grand fortifications (*Ang.* 336) in much the same way as Aeneas and Achates marvel at the size and activity of Dido's newly established Carthage (*Aen.* 1.418-440). Incardona notes that, like Dido, the Dame d'Eliveba enjoys "domination et seigneurie du pays" (*Ang.* 337).<sup>30</sup> I would propose that there are also clear parallels between the beauty of the two women: the Dame d'Eliveba is described as "une juene dame de tres excellente beaulté" (*Ang.* 337), just as Virgil's Dido is *forma pulcherrima* (*Aen.* 1.496). More significantly, both women are likened in their beauty to Diana and her retinue of nymphs. Hélienne writes that the Dame d'Eliveba "representoit la splendide et claire dame Dyane associée de ses belles nymphes" (*Ang.* 337), which closely mirrors Virgil's description of Dido's appearance during her first encounter with Aeneas:

*qualis in Eurotae ripis aut per iuga Cynthi  
exercet Diana choros, quam mille secutae  
hinc atque hinc glomerantur Oreades*

"Just as Diana leads her throng along the banks of the Eurotas  
or over the ridges of Cynthus, round whom a thousand Oreads,  
following her, gather on this side and that".

(*Aen.* 1.498-500)

The likening of both women to Diana, the virgin goddess of the hunt, symbolically links Dido and the Dame d'Eliveba to a further shared element of their story: their refusal of potential suitors.

In Hélienne's *Angoysses*, we learn that the Dame d'Eliveba has refused the offer of marriage from an admiral and now, as a result, her city is under threat of attack, as she explains:

"O vous hommes fideles, qui avez certaine intelligence, quelle est l'occasion pourquoy cest admiral (homme scelere et inicque) s'esforce de nous persecuter, et finalement reduyre en totale ruyne, et extermination, qui n'est pour aultre chose, que pour le refus que j'ay faict de me conjoindre avecq luy par lien de mariage, ce que ne consentiroye, quand il seriot dominateur et possesseur pacifique de tout l'universel monde, tant à l'occasion de ses mauvaies compositions de coustumes, que pour son antiquité: laquelle n'est aulcunement convenable à ma florissante jeunesse".

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<sup>30</sup> Incardona 2004: 169.

“O faithful men you understand very well why this admiral (a wicked and evil man) attempts to persecute us and finally reduce us to total ruin and destruction. It is nothing other than the refusal I made to be joined to him through the bond of marriage, to which I would not consent even if he were the master and peaceful possessor of all the world, as much because of his bad customary dispositions as because of his old age, which is not at all suitable to my flowering youth”.

(*Ang.* 346).

In Virgil’s *Aeneid*, it is Anna who first tells us that Dido has rejected many suitors, including the African king Iarbas (4.35-8). It is only later, however, at *Aeneid* 4.197, when rumour of Dido and Aeneas’ affair reaches Iarbas, that we get a sense of the threat this poses to Dido and her city, as it “set his mind alight” (*incendit animum*) and “fuelled his anger” (*aggerat iras*), causing him to angrily invoke Jupiter to avenge the injury done to him and his generosity by the woman who spurned him (*Aen.* 4. 206-218). Dido herself reminds us of the constant underlying threat that Iarbas poses when she foregrounds him in her reproach of Aeneas as he prepares to depart: *quid moror? [...] captam ducat Gaetulus Iarbas?* “What am I waiting for? For the Gaetulian Iarbas to drag me off, captured?” (*Aen.* 4.325-6). In Héli-senne’s *Angoysse*, the admiral who attacks Eliveba, forcing Guenelic and Quezinstra to help defend the city, is the Dame d’Eliveba’s unwanted admirer, her own Iarbas, and we get a sense of what might have happened in the *Aeneid* had not Aeneas followed his divine mandate to leave Carthage and seek the true home of his people.

Further parallels between the figures of Dido and the Dame d’Eliveba include, as Incardona demonstrates, their hospitality towards strangers who land on their shores and the resistance of their cities to attack.<sup>31</sup> I would add that Héli-senne makes a self-conscious connection between Dido and the Dame d’Eliveba by referring to Dido at the end of the Dame d’Eliveba’s speech, where Héli-senne relates that Quezinstra listened to the speech as intently as the Queen of Carthage listened to Aeneas’ story of the fall of Troy (*Ang.* 362).

It is clear that Héli-senne has used Dido as a source in the construction of the character of the Dame d’Eliveba and her story, but there are other parallels with characters from the *Aeneid* that underline the importance of Virgil’s text to Héli-senne’s work. Incardona draws insightful parallels between the male characters of the *Angoysse* and the *Aeneid*, arguing that Guenelic and Quezinstra

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<sup>31</sup> Incardona 2004: 171-175.

represent different aspects of Aeneas' characterisation and mirror his story.<sup>32</sup> Guenelic, Hélienne's young lover, is like Aeneas in the damage he caused to his lover's reputation.<sup>33</sup> Further, he is driven out of his home after rebuffing the unwelcome advances of his stepmother, only to have her vengefully make accusations of the same nature against him to his father (*Ang.* 237). Thus, like Aeneas, he is an exile from his paternal home, forced to wander and seek his own destiny. As a result of his experiences, Quezinstra is well aware of the potential destructiveness of passion and thus shuns it entirely, devoting himself to his heroic exploits.<sup>34</sup> In this determination too, Quezinstra resembles Aeneas, but only once Aeneas has realised that he must suppress his love for Dido and abandon her in order to accomplish his destiny (*Aen.* 4.27-282). Incardona, therefore, rightly suggests that Guenelic and Quezinstra can be seen to represent the two faces of Aeneas: the lover and the hero.<sup>35</sup>

Although Hélienne's translation of the *Aeneid* was published three years after the *Angoysses*, the clear similarities outlined between several of the characters and between elements of the plot demonstrate that Virgil's *Aeneid* was a key source of inspiration for Hélienne's first published work.<sup>36</sup> It is not at all surprising then that Hélienne should return to the *Aeneid* later in her career, translating it in a similar style to the *Angoysses*. It reinforces the idea that the *Eneydes* should be considered alongside Hélienne's other literary enterprises, rather than as a departure from them, and evidences Dido's role as a creator of unity throughout Hélienne's corpus. The way in which Dido is portrayed in the *Eneydes* – the work which focuses exclusively on the story of her and Aeneas – is, therefore, crucial to our understanding of Hélienne's engagement with classical literature and the function Dido performs throughout her texts.

Having established that the story of Dido and Aeneas plays a key role in the construction of the characters in the *Angoysses*, it is now necessary to explore how

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<sup>32</sup> Incardona 2004: 218.

<sup>33</sup> Dido herself expresses the damage her reputation has suffered at *Aen.* 4.321-3. Similarly, when they are reunited, Hélienne reports to Guenelic the insults she has had to endure as a result of their affair (*Ang.* 438).

<sup>34</sup> Describing it as an "incurable infirmity", Quezinstra tells Guenelic that passion leads to forgetfulness of one's self and God, the loss of time and honour, envy, and even murder, insisting that "nul fruit n'en vient", "no good comes of it" (*Ang.* 241).

<sup>35</sup> Incardona 2004: 219.

<sup>36</sup> It does not necessarily follow, as Incardona suggests (2004: 288), that the translation came first, only the reading of the *Aeneid*.

this contributes to Héli-senne's self-fashioning and the literary persona that she creates.

There are many similarities between the protagonist Héli-senne and Dido; some obvious, some more subtle. On the most basic level, both the protagonist Héli-senne and Dido embark on love affairs (although Dido breaks an oath of fidelity to her dead husband, whereas Héli-senne's husband is still very much alive). Héli-senne recognises the potential damage an affair with Guenelic might cause to her reputation, when she writes to him: "[...] impossible me seroit satisfaire à vostre affectueux desir sans deniger et adnichiler ma bonne renommée", "it would be impossible for me to satisfy your affectionate desire without tarnishing and destroying my good reputation" (*Ang.* 132). This recalls Dido's realisation of the damage to her reputation caused by her affair with Aeneas, albeit after the fact, when she reproaches him: *te propter eundem / extinctus pudor et, qua sola sidera adibam / fama prior*, "because of you too my shame is lost, and my former reputation, the only means by which I might reach the stars" (*Aen.* 4.321-3). And in the same way that Dido stays faithful to the dead Sychaeus, prior to the arrival of Aeneas, Héli-senne initially resists a number of potential suitors before embarking on her affair with Guenelic, ignoring the admiring glances she receives at the temple (*Ang.* 125) and thereby staying faithful to her husband.

Furthermore, both Héli-senne and Dido are afflicted by love far away from their homeland, after a series of misfortunes precipitated by the death of their fathers. Héli-senne finds herself in an unhappy marriage with an older man at the age of eleven, after losing her father at the age of one and being raised by her mother (*Ang.* 99). Likewise, it is the death of Dido's father that leads to her brother's ascent to the throne and his subsequent murder of her husband, causing her displacement from her homeland as she is forced to flee her tyrant brother.<sup>37</sup> Ultimately, after a brief period of happiness, both women are forced to endure the same fate of separation from their lovers as Héli-senne is imprisoned in the chateau of Cabasus (*Ang.* 213) and Dido is abandoned by Aeneas as he sets sail for Italy (*Aen.* 4.579-83).<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Virgil does not explicitly refer to the death of Dido's father. At *Aeneid* 1.345 we learn that Dido's father gave her in marriage to Sychaeus and at 1.346-7 that her brother now holds the kingdom of Tyre. The reader thus infers that Dido's father has since died and her brother has ascended the throne.

<sup>38</sup> For Héli-senne's lament, see *Ang.* 212. For Dido's lament when she realises that Aeneas is planning to depart, see *Aen.* 4.534-552.

There is also a significant relationship between the protagonist Hélienne and the Dame d'Eliveba, which – considering the influence of the Dido character in the Dame d'Eliveba that we have already considered – strongly reinforces the associations that can be made between Hélienne and Dido. The strength of the admiral's love for the Dame d'Eliveba is made palpable by the fact that he will go so far as to assault her city when she refuses his hand in marriage (*Ang.* 341 Hélienne). This clearly mirrors the strength of love felt by Hélienne's husband as he resorts to locking her in the chateau at Cabasus in an attempt to ensure her fidelity (*Ang.* 213 Hélienne). And Janine Incardona argues that this is not the only connection between Hélienne and the Dame d'Eliveba, suggesting that, while their situations are initially similar, as the objects of intense love, they eventually mirror one another in reverse.<sup>39</sup> That is to say, whereas Hélienne ends up imprisoned and continues to suffer torment as the focus of her husband's jealous love, the Dame d'Eliveba ends up free from the admiral's grip with the help of Guenelic and Quezinstra. As such, Incardona argues, the Dame d'Eliveba represents to Hélienne the end of her torments, a model to which to aspire.<sup>40</sup>

The relationships between the protagonist Hélienne, Dido and the Dame d'Eliveba create a link between Dido and Hélienne as an author. In creating a character that shares her pseudonym (or indeed adopting the pseudonym of her principal protagonist), Hélienne invites the reader to form the same associations with her as an author; if Dido is an integral part of the protagonist Hélienne, she is necessarily part of the literary persona Hélienne fashions for herself based upon that protagonist. It is worth noting once again the sibilant resonance of Elissa in the name Hélienne, made all the more likely in light of the other associations that have been created.

The strength of the association between Hélienne the author and Dido is further emphasised by the place names invented by Hélienne. One of the earliest Hélienne scholars, Louis Loviot, identifies the influence of genuine Picardian place names upon the fictional localities of the *Angoysses*.<sup>41</sup> Significantly, Loviot identifies the city of Eliveba as a anadrome of Abbeville,<sup>42</sup> Marguerite Briet's

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<sup>39</sup> Incardona 2005: 213.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Loviot 1917: 141. Abel Lefranc similarly demonstrates the play on common Picardian names in the names of the heroes Guenelic and Quezinstra. See Lefranc 1917: 376-7.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

hometown, as cited in Nicolas Rumez's *Historia Picardiae*.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Loviot suggests Hennerc, the port nearest the city of Eliveba in the *Angoysses*,<sup>44</sup> as an anadrome of Crenne, the patronym adopted by Hélienne, taken from her husband's estate. It is particularly noteworthy that localities most closely associated with the Dame d'Eliveba (and thus, by association, with Dido) are the places that tie most closely with aspects of Hélienne's real life. Through these playful references to her background, Hélienne invites the reader to make connections between Dido, the Dame d'Eliveba and Hélienne the author, as well as Hélienne the protagonist, leaving the reader to ponder, once again, what is truth and what is fiction.

What has emerged from this section is that Dido is a key literary model for Hélienne, because her story reflects the key issues Hélienne seeks to explore – namely passionate love and infidelity, expectations of the female sex and the representations of those expectations in literary form. The *Eneydes*, and Hélienne's engagement with Virgil's telling of the story, is not, therefore, a departure from Hélienne's usual work, but rather a key to understanding it. It is also her most patent – and thus potentially subversive – incursion into the masculine field of letters, given both the androcentricism of epic and the elite male humanist tradition in which the *Aeneid* is embedded. An examination of the text where Dido is not just an influence, but the principal thematic focus, gives us greater insight into those issues opened up by the way in which Dido is exploited and into Hélienne's contribution to the humanist tradition. Before we turn to Hélienne's treatment of Dido, however, we first need an overview of the various ways in which she had been previously exploited, to understand better the traditions with which Hélienne engages.

## 5.2 Chaste, passionate, abandoned: three Dido types

In this section I will explore what I propose are three different types of Dido, which each have distinct literary origins. The first is the historical Dido, who never encountered Aeneas and, after the death of her husband, killed herself rather than remarry and so became an emblem of chastity. The second is the Virgilian Dido,

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<sup>43</sup> The identification of Abbeville as Marguerite Briet's hometown was confirmed by archival research into the affairs of her and her husband by Saulnier (1964: 461).

<sup>44</sup> “[...] et prindrent terre au port, qui s'appeloyt Hennerc”, “and they disembarked at a port which was called Hennerc” (Ang. 347).

who welcomed the Trojan exile Aeneas and was so overcome with passion for him that she killed herself upon his departure. The third is the Ovidian Dido, who recounts the story from her own point of view and represents a woman abandoned by a deceitful lover. Individual representations of Dido are, as we shall see, much more fluid than these somewhat reductive categories might suggest, but they are nevertheless useful in providing a schema whereby we might avoid the over-privileging of the *Aeneid* as the only text through which a Renaissance audience would have encountered the figure of Dido. This overview is essential for establishing that the Dido whom Hélienne came upon in her reading (and who proved such an inspiration to her work and her persona) was not a unified or stable phenomenon, but a product of a rich and multifarious tradition of telling and retelling. Hélienne, I will suggest, exploits the richness of this tradition to its fullest in her *Eneydes*.

### 5.2.1 The historical Dido

The earliest extant telling of a Dido story is found in fragments attributed to the third-century BC Greek historian Timaeus of Tauromenium.<sup>45</sup> Timaeus relates how Dido, also known as Elissa, fled to Libya with her followers after her brother Pygmalion killed her husband, suffering many ills along the way. Once in Libya, following a Libyan king's offer of marriage, Dido built a pyre on the pretext of performing a ceremony that would release her from her vows to her former husband. Then, having built the pyre, she threw herself upon it in defiant refusal of the Libyan king's hand.<sup>46</sup> In this telling Dido is a noble figure made commendable by the fact that she sought death rather than lose her status as a woman who only marries once, an *univira*, as she would later be called.<sup>47</sup>

The noble *univira* Dido also appears in the *Historiae Philippicae* of the first-century AD historian Pompeius Trogus,<sup>48</sup> but only survives in Justin's epitome of the work from the second or third century AD. Justin's summary of Trogus's

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<sup>45</sup> There are 164 extant fragments.

<sup>46</sup> Timaeus, *FGrH* 566. For an introduction to Timaeus, see Brown 1958 and Pearson 1987.

<sup>47</sup> Although second marriages were common in ancient Rome after divorce or widowhood, a great deal of respect was accorded to those who chose not to remarry. On attitudes towards *univirae*, see Treggiari 1991: 233-6. Certain religious honours, such as the cult worship of the goddess Pudicitia, were the exclusive right of *univirae*. See further Langlands 2006: 46-49. It is worth noting that the word *univira* only entered literary usage in Christian texts, beginning with Tertullian, but before that frequently appeared in inscriptions. See further Hexter 1992: 340.

<sup>48</sup> On the dating of Pompeius Trogus' history, see Odgers 1925: 146. Odgers suggests a probable date of the first decade of the first century AD.



account is the fullest telling of the historical Dido's story and differs slightly from the sketchy outline we find in Timaeus. In Justin's version, Dido is married to her uncle Acerbas, who has buried his gold to prevent Pygmalion (the king and Dido's brother) from stealing it.<sup>49</sup> Having heard of Acerbas' wealth through rumour, however, Pygmalion kills him and is shunned by Dido.<sup>50</sup> Subsequently, Dido dupes Pygmalion into believing that she will move into his house and persuades him to send his servants to assist.<sup>51</sup> Once at sea, Dido orders the servants to throw her gold overboard as a funeral offering to Acerbas, but deceives them, since the packages are not full of gold, but sand.<sup>52</sup> Believing that they cannot return to Pygmalion without the gold, the servants accompany Dido into exile and eventually arrive in Africa, having abducted eighty virgins in Cyprus to populate their new city.<sup>53</sup> Dido then dupes the local inhabitants, by negotiating to buy the amount of land that could be covered by the hide of an ox, before cutting the hide into thin strips and tying them together to acquire enough land to establish the city of Carthage.<sup>54</sup> Here, we return to the plot of Timaeus' story and Dido's defiant refusal of Iarbas' hand. Iarbas threatens Dido with war if she does not marry him and, feigning to agree, Dido delays the marriage for three months to placate her husband's spirit. Her actions culminate in the building of a funeral pyre and the killing of sacrificial victims.<sup>55</sup> Dido then climbs the pyre, addresses her people and kills herself with a sword.<sup>56</sup> Justin adds the final note that Dido was honoured as a goddess in Carthage for as long as the city stood.<sup>57</sup>

While clearly similar to Timaeus' account, Justin's account underlines Dido's agency and her qualities as a leader in the establishment of her new city. Through her cunning, she frustrates her brother's attempts to steal her wealth and instead steals his servants, acquires land through deception and thwarts Iarbas. In addition, Marilyn Desmond notes the way in which the actions of Justin's Dido are political manoeuvres that situate her in masculine roles, including the abduction of women for her followers to establish and stabilise the new city through marriage

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<sup>49</sup> Just. *Epit.* 18.4.5-6.

<sup>50</sup> Just. *Epit.* 18.4.7-8.

<sup>51</sup> Just. *Epit.* 18.4.9-10.

<sup>52</sup> Just. *Epit.* 18.4.12-13.

<sup>53</sup> Just. *Epit.* 18.4.14-5.8.

<sup>54</sup> Just. *Epit.* 18.5.9-11.

<sup>55</sup> Just. *Epit.* 18.6.5-6.

<sup>56</sup> Just. *Epit.* 18.6.7.

<sup>57</sup> Just. *Epit.* 18.6.8.

and offspring,<sup>58</sup> and her suicide by sword – a warrior’s death worthy of a male hero.<sup>59</sup> This account, along with that of Timaeus, forms the basis of the historical Dido – a Dido who never meets Aeneas and who commits suicide to preserve her oath of fidelity to her dead husband Sychaeus.<sup>60</sup>

### 5.2.2 The Virgilian Dido

Although the dates proposed by scholars for the founding of Carthage make the meeting of Dido and Aeneas an historical impossibility and although it is unclear whether he himself invented the story, Virgil’s account can nonetheless be read as a revision of the historical Dido narrative.<sup>61</sup> The heroic exile and city builder exemplified in the historical Dido are transformed by Virgil into an abandoned woman whose desire causes her downfall. However – and this is extremely significant to our understanding of how Hélisenne responds to Virgil’s *Aeneid* – there are still strong discernible traces of the historical Dido in the Virgilian Dido; traces that Gian Biagio Conte would call the “poetic memory”.<sup>62</sup> Virgil includes details of Dido’s loss of Sychaeus and the oath of fidelity she swore to him, her spurning of the African king Iarbas, and her suicide by sword atop the funeral pyre, which are all consistent with the historical Dido. Moreover, Virgil conveys a sense of Dido’s qualities as a ruler and city builder, characterised by her wealth, generosity, the building campaign that she has initiated and the civilised society that she has established under her rule. Thus, Virgil’s Dido – like her historical predecessor – is shown to be both powerful and effective in the masculine role she adopts, embodying what Marilyn Desmond describes as a “formidable” character.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Desmond draws parallels with the rape of the Sabine women, ordered by Romulus, which forms part of the story of Rome’s foundation. See Desmond 1994: 26.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> For a more comprehensive survey of the historical Dido, see Lord 1969 and Poinssotte 1990.

<sup>61</sup> The founding of Rome is traditionally dated to 753 BC and the fall of Troy approximately 1183 BC. For an overview of the tradition of chronology regarding Troy and Rome, see Hexter 1992: 367-8. Pease suggests that the Dido-Aeneas episode may have been invented by Naevius. See Pease 1935: 18-21. G. B. Conte qualifies this argument, asserting that, even if Virgil did find Dido in Naevius, the substance of Book Four of the *Aeneid* is still very much his own and the Dido in Naevius is likely to have been little more than a device for tracing the hostility between two peoples back to a mythical age. See Conte 1986: 152.

<sup>62</sup> Conte 1986. Conte proposes a model of intertextuality that reduces the emphasis on authorial intentionality, suggesting instead a model that incorporates reminiscence of past forms, styles, mood and atmosphere, as well as the deliberate recollection of specific phrases.

<sup>63</sup> Desmond 1994: 27. Desmond cites her royal bearing, wealth, generosity and the building campaign she oversees as aspects of her formidability.

It is in Book Four of the *Aeneid*, however, that Virgil's revision of the historical Dido becomes most apparent. Here, Dido is a sexualised figure who forsakes both her pledge of loyalty to her dead husband and her role as ruler and city-builder when overcome by desire for Aeneas. The qualities of a good leader that Dido once possessed – wisdom and self-control – are now compromised. Francis Cairns has convincingly argued that, once she succumbs to her erotic desires, Dido takes on a masculine role of a different kind – that of the elegiac lover, whose indulgence of his passion makes him not only weak and foolish, but also morally culpable.<sup>64</sup> Though both this Dido-as-lover and the former Dido-as-city-builder transgress normative gender boundaries, it is the Dido-as-lover who is more of a threat to Roman social order on account of her unrestrained sexuality.<sup>65</sup> It is important to note, however, that Dido's qualities as a leader and the qualities of the city she founds are not wholly damaged by her relationship with Aeneas.

Ralph Hexter effectively argues that “Virgil presents the figure of Dido from several perspectives [...] in order to frustrate any attempt on the reader's part to see her as univocal and coherent”.<sup>66</sup> Nowhere is this more evident than in the cave scene in which Dido and Aeneas make love. The indeterminacy of this scene – and the uncertainty it poses about how we are meant to understand Virgil's Dido and her responsibility for the events that will eventually culminate in her abandonment and death – is evidenced by the lack of scholarly consensus. And it is precisely this indeterminacy, I would argue, that allows those who follow Virgil (including Hélienne) to appropriate Dido in such divergent ways, by filling in the gaps and minimising ambiguities. What problematises our understanding of Dido is the sympathy that Virgil elicits for her as he casts her in the role of the tragic heroine – a factor that I discuss below. As such, although she represents an impediment to Aeneas' mission, Virgil's Dido is undoubtedly portrayed with compassion. In fact, so compassionate is Virgil's portrayal of Dido that Jules Girard considers it the most moving tragedy of ancient times.<sup>67</sup> The Virgilian Dido is thus undoubtedly the erotic Dido, but is at the same time clearly more of a composite figure, incorporating elements of the historical Dido discussed above and the third Dido, Ovid's abandoned woman, to whom we now turn our attention.

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<sup>64</sup> Cairns 1989: 149.

<sup>65</sup> For an explanation of the shift in the masculine roles Dido adopts and the feminised unbridled sexuality that she represents, see Desmond 1994: 33.

<sup>66</sup> Hexter 1992: 336.

<sup>67</sup> Girard 1884: 338.

### 5.2.3 The Ovidian Dido

The third Dido first found expression in Ovid's *Heroides*, a set of literary epistles purporting to be from heroines of Greek and Roman mythology to the men they loved. Ovid's seventh epistle takes the form of a letter from Dido to Aeneas, set after Aeneas' departure, in which the abandoned Dido calls upon the faithless Aeneas to change his mind. This Dido refutes the arguments proposed by Virgil's Aeneas as justification for his departure, thus posing a direct challenge to the heroic values of Aeneas and, by extension, the empire he founds. Aeneas is thus represented as a callous ingrate and Dido a wronged woman.

*Heroides 7* is particularly important since it is the first portrayal of a decontextualised Virgilian Dido,<sup>68</sup> removed completely from her story in the *Aeneid*, who displaces Aeneas as the thematic focus of the text. As such, this version initiates a long tradition of versions in which Aeneas' mission is subordinated to Dido's personal tragedy, disrupting the patrilineal focus of the *Aeneid* and thereby questioning the ideology it may be perceived to represent. Most significantly, as we will see in greater detail below, I believe that the Ovidian Dido plays a key role in Hélienne's translation of the *Eneydes*, and current scholarship on the *Eneydes* has yet to explore her indebtedness to Ovid's *Heroides 7*.

The Dido that Ovid represents is one in whom the role of Dido-as-lover significantly overshadows her role as city-builder, unlike Virgil's Dido, whose accomplishments as city-builder are not overshadowed by the events of Book Four. Ovid reconsiders Virgil's representation of the events of *Aeneid* Four and imagines them from a female point of view. Marilyn Desmond offers a particularly incisive interpretation of the Dido of *Heroides 7* as a reader of Virgil who, with the benefit of hindsight, can read between the lines of Virgil's narrative and its textual invitations.<sup>69</sup> In so doing, according to Desmond's reading, the Ovidian Dido is able to expose the Virgilian Dido's limited understanding. Developing this argument further, Efrossini Spentzou demonstrates the way in which Ovid's Dido is not just a sceptical reader of Virgil, but an appropriative one who, sharing the privileged point of view of the Virgilian narrator, is also afforded his interpretive authority.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> The focus of *Heroides 7* is entirely on the story of Dido and Aeneas and is thus undoubtedly intended to evoke the Virgilian Dido, rather than any pre-Virgilian historical Dido.

<sup>69</sup> Desmond 1993: 33-45.

<sup>70</sup> Spentzou 2003: 35-6.

The Ovidian Dido then, is not just one who reads between the lines of Virgil's narrative, but writes between them too.

To understand better how Ovid's Dido functions as a reader of Virgil, let us consider a brief example of this in action in *Heroides* 7 on the loss of Creusa during the flight from Troy. In Virgil's *Aeneid*, Aeneas carries his father on his back and takes his son by the hand as they flee the burning city, leaving Creusa to follow behind (*Aen.* 2.721-5). They have almost reached safety when the noise of the enemy disturbs them and in the tumult Creusa is lost:

*hic mihi nescio quod trepido male numen amicum  
confusam eripuit mentem. namque auia cursu  
dum sequor et nota excedo regione uiarum,  
heu misero coniunx fatone erepta Creusa  
substitit, errauitne uia seu lapsa resedit,  
incertum; nec post oculis est reddita nostris.  
nec prius amissam respexi animumue reflexi  
quam tumulum antiquae Cereris sedemque sacratam  
uenimus: hic demum collectis omnibus una  
defuit, et comites natumque uirumque fefellit.  
quem non incusauī amens hominumque deorumque,  
aut quid in euersa uidi crudelius urbe?*

“At this, some hostile power scattered my mind wits  
muddled by fear. For while I was following by-ways,  
and straying from the known area of streets,  
alas my wife Creusa, torn from me by wretched fate,  
stopped, or lost the way, or sat down exhausted.  
It is not certain; she was never restored to our sight.  
Nor did I look back for my lost one, or turn my thought to her,  
until we came to the mound and scared sanctuary of ancient Ceres.  
When all were gathered here at last, one was missing,  
and had escaped the notice of friends, child and husband.  
What man or god did I not accuse in my madness?  
Or what was more cruel in the destruction of the city?”

(*Aen.* 2.735-746)

As Desmond notes, in the penultimate line of this passage, Aeneas blames everyone but himself for the loss of Creusa, even though it is quite clear that his decision to protect his father and son before his wife make him at least partly responsible for her death.<sup>71</sup> In *Heroides* 7, Dido recalls Aeneas' story of the flight from Troy and accuses him of lying:

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<sup>71</sup> Desmond 1994: 39.

*Omnia mentiris; neque enim tua fallere lingua  
incipit a nobis primaque plector ego:  
Si quaeras ubi sit formosi mater Iuli –  
occidit a duro sola relictā viro.  
Haec mihi narrarass et me movere.*

“You lie about everything, for your lying tongue did not start with me, nor am I the first to be punished: If you ask where the mother of beautiful Iulus is – she died, left alone by her harsh husband. You told me this and it moved me”.

(Ov. *Her.* 7.81)

We see quite clearly the sceptical Dido here who, with the benefit of hindsight, questions Aeneas’ devotion, but also openly challenges and explicitly blames him for Creusa’s death. Moreover, *haec mihi narraras* comments on the Virgilian Dido’s limited understanding. This Dido can see what Virgil’s could not – that Aeneas’ lack of regard for Creusa should have served as a warning of where she too might be ranked in Aeneas’ devotion. She is thus both a reader and rewriter of her own story. Through the privileged position that she now enjoys and the way in which she responds to her Virgilian predecessor, the model of subjectivity that Ovid’s Dido represents destabilises the processes of reading and writing. This destabilising act is, as will become apparent, a key function performed by Hélienne’s Dido throughout her corpus and in the *Eneydes* in particular.

#### **5.2.4 Displacement and interplay: the dynamics of the three types**

Having established the three different Dido types and their origins, I will now trace an overview of how they were received and exploited from antiquity onwards in an attempt to ascertain how much of an awareness Hélienne might have had of the figures behind the canonicity of Virgil’s model. This overview will demonstrate the way in which, though they were often played off against one another, the versions were also sometimes conflated, particularly from the Middle Ages onwards. In particular, I will suggest that, while the historical and Virgilian Didos enjoyed a strong presence from antiquity onwards, it is only from the Middle Ages into the Early Modern period that the Ovidian Dido comes into her own, especially in sixteenth-century France. In so doing, I hope to pave the way for a reading of the *Eneydes* that suggests that, when Hélienne translates the *Aeneid*, she brings the

historical and Ovidian Dido to bear on Virgil's tragic heroine in such a way as to enact some of the uncertainties she wishes to raise about truth, fiction, gender and authority.

As noted above, Virgil's version of the story of Dido and Aeneas was well known from antiquity through to the Renaissance on account of the privileged place of Virgil's works in the education system right across Europe. The popularity of Virgil's version, however, also rested on the fact that the tragedy of Dido continued to resonate with readers. St Augustine, for example, recalling in his *Confessions* his education as a boy, admits to weeping at the fate of Dido: *tenere cogebat Aeneae nescio cuius errores, oblitus errorum meorum, et plorare Didonem mortuam, quia se occidit ab amore*, "I was compelled to learn about the wanderings of a certain Aeneas, oblivious of my own wanderings, and to weep for the dead Dido, because she killed herself on account of love".<sup>72</sup>

Not all readings of Virgil's Dido were this sympathetic and, in the allegorical commentary tradition of the Middle Ages in particular, Virgil's Dido became emblematic of lust, as opposed to the chastity of the historical Dido. The twelfth-century commentator Bernard Silvester, for example, read the *Aeneid* as an allegory for what the human spirit endures during its temporary residence in the body of man, charting the psychological and physical development of Aeneas through the narrative.<sup>73</sup> In this schematisation of the *Aeneid*, Dido represents the dangers that the human flesh poses to the human spirit. Silvester followed a tradition begun by Fulgentius, writing in the late fifth or early sixth century, of seeing in the *Aeneid* a paradigm of the stages of man and considering Dido in relation to those stages as the personification of sexual desire.<sup>74</sup>

Virgil's Dido did not completely displace the historical Dido, however. The historical Dido survived as an emblem of chastity, on account of her prized status as an *univira* and was often invoked against Virgil's portrayal to expose the fictionality of the latter. The tradition of challenging the historicity of the Virgilian account of Dido dates back as far as antiquity. Macrobius, for example, in his *Saturnalia*, explicitly pits the two accounts against one another:

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<sup>72</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* 1.13.20.

<sup>73</sup> For a basic overview of Bernard Silvester's commentary, with particular reference to Dido and Aeneas, see Ferrante 1975: 158-60. For a more thorough analysis, see Desmond 1994: 85-94.

<sup>74</sup> Desmond discusses the Medieval association of Dido as libido at length (1994: 74-98).

*Quod ita elegantius auctore digessit, ut fabula lascivientis Didonis, quam falsam novit universitas, per tot tamen secula speciem veritatis optineat [...]. Tantum valuit pulchritudo narrandi, ut omnes Phoenissae castitatis conscii, nec ignari manum sibi iniecisse reginam, ne pateretur damnum pudoris, conniveant tamen fabulae, et intra conscientiam veri fidem frementes malint pro vero celebrari quod pectoribus humanis dulcedo fingentis infudit.*

“And here he has arranged the subject matter so much more tastefully than his model that the story of Dido’s passion, which all the world knows to be a lie, has nevertheless, for all these years, been regarded as true ...The beauty of his narrative has prevailed so far that, although all are aware of the chastity of the Phoenician queen and know that she laid hands on herself lest her chastity be questioned, still they shut their eyes to the fiction, suppress in their minds the evidence of the truth and extol as true the tale which the charm of a poet’s imagination has implanted in the hearts of mankind”.<sup>75</sup>

This idea that Virgil’s readers knew of the historical Dido’s chastity, yet allowed themselves to be blinded by his poetry, is surprisingly similar to the statements expressed in modern scholarship on the persistence of the Virgilian account. Margaret Ferguson, for example, suggests that it is “associated with his artistic power to make readers prefer fiction to history”.<sup>76</sup>

In the fourteenth century, Petrarch claimed in his *Epistolae de rebus senilibus* to be the first to expose the fictionality of the Virgilian account by questioning the chronology and showing that the dates for the founding of Carthage precluded the meeting of Dido and Aeneas.<sup>77</sup> But Servius had already discussed the problem at length:

*Sic autem omnia contra hanc historiam ficta sunt, ut illud ubi dicitur Aeneas vidisse Carthaginem, cum eam constet ante LXX annos Urbis Romae conditam. Inter excidium vero Troiae et ortum Urbis Romae anni inveniuntur CCCXL.*

But all things are invented and unhistorical, as when Aeneas is said to have seen Carthage, since it is established that it was built seventy years before the city of Rome. Three hundred and forty years come between the fall of Troy and the founding of the city of Rome.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Macrobius, *Sat.* 5.17.5-6.

<sup>76</sup> Ferguson 2003: 19.

<sup>77</sup> Petrarch, *Seniles* 4.5.

<sup>78</sup> Servius, *A.* 1.267



Thus, from late antiquity onwards, writers inherited a seemingly contradictory concept: that Virgil had, on the one hand, crafted a powerful artistic vision of a Dido who loved too much and, on the other, had lied about an exemplary woman.<sup>79</sup>

Christian patristic writing seized on the historical Dido's status as a woman who went to extreme lengths to remain *univira* and on the potential to exploit her as a powerful exemplum of chastity. Tertullian, for example, in *De exhortatione castitatis* establishes Dido as a paradigm for Christian widows to follow in the refusal to remarry, since Dido so steadfastly rejected a second marriage:

*Erunt nobis in testimonium et feminae quaedam saeculares, ob univiratus obstinationem famam consecutae; ut Dido, quae profuga in aliena solo, ubi nuptias regis ultro optasse debuerat, ne tamen secundas experiretur, maluit e contrario uri quam nubere.*

“Some pagan women will be a testimony to us too, who have won their renown on account of remaining univirae; like Dido, who was an exile in a foreign land and, when she ought to have chosen marriage with a king of her own accord, lest she experience a second marriage, preferred to burn than to wed”.<sup>80</sup>

Though Tertullian proposes Dido as a model for emulation in her refusal of a second marriage, he nevertheless states that Dido should have chosen to remarry rather than “burn”. Further instruction on how to read this exemplum is provided by the accompanying reference to 1 *Corinthians* 7:9, which states that widows should abstain from second marriage unless they are unable to resist sexual temptation. Jerome uses the historical Dido in exactly the same way, as an encouragement to Christian women to avoid second marriages, based on the advice of the aforementioned letter from St Paul to the Corinthians.<sup>81</sup>

It was through these texts – and other medieval Latin texts that drew upon them – that the historical Dido made her way into vernacular literature and retained a presence that sometimes challenged the Virgilian Dido, but at other times was conflated with her. A brief consideration of the examples of Giovanni Boccaccio and Christine de Pizan will demonstrate both possibilities and one of the many routes through which the historical Dido entered vernacular texts.

Giovanni Boccaccio, a student of Petrarch, devoted the last years of his life to compiling in Latin a mythological encyclopaedia, a compendium of the lives of

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<sup>79</sup> For a thorough overview of the critiques of Virgil's veracity, see Purkiss 1998.

<sup>80</sup> Tertullian, *De exhortatione castitatis* 13.3.

<sup>81</sup> Jerome, *Adversus Iovinianum* 2.43.

great men, a geographical encyclopaedia and a compendium of great women. It is in this final work, the *De mulieribus claris*, that we find Dido exploited as an exemplum of chastity.<sup>82</sup>

There has been much debate in scholarly literature about Boccaccio's aims in the *De mulieribus claris*, chiefly concerning whether he presents a positive or negative view of the deeds of women. Despite the impression given by the title, that the work is a celebration of women, some have drawn attention to the way in which Boccaccio's work seems to undermine women's achievements rather than celebrate them. Glenda McLeod in particular emphasises the possible negative connotations of infamy attached to the word *clarus* in the title<sup>83</sup> and Rosalind Brown-Grant has successfully argued that the view of women in Boccaccio's work can, at best, be seen as rather ambiguous.<sup>84</sup> Boccaccio's work sets forth both positive exempla to imitate and negative exempla to avoid:

*Verum quoniam extulisse laudibus memoratu digna et depressisse increpationibus infanda nonnunquam, [...] erit hinc egisse generosos in gloriam et inde ignavos habenis ad infaustis paululum retraxisse.*

"Indeed because it extols with praise deeds worthy of commemoration and sometimes weighs down crimes with reproaches, this [work] will drive the noble to glory and then rein in, to some extent, the cowardly from their wicked deeds".<sup>85</sup>

His historical, non-Virgilian Dido in *De mulieribus claris* is clearly intended as a positive model for emulation. Presenting her as an embodiment of chastity, Boccaccio tells the story of Dido's devotion to Sychaeus. The story of the Virgilian Dido and her love for Aeneas is not entirely suppressed, but it is, nevertheless, explicitly refuted:

*[...] adveniente Enea Troiano numquam viso, mori potius quam infringendam fore castimoniam rata, in sublimiori patrie parte, opinione civium manes placatura Sicei, rogum construxit ingentem.*

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<sup>82</sup> For more detailed discussions of Boccaccio's treatment of Dido, see Desmond 1994: 58-73 and Kallendorf 1985.

<sup>83</sup> McLeod 1991: 64-5.

<sup>84</sup> Brown-Grant 1999: 139. Boccaccio himself asserts that "famous" should not be read synonymously with "virtuous": *Non enim est animus mihi hoc claritatis nomen adeo strictim summere, ut semper in virtutem videatur exire*, "For it is not my intention to use the word famous so restrictedly that it always seems to mean virtue" (Bocc. *De mulieribus claris* Pr. 6).

<sup>85</sup> Bocc. *De mulieribus claris* Pr. 7.

“Having never seen the arrival of Trojan Aeneas, and having decided to die rather than for her chastity to be violated, in the highest part of the city, in the opinion of the citizens to please the shade of Sychaeus, she built a great funeral pyre”.<sup>86</sup>

After Dido has stabbed herself in front of her people, Boccaccio makes clear the didacticism of this exemplum – that it is an encouragement to widowed Christian women to preserve their widowhood – saying: *In te velim ingerant oculos vidue mulieres et potissime Christiane tuum robur inspiciant*, “I wish that widowed women would turn their eyes to you and especially that Christian women would contemplate your strength”.<sup>87</sup>

There is clearly, however, some ambivalence in the way in which Boccaccio presents Dido, since her agency, and thus her effectiveness as an exemplum, is somewhat undermined by the fact that she is forced by the citizens into an unwanted choice between marriage to Iarbas or suicide. This is made most explicit by Boccaccio when, in her final speech, Dido tells the gathered crowd: *Prout vultis cives optimi, ad virum vado*,<sup>88</sup> “In accordance with your wish, good people, I go to my husband”. This is particularly significant, as we might consider this as an important precedent for Héli-senne’s own questioning and problematising of the exemplary function of Dido.

In Boccaccio’s earlier vernacular writings, he draws explicitly on the Virgilian, rather than the historical, Dido. In *Fiammetta*, for example, the eponymous heroine includes Dido among a series of literary figures who have suffered at the hands of their lovers. The allusion is clearly to the passionate Virgilian Dido rather than the chaste historical Dido, as Fiammetta seeks to explain through the example of the perniciousness of Cupid.<sup>89</sup> Both Marilyn Desmond and Craig Kallendorf effectively argue that Boccaccio moves away from the Virgilian Dido towards the less morally ambiguous historical Dido in his Latin writings, in line with his growing conviction that literature should be a force for moral regeneration.<sup>90</sup> What is significant here is that, whether Boccaccio defends the historical Dido or criticises the Virgilian Dido, the richness of the tradition surrounding her allows Boccaccio to explore various ethical issues and positions

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<sup>86</sup> Bocc. *De mulieribus claris* 42.14.

<sup>87</sup> Bocc. *De mulieribus claris* 42.16.

<sup>88</sup> Bocc. *De mulieribus claris* 42.15.

<sup>89</sup> Bocc. *Fiammetta* 76.

<sup>90</sup> Desmond 1994: 58-73 and Kallendorf 1985.

through the same figure. In the following section I will consider a writer who exploits the historical and Virgilian Dido not just within the same corpus, but within a single work.

Medieval Latin works, such as that of Boccaccio, which tell the story of the historical Dido, are the conduit through which she entered vernacular literature and the fourteenth-century French author, Christine de Pizan, draws heavily on Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* as a source for her work the *Cité des Dames*. In this work, Christine seeks to respond to the caricatures of women created by male authors with a catalogue of their exemplary deeds. In the work, Christine is visited by three allegorical figures, Reason, Rectitude and Justice, who persuade her to build a city in which to house and protect the female figures of the past, present and future through the creation of a text in which history is written by female counter-authorities.

The first time Dido is presented to the reader, in Part One of the *Cité*, it is as the non-Virgilian Elissa, married to Sychaeus.<sup>91</sup> Elissa is the model of the virtuous wife – the marriage is one of love and great happiness and when her husband is killed at her brother's bidding, she almost dies of grief.<sup>92</sup> Significantly, there is no mention of Aeneas and Christine ends the story with the completion of the city of Carthage and Dido's judicious rule over it. Far from being an example of someone who loved beyond the bounds of rational restraint, Dido is exploited here as a model of rationality, as the title of the chapter suggests: "Ci dit de la prudence et advis de la royne Dido", "She said this about the good sense and cleverness of Queen Dido".<sup>93</sup> As in other sections of the *Cité des Dames*, Dido's position as the first of a particular kind of example is pointed – she is not only *literally* the first figure in a list of examples of female good judgement, but also *figuratively* in the sense that she is, as it were, the archetypal example.

Later, in Part Two of the *Cité*, Dido is exploited as an exemplum of women's constancy in love and this time Christine does recall the Dido and Aeneas story and speaks of Dido's "amour ferme", "constant love".<sup>94</sup> Here Dido follows thirteen other literary and historical figures renowned for their chastity, and constancy is elided into the same category. This marks a significant revision of the Virgilian

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<sup>91</sup> Christine *Cité* 1.46.

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Christine *Cité* 1.46.

<sup>94</sup> Christine *Cité* 2.55.

Dido and, by evoking this model rather than the historical Dido in the context of chastity, Christine implicitly criticises the misogynist tradition that has portrayed Dido as lust.<sup>95</sup> The presence of both models of Dido in the *Cité* makes Christine's revision of the Virgilian model all the more self-conscious and thereby highlights the dubious privileging of either account in previous authors.

Boccaccio and Christine de Pizan demonstrate the way in which the historical Dido made her way into vernacular literature via medieval Latin texts, especially catalogues of women. Moreover, they confirm not only that the Virgilian Dido is still very much present throughout the Middle Ages, but also that not all writers felt the need to displace one particular version in favour of another. These writers saw the potential in both models of Dido to explore various interpretative possibilities, whether relating to ethical questions, as with Boccaccio, or the genderedness of history, as with Christine de Pizan.

Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* and Christine de Pizan's *Cité des Dames* can be considered as contributions to the *querelle des femmes*, the tradition in which Hélienne's own work is situated, and both continued to circulate widely across Europe into the Renaissance.<sup>96</sup> Jerry Nash convincingly suggests that Hélienne's use of Dido in the eighth *epistre familiere* points to a knowledge of both works and Diane Wood counts them among Hélienne's library holdings.<sup>97</sup> While it seems likely that Hélienne had access to at least one or both of these works, whether she alludes to them specifically is immaterial. What is clear (particularly through references to the constancy of Dido's love for Sychaeus, her achievements as a city-builder and the etymology of her name) is that Hélienne is very much aware of this countertradition to Virgil's Dido and the plurality of both the stories told about her and the multitude of interpretative possibilities opened up by those stories. It is essential that we bear this in mind when we consider Hélienne's treatment of Dido in the *Eneydes*, as it has a significant impact upon the way in which she renders Virgil's narrative and upon the persona she fashions for herself based upon the Dido she creates.

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<sup>95</sup> For a full and sophisticated discussion of Christine de Pizan's treatment of Dido as a feminist resistance to textual misogyny, see Desmond 1994: 195-224.

<sup>96</sup> Many Latin editions of *De mulieribus claris* were in circulation in this period and a French translation of the work had been available since 1493. Christine's *Cité* had not been published but circulated widely in manuscript form.

<sup>97</sup> Nash 1990: 38-48 and 1997: 394. Wood includes *De mulieribus claris* among books Hélienne definitely had in her possession and Christine's *Cité* among books she probably owned in inventories based upon allusions throughout her corpus. See further Wood 2000: 24-5.

Unlike the Virgilian and historical Didos, the Ovidian Dido was relatively unknown throughout the Middle Ages, since the *Heroides* was largely unread until the middle of the twelfth century, when it circulated widely and became the most popular of Ovid's texts. Like the historical Dido, the Ovidian Dido (the abandoned and wronged queen) was frequently evoked in order to displace the Virgilian Dido and challenge Virgil's authority. We can see its influence as early as 1160 in the medieval romance the *Roman d'Eneas*, the loose prose adaptation of the *Aeneid* in which Aeneas is presented as a faithless lover and the sympathy for Dido suggested by Virgil becomes "overt and ostentatious", as David Wilson-Okamura puts it.<sup>98</sup> It also circulated widely in vernacular culture as part of the *Ovide Moralisé*, the allegorical prose adaptation of the *Metamorphoses*, where it was included in Book Fourteen, after the brief summary of the *Aeneid* that appears in the *Metamorphoses* at 14.81.<sup>99</sup> There is a clear sense here in which, through vernacular texts, we see the Ovidian Dido flourishing among a more heterogeneous audience less defined by the reading practices of academic institutions.

Some medieval versions of the Dido story conflate the Ovidian and Virgilian Dido, producing a hybrid figure whose story closely mirrors the plot of *Aeneid* Four, but who exhibits less anger and more pathos, akin to the Dido of *Heroides* 7.<sup>100</sup> As Marilyn Desmond suggests, this demonstrates the skill with which Ovid's response to Virgil's narrative is so intricately interwoven into the story of the *Aeneid*.<sup>101</sup> It is essential to bear this in mind when we consider the rich composite figure that Dido would have presented to the sixteenth-century reader, as the poetic memory behind the canonicity of Virgil's account now includes the abandoned Ovidian Dido, who tells her story from her own point of view, as well as the chaste historical Dido.

Most significantly, sixteenth-century France saw an explosion in interest in Ovid's *Heroides*.<sup>102</sup> According to Paul White, at least forty-two Latin editions of the *Heroides* were printed in France between 1499 and 1580 and this figure does not

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<sup>98</sup> Wilson-Okamura 2010: 233. For more on the treatment of Dido in the *Roman d'Eneas*, see Cormier 1973: 131, 136.

<sup>99</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the treatment of Dido in the *Ovide Moralisé*, see Blumenfeld-Kosinski 1997: 90-136.

<sup>100</sup> For a discussion of the medieval conflation of the passionate and the abandoned Dido, with examples, see Desmond 1993: 46.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> Paul White asserts: "Nowhere in the sixteenth century is interest in Ovid more pronounced than in the French reception of the *Heroides*" (2004: 165).

account for those printed within collections of the complete works of Ovid.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, the *Heroides* was translated into French in the last decade of the fifteenth century by Octovien de Saint-Gelais in a version that saw enormous success, circulating widely in both manuscript and print. Entitled *Les XXI Epistres d'Ovide*, Octovien's translation was reprinted in nineteen editions in the first half of the sixteenth century, including an edition printed by Hélienne's printer Denys Janot.<sup>104</sup> Given Hélienne's familiarity with Octovien's translation of the *Aeneid*, it is tempting to suppose that she may also have had access to a copy of his *Heroides*. But whether she did or not, Ovid's retelling of Dido's story from her own point of view and sharp response to the textual invitations of Virgil's *Aeneid* seem to be reflected in Hélienne's translation of the story in the *Eneydes*. Before we turn to this however, it is necessary to explore the exemplary function of Dido throughout Hélienne's corpus. A reassessment of the levels of meaning (and subsequent uncertainty) created through that exemplarity are key, I would argue, not just to understanding Hélienne's exploitation of Dido, but also her self-positioning within the humanist tradition more generally.

### 5.3 Dido throughout Hélienne's corpus: Problematizing exemplarity

In this section I will briefly examine the appearance of Dido throughout Hélienne's corpus and consider the exemplary function she performs. Considering Diane Wood's discussion on the dualism of Dido's character, I will first suggest that we should link this more explicitly to the poetic memory of the other Dido stories, which were still very much part of the Renaissance reader's consciousness. More significantly, in the second part of this section, drawing on Pollie Bromilow's discussion of the problematisation of female exemplarity in sixteenth-century France, I will explore the way in which the exemplum of Dido in the *Angoysses* explicitly challenges the success of exemplarity and destabilises the processes of reading and writing, thus challenging the notion of objective authority. This will establish a way of reading Dido as the enactment of the unstable notion of truth that will prove essential to our understanding of how Hélienne renders Virgil's *Aeneid*.

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<sup>103</sup> White 2004: 165.

<sup>104</sup> White notes (*loc. cit.*) that Octovien's *Heroides* was unrivalled, but for Charles Fontaine's translation of the first ten epistles.

### 5.3.1 The duality of Dido and her function as exemplum

This section begins by exploring the portrayal of Dido throughout Hélienne's corpus, in which she is seen to represent a paradigm of virtue and the abandonment of that same virtue in the face of consuming passion – a dichotomy successfully argued by Diane Wood, who demonstrates how Hélienne presents Dido in two distinct exemplary forms, one to be emulated and the other to be avoided.<sup>105</sup> This dualism might be considered to embody the historical Dido on one end of the scale and the Ovidian on the other, with Virgil's Dido, as I have already suggested, sharing characteristics with both. We have already seen that in Hélienne's eighth *epître familière* Dido serves as a positive exemplum, as the writer encourages her friend Clarice to put an end to the relationship with her current lover in order to marry the stranger her parents have chosen for her. Hélienne urges the woman to follow the example of Dido, who she recalls as a paradigm of constancy and, in a striking and evocative image that emphasises both the exemplarity of her virtue and the severity of her misfortune, Hélienne likens Dido's constancy to the brightness of stars in the dark sky:

“[...] car tout ainsi qu'apertement l'on voit la splendeur des astres, durant l'obscurité nocturne, pareillement elle estant succumbée en la calamité de tenebreuse infortune, fist apparoir la reluisance de sa magnanimité”.

“For, just as one sees plainly the stars during the darkness of night, likewise she, having succumbed to the calamity of shadowy misfortune, made manifest the splendour of her magnanimity”.

(*Epistres* 95-6)

Hélienne thus encourages her addressee, despite her own adverse circumstances (the pressure from her parents to marry), to be steadfast and, like Dido, to demonstrate the *reluisence de sa magnanimité*, “the splendour of her magnanimity”, by acting in accord with her parents' wishes and marrying the man they have chosen for her, thus demonstrating, like Dido, strength and courage amidst difficult circumstances. The reasoning behind Hélienne's advice is that Dido had so much greater reason to be sorrowful, having lost her husband, than Clarice, who is losing only a lover whom she hoped would become her husband:

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<sup>105</sup> Wood 1992.



“Tu debverois estimer que c’est peine plus grievve d’estre spolié des choses par long temps possedées, que n’est difficile le tolerer de la privation de cela, dont seulement par le benefice d’esperance, à la jouissance l’on aspire”.

“You should consider that it is far more grievous to be deprived of things that you have possessed for a long time, and that it is not difficult to endure separation from that thing to whose pleasure you aspire, only through the kindness of hope”.

(*Epistres* 96)

This message of constancy in the face of adversity is addressed not just to Clarice, however, but is intended to benefit all women who might gain from following Dido’s example. Hélienne makes it clear at the end of the letter that, for her, Dido’s virtue is so outstanding that it is timeless, representing a positive model of virtue for any era, “tant aux modernes qu’à la posterité future”, “as much for today’s people as for future posterity” (*Epistres* 96). Thus, from the didactic tone, it is apparent that the letters are as much intended for a wider audience as they are for their literary addressee. This audience is, I will argue, even broader than the community of female readers that is implied in the text and includes the learned male humanist community as well as the more heterogeneous readership of vernacular literature. The layers of meaning that can be activated in the exemplary figure of Dido appeal to this broader audience.

The Virgilian Dido is entirely suppressed here – there is no mention of Aeneas, and Hélienne clearly draws upon the poetic memory of the historical chaste Dido. In a similar manner, the *Angoysses* also exploits the figure of Dido as a positive exemplum of constancy. The first mention of this Dido comes at the end of part one of the *Angoysses* and is addressed to all ladies, warning them against the dangers of “amours impudiques” (*Ang.* 221). Here, the protagonist Hélienne, lamenting her own sufferings in love, insists that she is telling her tale so that others might learn from her experiences and avoid submitting to passion, and asks God to grant them certain qualities – qualities embodied by various women from antiquity – in the hope that they might avoid such suffering (*Ang.* 222). Among this catalogue of virtuous women Dido appears, at this point, to function in a similar capacity to her appearance in the *Epistres* – as a model for women to emulate – as the protagonist wishes her female readers “la constance de Dido”, “the constancy of Dido” (*Ang.* 222). The model of Dido that Hélienne seems to be evoking here is

the chaste historical Dido who never broke her vow of fidelity to her dead husband.

However, the Virgilian Dido is not entirely displaced or suppressed in the *Angoysses*. Hélienne also evokes the Dido emblematic of passion, whose love for Aeneas brought about her downfall, and the first reference to her in the *Angoysses* has already cast her in this light. At *Ang.* 132 the protagonist Hélienne responds to a letter from Guenelic, encouraging him to desist in his passion for her and expressing her concern for the damage it may cause her reputation – damage which she considers to be a fate worse than death. To demonstrate the rationale for her fear, Hélienne cites exempla of those whose reputations have suffered as a result of yielding to passion, including Dido: “Et si la royne de Carthage eusse perserveré d’estres constante, elle eust avec louenge perpetuelle de son amy Sicheus l’umbre suyvie”, “And if the queen of Carthage had persevered with being constant, she would have followed the shade of her beloved Sychaeus with eternal praise” (*Ang.* 133). This very much reflects the Virgilian Dido’s overwhelming love for Aeneas, which proved that she “was not affected by appearance nor rumour” (*Aen.* 4.172). Dido, then, stands as a stark warning here of the potential consequences of submitting to desire. To make her lesson absolutely clear, Hélienne instructs the reader how to read the exemplum of Dido, leaving them in no doubt that her story is an example of conduct to be avoided:

“Telles hystoires doibvent estre suffisantes pour nous garder de succomber en semblables delictz, et, n’estre si faciles d’escouter les polides, elegantes & sauves paroles de vous aultres jouvenceaulx, lesquelles ne sont sinon unq laq deceptive pour circunvenir & decepvoir celles qui sont trop faciles au dommageable croire [...]”.

“Such stories should be sufficient to stop us from succumbing to similar pleasures and to not be so ready to listen to the charming, elegant and suave words of you other young men which are no more than a deceptive trap to surround and deceive those who are too susceptible to harmful trust”.

(*Ang.* 133)

The protagonist Hélienne evokes Dido later in a similar manner as an exemplum of the suffering caused by passion, but this time she emphasises the torment it can cause the individual upon separation from their lover, rather than the damage to their reputation. Locked away at Cabasus and unable to see or

communicate with Guenelic, Hélienne complains that she suffers even more than Portia did for Brutus, Cornelia for Pompey and “la magnanime royne Carthagienne pour Eneas” (*Ang.* 212-3).

The potential destructiveness of passion and subsequent force of Hélienne’s didacticism are all the more stark later still in the *Angoysses*, as Guenelic tells his companion Quezinstra that he is unable to desist from pursuing Hélienne on account of the strength of his passion. Guenelic recalls those who have died on account of such passion and the ensuing inability to exercise reason, including Dido and Phyllis: “[...] par ceste passion sont mors comme Dido et Philis: lesquelles par amour violement leurs vies finerent”, “through this passion they are dead, like Dido and Phyllis, who, on account of love, violently put an end to their lives” (*Ang.* 243). His statement is, of course, proleptic of his own death at the end of the *Angoysses*, and the perils of yielding to carnality loom large. The narrator gives no more exposition than this; the reader is clearly expected to be familiar with the stories of Dido’s and Phyllis’ suicides. By evoking here the Virgilian Dido and the story of her affair with Aeneas, Hélienne turns Dido from a model of constancy into a model of the potential destructiveness of love, in keeping with the title of the novel and its recurrent theme.

Since Hélienne thus problematises the constancy of the historical Dido with reference to the passion of the Virgilian Dido, how does she ultimately reconcile the two to ensure the didactic effectiveness of her exempla? Diane Wood offers a persuasive suggestion that Hélienne exploits the potential dualism of Dido’s character, as she embodies a tension between chastity and carnality.<sup>106</sup> By this token, according to Wood’s reading, the dual nature of Dido’s character, far from complicating Hélienne’s warning to the reader, actually serves to reinforce it. By beginning with the Dido-as-constancy model, Hélienne demonstrates even more palpably love’s potential for destructiveness in its ability to overcome even the most virtuous of women. Dido’s former virtue and subsequent fall underline Hélienne’s message that women should strive to avoid the dangers of love.

We have seen then that in the *Eneydes* there is an inherent dualism in Dido’s character that allows Hélienne to reinforce her didactic message. However, I will argue that there is a further element of didacticism in Hélienne’s use of Dido that

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<sup>106</sup> Wood 1992.

has little to do with the perils of love, but rather the notion of exemplarity and, in particular, the way in which women are represented in literature.

### 5.3.2 Dido and the failure of exemplarity

In this section I contribute further to Wood's reading of the exemplary function of Dido throughout Hélisenne's corpus, suggesting that Hélisenne problematises the ways in which Dido's story can be presented and read. This problematisation is central to both Hélisenne's interrogation of the acts of reading and writing, and the consequent implications for claims to truth. The dismantling of authority that results is, I suggest, the principal strategy in Hélisenne's defence of women and in her definition of her role in the humanist tradition.

In her work on female exemplarity in sixteenth-century France, Pollie Bromilow successfully demonstrates that female exemplarity has its own specificity and cannot be treated in the same way as masculine exemplarity.<sup>107</sup> More precisely, through examining Marguerite de Navarre's use of exempla in the *Heptaméron*, Bromilow demonstrates how the female writer recognises the problematic nature of the exemplary process, particularly for her female protagonists and readers.<sup>108</sup> The use of exempla in the *Héptameron*, she argues, interrogates the concept of truth and shows that it cannot be relied upon.<sup>109</sup> And in so doing, Bromilow suggests, it exposes the potentially damaging nature of the accusations of misogynist textual authority.<sup>110</sup> This is significant, as Hélisenne appears throughout her work to convey the same concerns, using Dido as a touchstone for exploring and problematising exemplarity, and exploiting the richness of interpretations already placed upon Dido's story to question ideas of truth and authority.

Let us consider an episode from the *Angoysses* in which we might find the most self-conscious formulation of this strategy, which will in turn prove crucial to our understanding of the *Eneydes*. As we have seen, in the *Angoysses* Dido is

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<sup>107</sup> Bromilow 2007: 1, 12-20.

<sup>108</sup> Bromilow 2007: especially 39-50. Bromilow places the problematisation of female exemplarity within the existing scholarly concept of a broader 'crisis of exemplarity' in Renaissance France. For introductions to the 'crisis of exemplarity', see Gelley 1995 and Lyons 1989.

<sup>109</sup> On the interrogation of truth in the *Heptaméron*, see Bromilow 2007: 67-72.

<sup>110</sup> Bromilow 2007: 62-66. Bromilow argues that Marguerite de Navarre distances herself from written sources, especially ancient ones, in the *Heptaméron* since she is aware of the "problematic position of the female writer and reader in the face of male dominated institutions such as history and rhetoric" (64).

portrayed as a positive exemplum of constancy to emulate and a negative exemplum of passion to avoid. What is significant is that here Hélienne acts out through her central protagonist the failure of this exemplary strategy. As noted above, in the *Angoysses*, the protagonist Hélienne offers Dido as an exemplum of the dangers of submitting to passion in her letter to Guenelic. We are told explicitly that the exemplum of Dido is meant to inspire women to avoid the flattering – and ultimately deceptive – words of young men, on account of the destruction that invariably ensues from submitting to one’s desire. But, in the context of the letter to Guenelic, it also purports to be a justification for her plea to him to stop pursuing her.

However, as Wood shrewdly observes, the protagonist Hélienne deliberately misappropriates the exemplary function of Dido.<sup>111</sup> Rather than understanding from Dido that she too must remain constant and resist passion, as she exhorts female readers, Hélienne explicitly acknowledges the false pretences under which she writes the letter. Instead of resistance, Dido’s misfortune represents for Hélienne a means of playing hard-to-get: “Il me sembla qu’il ne seroit bon d’acquiescer promptement à sa requeste: par ce que les choses qui facilement sont obtenues, sont peu appréciées”, “It seemed to me that it would not be good to acquiesce promptly to his request, because things which are obtained easily are little appreciated” (*Ang.* 131). The justification she provides in her letter for wanting to resist a relationship with Guenelic – that is, the potential damage to her reputation – is thus exposed as a mere “tactical manoeuvre”, as Wood puts it.<sup>112</sup> Hélienne never intends to heed the warning that the Dido exemplum provides, nor does she hope that Guenelic will either. It is perhaps possible that she wishes her readers to benefit from the example of Dido’s abandonment to passion, but her wilful misappropriation of the Dido story prevents a straightforward reading of the way in which Dido is used. Hélienne’s admission that her resistance is part of her amorous strategy might suggest to the reader an exemplary function of its own, providing an exemplum to imitate of playing hard-to-get. We thus question not only the reliability of this exemplum, but the whole process of exemplarity.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Wood 2000: 147.

<sup>112</sup> Wood 2000: 147.

<sup>113</sup> Pollie Bromilow has recently offered a discussion of the exemplarity of Lucretia in the *Angoysses* that would support such a reading. She demonstrates that when the protagonist Hélienne thinks

Wood fails to explore the broader implications of this multi-layered exemplarity, and particularly the significance that it is the exemplarity of Dido – the pervasive exempla throughout her corpus – that Hélienne problematises. The idea that Dido might therefore be considered a touchstone for truth and fiction, for exposing misrepresentation and questioning reliability, reflects the rich interpretative possibilities of the Dido figure as she appeared to a Renaissance audience.

Hélienne’s sophisticated exploitation of these possibilities to enact a dismantling of truth and authority finds its fullest expression in the *Eneydes*.

#### 5.4 The “lamentable tragedie” of Dido

As we have seen above, Dido’s story was clearly influential in Hélienne’s creation of the plot and characters of the *Angoysse*, but I would further suggest that Hélienne takes the sentimental style she has developed in writing the *Angoysse* and employs it in her translation of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, accentuating its tragic qualities.<sup>114</sup> This would clearly have appealed to Denys Janot’s clientele, who had an appetite for romances, poetry and tragedies, and allowed Hélienne to explore further the psychological depth of her characters. I will also argue that the way in which Hélienne heightens the pathos and turns the focus of the narrative towards Dido has important ramifications for the way in which we read Dido’s guilt or innocence (which I discuss in the following section) and how this subsequently reflects Hélienne’s broader strategy of interrogating the concepts of literary truth and fiction, challenging masculine authority and defending the female sex.

Critical attention on the *Eneydes* has noted the tragic quality of the translation, but has done so without attempting to explore the tragic qualities of the original.<sup>115</sup> Examining the final scene of Dido’s death in Book Four, I will therefore suggest that Hélienne draws out and emphasises the tragic aspects already inherent in Virgil’s narrative, aspects that conform quite rigidly to Aristotelian definitions of tragedy. This will demonstrate that, to fully appreciate

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back to the monk’s advice that she should follow the examples of chastity set by Penelope and Lucretia, she not only questions the applicability of such exceptional exempla to the common woman, but also misappropriates the exempla in such a way as to flatter her lover and put his constancy to the test. See Bromilow 2011: 14-15.

<sup>114</sup> Gustave Reynier (1908: 11) first applied the term “sentimental” to Hélienne’s style to describe her focus on emotions rather than events and identified her *Angoysse* as the first novel of this kind.

<sup>115</sup> See, for example, Wood (2000: 135), who refers to “the legendary tale of Dido’s tragic love for Aeneas” and Worth-Stylianou 2002: 156.

the way in which Hélienne manipulates the *Aeneid* and her reasons for doing so, we need to begin with an understanding of Virgil that recognises the richness of his narrative and the wealth of interpretative possibilities. In particular, I will suggest that Hélienne's translation of this scene removes any sense that, in the end, Dido's suffering might be transcended through divine intervention. I will contend instead that Hélienne's *Eneydes* never loses a dark sense of suffering and that she portrays Dido's ordeal as far more than she deserved. Out of all the tragic components of the story, it is this, I will argue, that provides a truly tragic perspective and has important implications for the way in which the reader might respond to her story and, in particular, her culpability.

The tragic qualities of Virgil's *Aeneid* were recognised as far back as antiquity. Philip Hardie notes, for example, that Martial referred to the poet as *Maro cothurnatus*, "buskined Virgil" (5.5.8, 7.63.5), a reference to the footwear worn by actors in tragic drama.<sup>116</sup> By late antiquity, commentators such as Macrobius were engaged in the task of identifying resonances of Attic and Roman tragedy in the *Aeneid*.<sup>117</sup> And twentieth-century criticism continues to explore Virgil's use of tragedy in the *Aeneid*, with many scholars focussing especially on the tragic elements of the story of Dido.<sup>118</sup> Richard Heinze, in particular, initiated a critical tradition of reading Book Four in Aristotelian terms as a "tragic epyllion", in which Dido is the tragic protagonist who experiences a reversal of fortune (*peripeteia*).<sup>119</sup> Heinze links Virgil's use of tragedy to Aristotle's explanation of the function of tragedy to arouse pity and fear.<sup>120</sup>

Using Heinze's Aristotelian definition of the tragic in Virgil's *Aeneid*, Antonie Wlosok offers a thorough examination of the Dido episode, arguing that it coincides strongly with the theory of tragedy proposed in Aristotle's *Poetics* and can be seen as the paradigm of a tragic episode within an epic.<sup>121</sup> Wlosok observes

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<sup>116</sup> Hardie 1997: 312.

<sup>117</sup>As Wlosok suggests (1999: 158), the numerous Dido tragedies in various languages inspired by the *Aeneid* corroborate further the idea that its tragic elements have long been recognised.

<sup>118</sup> For general studies of the tragic qualities of the *Aeneid*, see Heinze 1928: 319-330, Knight 1944, Quinn 1968: 323-49, Hardie 1997 and Panoussi 2009. For an overview of the tragic elements specific to Virgil's Dido, see, for example, Pease 1935: 8-11, De Witt 1907: 283-8 and Quinn 1968: 323-39.

<sup>119</sup> Heinze 1928: 119. Scholars who follow Heinze's Aristotelian reading include Pease 1935: 8-11 and Wlosok 1999.

<sup>120</sup> Heinze 1928: 467 While Heinze focuses on Greek tragedy, more recently Philip Hardie has stressed the potential influence of Roman tragedy and the tragic quality of earlier Roman epic (specifically Ennius) upon Virgil's *Aeneid*. See Hardie 1997: 322-5.

<sup>121</sup> Wlosok 1999: 159.

that five elements considered essential to tragedy by Aristotle could be found in Virgil's Dido episode: the hero should be of high rank or privileged position, he should be virtuous but by no means perfect, conflict should be caused by external factors, the hero should make a mistake (*hamartia*) that leads to a reversal (*peripeteia*), and finally the suffering that result from the hero's *hamartia* should be greater than he deserves.<sup>122</sup>

This last component of tragedy – that the hero should suffer more than they deserve – clearly echoes Hélienne's literary preoccupation with suffering, as borne out in the *Angoysses*, and it is this aspect of Virgil's Dido that Hélienne accentuates throughout the *Eneydes*, to devastating effect. One passage that gives us a particularly strong and archetypal picture of the pathos Hélienne evokes for Dido as a tragic heroine can be found at the end of Book Four.<sup>123</sup> Juno sends Iris to cut a lock of the dying Dido's hair to release her soul into the winds and Virgil presents the scene as follows:

*Tum Iuno omnipotens longum miserata dolorem  
difficilisque obitus Irim demisit Olympo  
quae luctantem animam nexosque resolveret artus.  
nam quia nec fato merita nec morte peribat,  
sed misera ante diem subitoque accensa furore,  
nondum illi flauum Proserpina uertice crinem  
abstulerat Stygioque caput damnauerat Orco.  
ergo Iris croceis per caelum roscida pennis  
mille trahens uarios aduerso sole colores  
deuolat et supra caput astitit. 'hunc ego Diti  
sacrum iussa fero teque isto corpore soluo':  
sic ait et dextra crinem secat, omnis et una  
dilapsus calor atque in uentos uita recessit.*

"All-powerful Juno pitied her long pain  
and difficult death and sent down Iris from Olympus  
to set free her struggling spirit and loosen her knotted limbs.  
for because she died neither through fate nor a deserved death,  
but wretchedly before her time and ablaze with sudden passion,  
Proserpina had not yet taken from her head a lock of golden hair  
and assigned her to Stygian Orcus.  
Therefore Iris, dewy, flew down on saffron wings through the sky,

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<sup>122</sup> Wlosok 1999: 160. Wlosok also outlines the way in which Virgil's Dido episode might be broken down into five acts, thereby conforming to the five-act rule of the Greek drama. See Wlosok 1999: 161-3.

<sup>123</sup> Worth discusses this passage cursorily in her brief comparison of Renaissance translations from Latin into French, noting that Hélienne "contrives to insert frequent expressions of pity for Dido, particularly through her choice of adjectives (e.g. "jeune" in the last line)". See Worth-Stylianou 2002: 156.



trailing a thousand different colours as the sun shone against her and she came to rest above her head. "I take this, as commanded as an offering to Dis and I release you from that body": Thus she spoke and cut the hair with her right hand, and with it all warmth left her and her life departed into the winds".

(*Aen.* 4.693-705)

Comparing the way in which Hélienne renders the scene to Octovien de Saint-Gelais' translation of the same passage, particularly with regard to her use of language, will show how Hélienne heightens the pathos of the Virgilian scene. This passage is, in some ways, typical of the way in which Hélienne presents Dido as a tragic victim throughout the translation, and yet I would argue that it is particularly significant since it marks the end of Hélienne's translation; finishing here, at the end of the fourth book, Hélienne chooses to leave the reader of the *Eneydes* with a lasting impression of the suffering of Dido. Before examining Hélienne's translation of the passage, however, it is important to pause briefly to consider Virgil's treatment of this episode and its role in the broader scheme of the Dido-Aeneas story.

Virgil's description of the dying Dido's soul struggling to free itself from its body is certainly one of the darker, more pessimistic scenes of Virgil's *Aeneid* – one which might call into question the cost of empire. Even the gods are moved to pity by Dido's difficult death (*Tum Iuno omnipotens longum miserata dolorem*), and the whole episode forces us to linger on the agonies of Dido. Virgil's language, moreover, encourages a sympathetic reading. It is a *difficilis obitus*, "a difficult death"; Dido's soul is *luctantem*, "struggling" and her limbs are *nexos*, "knotted" (*Aen.* 4.694-5). Furthermore, she is dying a death *nec merita*, "not deserved", but *misera*, "wretched", and *ante diem*, "before her time" (*Aen.* 4.696-7).

The pathos evoked by such language is heightened by more subtle tragic undertones, which also contribute here to the characterisation of Dido as tragic heroine. In particular, scholars have noted how Iris cutting of a lock of Dido's hair to dedicate to Dis casts Dido in the role of Alcestis.<sup>124</sup> In this episode of Euripides' *Alcestis*, Thanatos plans to cut a lock of Alcestis' hair to dedicate to the god of the underworld as he comes to lead her there in Admetus' stead, saying:

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<sup>124</sup> See Lyne 1989: 110 and Clausen 2002: 112. The most detailed discussion of this allusion is found in Rauk 1995.

“στείχω δ’ ἐπ’ αὐτὴν ὡς κατάρξωμαι ξίφει:  
ἱερός γὰρ οὗτος τῶν κατὰ χθονὸς θεῶν  
ὄτου τόδ’ ἔγχος κρατὸς ἀγνίση τρίχα”.

“I go to her to take the first sacrificial cutting of her hair. For when this sword has consecrated the hair of someone's head, he is the sacred property of the gods below”.

(Eur. *Alc.* 74-6)

As mentioned above, the allusion to tragedy in Virgil's scene, though subtle, was recognised in antiquity just as it has been in modern scholarship.<sup>125</sup>

It is also widely argued that Iris' cutting of the lock marks a pivotal moment in Virgil's depiction of Dido's death. Williams likens the function of the whole scene to that of a choral ode ending a Greek tragedy on a calm note, suggesting that it marks the replacement of human turmoil with divine inevitability: “Iris, with her other-worldly beauty and colour, brings light at last to Dido's dark tragedy”.<sup>126</sup> Focusing on the value of the word *obitus*, “death”, Lyne argues for connotations of an ordinary, everyday death, not at all heroic or dignified, and thus introduces a moment of bathos into Dido's demise.<sup>127</sup> The allusion to Alcestis in Iris' cutting of Dido's hair, Lyne argues, then transcends the bathetic effect, endowing Dido with dignity and heroism once more.<sup>128</sup> Pöschl reads the episode in much the same way, as he comments on Iris' arrival: “If [Dido's] death at first seemed to be the result of her passion and grief, it is now seen as the transfiguration and defeat of that passion and grief”,<sup>129</sup> placing it in part of a broader scheme of Dido's “vacillation between humiliation and grandeur”.<sup>130</sup> What all these critical responses have in common is an element of transcendence. In one way or another they all posit that the release of Dido's soul through Iris' cutting of her hair somehow overcomes Dido's human suffering, restoring to her a heroic kind of dignified calm or acceptance.

There are, however, more pessimistic readings of this passage. Austin's commentary notes an inherent bitterness in the contrast of Iris' colourful arrival to

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<sup>125</sup> Macrobius refuted Cornutus' suggestion that Virgil invented the ritual of cutting of the lock (Macrobius *Sat.* 5.19.2). For a full discussion of the complex relationship between Macrobius and Cornutus and their response to this episode, see Rauk 1995.

<sup>126</sup> Williams 1972: 393. Cf. Perkell 1994: 69.

<sup>127</sup> Lyne 1989: 108-111.

<sup>128</sup> Lyne 1989: 110.

<sup>129</sup> Pöschl 1962: 90.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

the dark tragedy of Dido.<sup>131</sup> Johnson's reading is more pessimistic still, as he reads the whole scene as undermining, rather than transcending, Dido's defeat of passion and grief.<sup>132</sup> For Johnson the arrival of Iris, and the beauty of the rainbow in particular, is distracting and diminishes the significance of Dido's suffering: "The beauty gradually overwhelms and dissolves the dignity of Dido's death and with it the meaning of her life and the authenticity of her struggles".<sup>133</sup> The disparity of critical response to this passage demonstrates, however briefly, both the potential for multiple readings of the *Aeneid* and the need for caution when trying to examine how H elisenne's translation compares to it. It is worth noting again that those few scholars who have written on the *Eneydes* tend to suggest readings that regard Virgil's meaning as fixed and work with readings that might be considered optimistic, in so far as they do not perceive in the figure of Dido any rift in the ideological fabric of the *Aeneid*.<sup>134</sup>

A further possibility I would suggest is that the colour and beauty of Iris do indeed bring dignity to Dido's death, through distraction and the aversion of the reader's gaze. The graphic detail of Dido's death eroticises and aestheticises her suffering – as argued by Alison Keith – with her literal stab wound corresponding to the earlier metaphorical wound of love.<sup>135</sup> Thus the beauty of Iris is the only thing that finally ends this objectification and directs our gaze elsewhere, away from Dido's agony. In so doing, it also marks an end to the erotic associations of Dido's death and can be seen as the final defeat of her passion, restoring her from passionate woman to the self-sufficient queen and city builder of Book One.

When we turn to H elisenne's rendering of this passage, we will see that she increases the pathos of the Virgilian scene by bringing back the idea of Dido's mental torment, stressing further the physicality of Dido's pain, replacing the serenity of the scene with panic, delaying Iris' arrival on the scene and introducing poignant reminders of Dido's youth.

H elisenne's chapter-long translation of this passage is preceded by an anticipatory title that summarises its contents as follows:

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<sup>131</sup> Austin 1963: 201.

<sup>132</sup> Johnson 1976: 67-74.

<sup>133</sup> Johnson 1976: 71. A third reading is offered by Perkell, who argues that Virgil undermines the stability of this passage in order to elicit contradictory responses from readers. See Perkell 1994.

<sup>134</sup> Both Wood and Worth-Stylianou discuss H elisenne's treatment of Dido in such a way as to suggest that Virgil portrays her less sympathetically than he appears to. See Wood 2000: 151 and Worth-Stylianou 2002: 156.

<sup>135</sup> Keith 2000: 116-117.

“Comme la sublime déesse Iuno eust compassion de la trop longue peine e l’infoelice dame: dont pour y imposer fin envoya du ciel Yris, lui donnant charge que de la prison corporelle deslye l’ame”.

“How the sublime goddess Juno had compassion for the prolonged suffering of the unfortunate woman: to put an end to it she sent from the sky Iris, giving her the responsibility for releasing her soul from its bodily prison”.

(IV, f. cii, r)

Here in the title, in the “prolonged suffering” and the image of a “bodily prison”, emotive language is already conditioning the reader to respond to the passage in a particular way and setting the tone for the text that follows.

Hélisenne’s chapter is substantially longer than the thirteen lines of Virgil, which immediately gives us some indication of the paraphrastic nature of this particular passage and the liberties that Hélisenne takes with her translation. The first thing to note is the stress upon Dido’s psychological torment. The *dolor* of Virgil’s Dido (*Aen.* 4.693) is intensified by Hélisenne’s qualification of it as a “peine anxieuse”, “anxious pain” (IV, f. cii, r), stressing, as she so often does, the psychological aspect of Dido’s suffering.<sup>136</sup> And Hélisenne returns to this idea of mental torment towards the end of the passage, when Juno tells Dido that she has come to release her from her body, and Virgil’s *isto corpore*, “that body” (*Aen.* 4.703) becomes “son angustié corps”, “your anguished body” (IV, f. cii, r).

Despite the added emphasis on Dido’s mental anguish, however, Hélisenne also retains the strong sense of the physicality of Dido’s pain in her description of Dido’s struggling soul. Borrowing from Octovien de Saint-Gelais the imagery of imprisonment,<sup>137</sup> Hélisenne uses it to intensify the nature of the soul’s struggle to escape and its difficulty in doing so as Juno appoints Iris to “deslier l’ame de sa prison corporelle”, “release the soul from its bodily prison” (IV, f. cii, r). The corporeality of Dido also changes in Hélisenne’s hands from a tightly held-together, contorted entity to a much more feeble and delicate unit as the *nexos artus*, “knotted limbs”, described by Virgil are rendered as “fragiles & mortelz”, “fragile

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<sup>136</sup> In comparison, Octovien’s translation seems guided by the constraints of his tight rhyme scheme, as he removes any sense of pain and renders Virgil’s *dolor* as “passion”, to rhyme with the “compassion” of Juno in the previous line (1509: 81). So we see that Hélisenne’s introduction of the mental aspect of Dido’s pain is original, or at least not drawn from Octovien.

<sup>137</sup> Octovien 1509: 82.

and mortal” (IV, f. cii, r).<sup>138</sup> The fragility of Dido’s limbs serves to set her agony in even sharper relief, reflecting Phillippe Heuzé’s idea that the more delicate the body, the “better it reacts” to suffering.<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, Hélienne reminds us explicitly of the violent nature of Dido’s suicide and refers back to it: “Or puisque c’estoit une morte violente, de tant plus estoit la dissolution du corps difficile”, “Now because it was a violent death, so much more difficult was the dissolution of the body” (IV, f. cii, r).

Towards the end of the passage, Hélienne’s Iris, as she performs her ordained duty, reminds Dido that she was suffering because of the “anxietez extremes originées d’amour trop grande”, “extreme anxieties which arose from excessive love” (IV, f. cii, r). This provides a clear thematic link with the *Angoysses* and its central theme of the dangers of excessive love, strongly recalling the wording of its full title *Les Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d’amours* (*The painful torments which come from love*). The image of a Dido who stood little chance against the dangerous power of loving to excess and whose fate recalls that of the protagonist Hélienne in the *Angoysses*, is far removed from the intelligent and powerful queen and city builder of Book One, and is clearly intended to elicit more sympathy from the reader.

Hélienne’s presentation of Iris too departs significantly from Virgil’s. As already mentioned, in Virgil the serenity of the goddess is a large part of what makes this scene so transcendental, establishing a calm and tranquil tone that contrasts with the intensity of the previous scene. Octovien de Saint-Gelais adds an epithet of speed to describe Iris, finding in “tresagille” a convenient rhyme for the “difficile” of the previous line, to render Virgil’s *difficilis obitus* (*Aen.* 4.694): “Et de sa mort trop longue et difficile | Du ciel envoye Iris la tresagille”, “And for her death, too long and difficult, she sent from the sky most-agile Iris”.<sup>140</sup> Hélienne, though freed from the constraints of a rhyming scheme, consciously adopts Octovien’s epithet “tresagile” for Iris (IV, f. cii, r). Furthermore, while there may be some suggestion of speed in the *Aeneid* as Virgil’s Iris flies down and comes to a

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<sup>138</sup> The fragility of Hélienne’s limbs is entirely Hélienne’s own addition, since Octovien omits the sense of *nexos* altogether (1509: 81-2).

<sup>139</sup> Heuzé 1985: 132. Heuzé discusses here Virgil’s prolonging of the physical suffering of Dido and Camilla for aesthetic purposes.

<sup>140</sup> Octovien 1509: 81-2.

stop over Dido's head (*Aen.* 4.702),<sup>141</sup> Hélienne adds a much more explicit note of urgency in Iris' flight: "persista en la velocit  de son cours", "she persisted in the speed of her course" (IV, f. cii, r). Similarly, we find a further element of haste as Iris cuts a lock of Dido's hair, "sans aucune dilation", "without a single delay" (IV, f. cii, r). The calm serenity of Virgil's Isis is thus replaced with an almost frantic sense of urgency in H lienne's translation of this scene, as though the goddess herself feels for Dido and wishes to put an end to her suffering. By diminishing the sense of calm transcendence in the passage, H lienne exploits Virgil's use of tragedy and puts before us an image of death as the result of passion and grief without the serene defeat of that passion and grief that Virgil offers.

The use of colour in this scene serves to reinforce this point. Before her translation of Iris and her saffron wings trailing colours across the sky found at *Aeneid* 4.700, H lienne introduces into the text an excursus on the three fates and Charon that underlines the untimely nature of Dido's death *ante diem*:

"car les trois soeurs n'avoient encores fait en elles leurs office [...], Charon n'avoit encores sa barque appareill e pour passer l'ame d'elle outre le fleuve Acheron".

"for the three sisters had not yet done their duty [...], Charon had not yet equipped his boat to take her soul across the river Acheron".

(IV, f. cii, r)

However, in the middle of these two additions, H lienne introduces a further digression – a mythological gloss outlining the names of the three fates and their respective duties.<sup>142</sup> It is uncommon for H lienne to introduce mythological commentary into the narrative itself as she does here, and this kind of hyperdigression has a twofold effect. Firstly, it prolongs Dido's suffering even further, delaying the eventual moment when her struggling soul is freed by Iris' cutting of her hair. And secondly, it delays the colour that Iris brings to the scene, which we might see as the pivotal moment of transcendence. When H lienne's Iris does finally arrive on the scene, she has all the colour of Virgil's: "Yris avec ses aesles

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<sup>141</sup> The verb *devolare* can convey a notion of speed, as it does, for example, at Liv. 2, 29; Lucr. 6, 205 and Petr. 105, 8, but it can also be used in the sense of 'to fly down without any suggestion of haste', as at Plaut. *Am.* 5, 1, 56 and Liv. 7, 12, 13. We might suppose that Iris hastens to carry out Juno's instructions, but it is by no means apparent from the text that we should read it in this way.

<sup>142</sup> While mythological glosses are not uncommon in the *Eneydes*, they are usually restricted to the margins of the texts, as we see in the other four examples on this page, which briefly explain the characters of Iris, Proserpina, Charon and Dis (IV, f. cii r<sup>o</sup>).

crocées, en l'aer tiroit à elle mille couleurs variables & diversifiées”, “Iris with her saffron wings, pulling behind her a thousand different and diverse colours” (IV, f. cii, r). Yet the scene is darkened again almost immediately. For, while Virgil’s Dido loses all of her heat as her life passes into the winds (*Aen.* 4.704-5), Héli-senne’s Dido loses all her colour too: “Lors Dido devenant pasle, piteuse & descoulorée, toute chaleur naturelle d’elle se sequestra”, “Then, with Dido becoming pale, piteous and drained of colour, all natural heat left her”, (IV, f. cii, r). Thus, once again, Héli-senne brings us back to the dark sense of tragedy, and any sense of transcendence is clearly undermined.

Héli-senne’s introduction of additional elements (Dido’s mental torment, the violence of her suffering, the unpreparedness of the fates and Charon) adds tragic overtones to the more subtly tragic undertones of Virgil’s account. In so doing, she more forcefully displaces Aeneas and his mission, making Dido’s personal tragedy the central focus of the text. The segmentation of the text into chapters contributes to this effect; there is no Aeneas in this chapter, just a tragic and pitiful Dido who has to wait so much longer for the ultimate defeat of her passion and grief, if we can see it as a defeat at all. Moreover, by ending her translation here, Héli-senne removes all sense that Dido is part of a much larger story, part of the whole process that will eventually lead Aeneas to Italy. The note on which Héli-senne ends is particularly poignant and, made emphatic by the use of alliteration, conveys the tragic force of the whole passage as she reminds us once again of the untimely nature of Dido’s death: “[...] & avec les ventz s’en vola sa juene vie”, “and with the winds, her young life flew away” (IV, f. cii, r).

## **5.5 Dido’s *culpa* and the dangers of love**

This section considers the idea that while Héli-senne increases the pathos we might feel for Dido, she nevertheless makes her fully responsible for the events that ultimately lead to her death. In so doing, Dido serves a didactic function in the *Eneydes*, acting as an exemplum of the danger of yielding to passion. I will suggest that Héli-senne stresses Dido’s agency and objectifies Aeneas as part of this process of exemplarity.

### **5.5.1 Dido’s regret**

One of the key problems scholars encounter when considering the tragic elements of Virgil's story of Dido is the question of Dido's *hamartia*.<sup>143</sup> As John Moles and countless others ask, "Is Dido guilty and if so, of what?"<sup>144</sup> Is Dido responsible for her own downfall, or is she a helpless victim of divine manipulation? To a large extent, how the reader views Dido's guilt or innocence directs the sympathy they have for her and has considerable implications for how they perceive the ideology of the text as a whole. It is, perhaps, not surprising then that there is little scholarly consensus on this question.

The majority of attempts to address the issue of Dido's guilt or innocence rest on the meaning of the word *culpa* in the line at the end of Virgil's cave scene: *coniugium uocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam*, "She calls it marriage and with this name disguises her shame" (*Aen.* 4.172). This statement raises several questions about the exact nature of Dido's *culpa*: Is it that she fails to honour her oath of fidelity to her dead husband, or that she embarks upon an illicit affair with Aeneas rather than seeking a marriage compact? With what justification does she call her relationship with Aeneas a marriage? In this section I will briefly consider these issues in relation to Virgil's treatment of the cave scene, arguing that, although the event depicted is certainly not a wedding, the indeterminacy with which it is presented explains Dido's self-delusion and allows Hélienne to manipulate the scene. Offering a close reading of Hélienne's translation of the cave scene and its aftermath, I hope to demonstrate that, while the scene appears to follow the same pattern we have already observed of accentuating the tragic elements – and appears to lessen our sense of Dido's self-delusion – Hélienne nevertheless makes Dido appear fully culpable for her actions. This seems to fit with the aforementioned suggestion that Dido performs an exemplary function, like the protagonist Hélienne in the *Angoysse*, against the dangers of succumbing to passion. The message to the reader is that, where Dido fails, they can and should resist passion. Dido has to be made culpable to allow her to fulfil this function and

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<sup>143</sup> Horsfall (2001: 126) notes that a large part of the critical uncertainty rests on the indeterminacy of the meaning of the word *hamartia* itself. For examples of differing interpretations of *hamartia* in relation to Virgil's Dido, see Rudd 1976: 162 and Moles 1987: 143-5.

<sup>144</sup> Moles 1987:153 cf. Rudd 1976, Pease 1935: 14-21, Perkell 1981. Rudd offers a persuasive rationale for the wealth of scholarly interest in the question of Dido's guilt, suggesting that, in essence, it explores the more universal question of how to reconcile divine providence and individual free will. See Rudd 1976: 33.



provide an illustration of conduct to avoid; were she not fully responsible, the exemplum would lose its applicability.

Virgil's cave scene begins with Dido and her Carthaginians, riding out for a hunt, accompanied by Aeneas and the Trojans. During the hunt, Juno sends a storm, forcing Dido and Aeneas to seek shelter in a cave. There, Dido and Aeneas seem to consummate their love, with Juno, Earth and all the nymphs present at what *appears* (to Dido at least) to be some kind of wedding ceremony:

*Interea magno misceri murmure caelum  
incipit, insequitur commixta grandine nimbus,  
et Tyrii comites passim et Troiana iuventus  
Dardaniusque nepos Veneris diuersa per agros  
tecta metu petiere; ruunt de montibus amnes.  
speluncam Dido dux et Troianus eandem  
deueniunt. prima et Tellus et pronuba Iuno  
dant signum; fulsere ignes et conscius aether  
conubiis summoque ulularunt uertice Nymphae.  
ille dies primus leti primusque malorum  
causa fuit; neque enim specie famaue mouetur  
nec iam furtiuum Dido meditatur amorem:  
coniugium uocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam.*

“Meanwhile the sky becomes filled with a great rumbling: rain mixed with hail follows, and the Tyrian company and the Trojan men, with Venus’s Dardan grandson, scatter here and there through the fields, in their fear, seeking shelter: torrents stream down from the hills. Dido and the Trojan leader reach the very same cave. Primeval Tellus and Juno of the Nuptials give their signal: lightning flashes, the heavens are party to their union, and the Nymphs howl on the mountain heights. That was the first day of death and misfortune. Dido’s no longer troubled by appearances or reputation, she no longer thinks of a secret affair: she calls it marriage: and with this name disguises her sin.”

(*Aen.* 4.160-172)

Let us first consider how justified Dido might be in considering the cave scene a wedding ceremony and whether we are able to discern whether Dido’s use of the word *coniugium* is presented as deceit or self-delusion.

The scholar Gordon Williams argues for Dido’s innocence here: “The decisive fact is that Virgil always portrays Dido as really convinced that she is

married to Aeneas".<sup>145</sup> Niall Rudd agrees, and shrewdly notes that the line *coniugium uocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam* must be considered as a moral comment from the narrator and not an admission of guilt on Dido's part.<sup>146</sup> Frances Muecke, on the other hand, in her study of the dramatic irony of Virgil's Dido story, insists that since Dido has heard Aeneas relate the prophecies he has been given, she possesses enough information to know that Aeneas cannot marry her and that his destiny lies elsewhere.<sup>147</sup>

The presence of the gods in Virgil's cave scene seems to legitimise Dido's interpretation of the events as marriage, because of their symbolic function as witnesses to the supposed marriage, and have been interpreted in this way since Pease's highly influential commentary on Book Four.<sup>148</sup> The lightning flashes function as wedding torches, Tellus and Aether act as witnesses, Juno presides over the ceremony (as the *pronuba* makes this function explicit) and the nymphs sing the wedding song. However, Nicholas Horsfall argues that these elements are so clearly parodic that Dido cannot possibly interpret them as signs of a genuine wedding ceremony.<sup>149</sup>

Gordon Williams rightly argues that Roman marriage could exist without ceremony or formality and, if we do not rely on interpreting the ceremonial aspect of the cave scene, Virgil's Dido might be considered justified in her belief that she is married to Aeneas.<sup>150</sup> However, as both Francis Cairns and Nicholas Horsfall have pointed out, *conubium* (that is, the legal right to marry in ancient Rome) could not apply to Aeneas and Dido, since she was a foreigner and Roman citizenship was the principal requirement of Roman marriage by consent.<sup>151</sup>

Dido appears to be genuinely convinced that she is married to Aeneas, through her use of language, most noticeably, when she later refers to what happened in the cave as *hymenaeos* as she appeals to Aeneas not to leave (*Aen.* 4.316). Aeneas' interpretation is, of course, quite different, as he protests that there

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<sup>145</sup> Williams 1968: 379-80.

<sup>146</sup> Rudd 1976: 41.

<sup>147</sup> Muecke 1983: 145-6. I would suggest that, given Aeneas' own inability to grasp the significance of the prophecies given to him, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Dido too might overlook them, especially since she has already been captivated by the charm of Cupid disguised as Ascanius and moved by Aeneas' tales of his sufferings.

<sup>148</sup> Pease 1935: 205.

<sup>149</sup> Horsfall 2001: 128.

<sup>150</sup> Williams 1968: 377-89.

<sup>151</sup> Horsfall 2001: 128 and Cairns 1989: 47. On the restrictions governing Roman *conubium*, see Treggiari 2002: 43ff.

was no formal ceremony binding them and insists: “I never entered into this contract by holding out bridal torches” (*Aen.* 338-9). We can see thus the potential for varying interpretations.

When we turn to Héli-senne’s *Eneydes*, we find that some of Virgil’s ambiguity regarding the cave scene is notably downplayed. In the passage leading up to the cave scene, in which Juno explains to Venus the plan she has devised for joining together Dido and Aeneas, Héli-senne’s vocabulary heavily stresses the legitimate nature of the union. Virgil’s Juno says *conubio iungam*, “I will join them in marriage” (*Aen.* 4.126), which, as we have noted, does carry some legalistic connotations. Héli-senne’s Juno insists even more explicitly on the legitimacy of the marriage, saying that it will be “un mariage legitime”, “a legitimate marriage” (IV, f. lxxxii, r). Moreover, two chapters earlier, when Héli-senne’s Juno had first proposed the plan, she called it a “nuptial conjunction” (IV, f. lxxxii, r) and a “perpetuelle alliance” (IV, f. lxxxii, v). This sustained emphasis on the legitimacy and permanence of the union, built up from Juno’s first mention of the plan, lends more weight to Dido’s view of the events. Her interpretation here seems to be less subjective and less self-delusory, reinforcing her belief that she was married to Aeneas.

Héli-senne also exploits further the function of the gods as symbolic witnesses to the union, by making their role in proceedings less oblique and more explicit. We are told that Juno is there in her capacity as goddess “qui a accoustumé de presider aux mariages legitimes”, “who was accustomed to preside over legitimate marriages” (IV, f. lxxxiii, v), which, with the emphasis again on “mariage legitime”, seems to carry more force than Virgil’s *pronuba Iuno* (*Aen.* 4.166). For added emphasis, Héli-senne repeats exactly the same thing in a gloss on Juno in the margin of the page. Furthermore, in addition to Tellus, Aether, Juno and the nymphs, Héli-senne adds in a whole retinue of deities to witness the union: Napaeans, Dryads, Nereids, fauns, satyrs, Oreads, Hesperides, Pierides and all the wood and mountain deities (IV, f. lxxxiii, v). Octovien de Saint-Gelais’ rendering of the cave scene provides a useful point of comparison: Octovien has Juno present, but downplays the Virgilian personification of Tellus and Aether, translating them simply as “the earth” and “the air”, lessening the sense of divine involvement and decreasing the number of witnesses to the union.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Octovien de Saint-Gelais 1509: 169.

We also see in Hélienne's rendering of this passage a heightening of pathos similar to that observed in the scene of Dido's death. In Virgil's *Aeneid*, the rhythm is slowed by the use of spondees in line 160 and lugubrious alliteration (*magno misceri murmure*), immediately indicating a change of tone from the joyful hunt scene. Long before we get to the authoritative statement that "that was the first day of death and misfortunes", (*Aen.* 4.170), the tone is ominous. The lightning that symbolically functions as wedding torches seems to portend the impending misfortune, and the wedding songs of the nymphs are unusually described as ululations, seeming to suggest mourning rather than celebration. Thus, all the signs that lead Dido to interpret the events as marriage signal to the reader a different interpretation. As Virgil conflates wedding and funeral imagery in anticipation of that definitive statement *ille dies primus leti primusque malorum / causa fuit* (*Aen.* 4.169-70), we – like the mournful nymphs and divine witnesses – are directed to understand the ramifications of the scene; that it will lead to Dido's death.

Hélienne emphasises even more strongly the dire consequences that will ensue, by making the wedding even more of a parody and foreclosing some of the subtlety of Virgil's scene. In the *Eneydes*, the grief of all the divine witnesses to the union is made all the more palpable as they are distressed by their foreknowledge of the tragedy that will ensue. Elaborating at length on Virgil's nymphs howling from the top of mountains (*Aen.* 4.168), Hélienne has Napaeans unable to raise their heads to view the sad spectacle, Dryads too busy weeping to come out of their trees, Nereids moaning and unable to leave their home, fauns, satyrs, Hesperides, and all the wood and mountain deities in anguish at what has happened (IV, f. lxxxiii, v). Thus the reader must start to question Dido's interpretation of the events, and whether she really believed it was a wedding or simply called it one. The heavy emphasis Hélienne puts on the mourning of the deities shifts the delicate balance of wedding and funeral imagery found in the *Aeneid*, and we are less able to assume that Dido takes the nymphs' ululation for *hymenaeos*. We can see then how Hélienne manipulates the scene to bring out the sense of mourning and elicit sympathy for Dido and yet, at the same time, makes it more difficult for us to imagine how Dido could really have deluded herself into believing that this was a marriage ceremony.

Hélienne thus appears not to fully exculpate Dido from her actions. In fact, later in the final speech given before her suicide, Hélienne's Dido acknowledges

her own responsibility for her downfall. With a heavy emphasis on the suffering her Dido's love for Aeneas has caused, Hélienne increases the emotiveness of Virgil's final speech for Dido at *Aeneid* 4.651-662 and, with a declamatory passage, full of exclamations, adds an additional page to Dido's lament (IV, f. c, r-v). Virgil's Dido exclaims *uixi et quem dederat cursum Fortuna peregi*, "I have lived, and I have finished the course which Fortune gave me" (*Aen.* 4.653). Hélienne's Dido, however, at the mention of Fortune, continues with a series of reproaches against the nature of Fortune, calling her "blind and changeable", "cruel and wicked" and "deceptive" (IV, f. c, r). Nevertheless, despite her reproaches of fortune, some lines later Dido acknowledges her own responsibility for her sufferings, expressing her regret at compromising her status as an *univira* through her submission to passion:

"[...] ay esté trouvé desgarnye des avirons de vertu: lesquelz au precedent me faisoient ma viduité & chaste pudicité conserver. Las si ie les eusse aupres de moy retenu, ilz eussent esté aptes à me iecter & liberer de tous perliz, en me conduisant apres longue resistance au port de suave & douce tranquillité".

"I have been found stripped of the rudders of virtue, which in the past made me preserve my widowhood and chastity. Alas, if only I had kept them close to me they would have been ready to remove and free me from all dangers, by leading me after a long resistance to the port of sweet and gentle tranquility".

(IV, f. c, r-v)

Dido becomes a self-styled exemplum here as she admits that the situation was not out of her hands and could have been avoided, had she only exercised her virtue more strongly and resisted. Her regret here seems to suggest that she fulfils a similar didactic function to the protagonist of the *Angoysses*, who used her own experiences of the dangers of love as a warning to others. To do this effectively, Hélienne must make Dido, at least in part, culpable for what has happened.

Dido's *culpa*, according to Hélienne, is thus not whether she really considered herself to be married to Aeneas or not, but the morality of breaking her oath to remain an *univira*. And this reading accords with John Moles' interpretation of Virgil's *coniugium uocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam* as a criticism of Dido's moral response to the gods' manipulation of her.<sup>153</sup> Dido is innocent, he argues, in that she falls in love with Aeneas through divine machinations, and yet her moral

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<sup>153</sup> Moles 1987: 155.

response to those machinations – a response that sees her yielding to her love – makes her guilty.<sup>154</sup> Hélienne appeals to a similar logic in the *Eneydes*: however much Dido might rail against the iniquity of Fortune, she admits in her final lament: “à mon indiscretion la coulpe se doibve attribuer”, “the blame must be attributed to my indiscretion” (IV, f. c, v).

### 5.5.2 The didactic force of Dido’s agency

In order to understand why Hélienne places so strong an emphasis on the culpability of Dido, we have to consider it in the broader context of the didacticism of Hélienne’s work and, in particular, her insistence on the concept of free will. The effectiveness of Dido as an exemplum, I will suggest, is underlined by Hélienne’s rendering of the *Aeneid* in such a way as to stress the agency of Dido and her qualities as a city-builder, ruler and self-governing *virago*. This emphasis has a twofold effect. Firstly, it demonstrates the dangerous potential of love by showing that, despite her agency in other arenas, Dido still succumbs to her passion and fails to exercise her free will to resist. And secondly, Hélienne appears to present Dido’s agency in an admirable way, reminding us of Hélienne’s aim to demonstrate that to act as a *virago*, and exceed the limitations usually imposed upon one’s gender, does not in itself imply moral corruption.

While Hélienne consistently focuses on the dangers of love and its destructive potential, the central premise of her didactic lesson is that, however powerful love might be, it is possible to resist by exercising one’s own free will. This message is made clear throughout Hélienne’s works. We see it set forth particularly clearly, for example, in the fifth *epistre familière*. Here Hélienne responds to a letter from her friend Galasie, in which Galasie has confessed to harbouring an illicit passion, by attempting to persuade her to desist from such thoughts: “O que c’est chose tresurgente: pour ne succomber en ceste captivité, que par bon & vertueux couraige du commencement l’on s’esforce de resister”, “O, it is a very pressing matter: to not fall into this captivity, one must try to resist it from the beginning through a good and virtuous heart” (*Epistres* 80). The way to resist passion, Hélienne goes on to explain, is to exercise free will to take control of one’s soul:

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<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

“Car autant fait la personne qu’elle dispose, pource que nostre ame n’est aultre qu’une seule disposition, de laquelle nous faisons comme d’une ymaige de cire, que nous povons selon nostre arbitrale volonté augmenter, ou diminuer, & avec telle facilité, que l’ame se contriste, avec celle mesmes se peult letifier: vostre vivre n’est aultre chose q’ung vouloir: ou il te inclinera, l’ame condescendera”.

“For a person achieves as much as she sets out to do, because our soul is none other than a single disposition, which we make like a wax figure, that we can increase or decrease according to our arbitral will & with such ease as the soul sorrows, with the same ease it can rejoice. Your life is none other than a will: where it leads you, the soul will follow”.

(*Epistres* 82)

The key message here is summed up by “vostre vivre n’est aultre chose q’ung vouloir”; Hélienne asserts that our whole life is governed by our “vouloir” (will), which is able to determine the disposition of our soul. The malleability of the soul according to the will one exercises over it is underscored by likening it to the malleability of a wax figure.<sup>155</sup>

The same reasoning is offered to the protagonist Hélienne in the first part of the *Angoysses*. Hélienne’s husband has taken her to see the monk in the hope that he will persuade her to desist in her illicit love for Guenelic and dissuade her from suicide (*Ang.* 34ff.). The monk insists to Hélienne that her passion is not out of her control and that she submits to it wilfully:

“[...] vous comme plus volontaire que sage, voulez suyvre vostre sensualité, et plus tost vous priver de vie, que de faillir à l’accomplissement de vostre voluptueux plaisir et appetite desordonné, sans avoir regard à l’offense que vous faictes à dieu et à vostre mary, la craincte duquel debveroit estre suffisante pour retirer vostre cueur inveteré et endurcy”.

“You, more wilful than wise, want to follow your sensuality, and would sooner kill yourself, than fail to achieve your voluptuous pleasure and satisfy your unruly appetite, without regard for the offense you commit against god and your husband, the fear of which should be enough to draw back your inveterate and hardened heart”.

(*Ang.* 155)

By expressing the wilfulness of her submission to passion, the monk’s message to the protagonist Hélienne is clear and could be encapsulated in the phrase that Hélienne the letter writer addresses to Galasie: “vostre vivre n’est aultre chose q’ung vouloir”.

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<sup>155</sup> For a fuller discussion of this imagery, see Wood 2000: 86 and 162 n. 18.

The didactic lesson Hélienne offers is not solely applicable to women, as she clearly demonstrates that men, too, need to exercise their free will and choose reason over passion. We see this most clearly in Quezinstra's advice to Guenelic at the end of the *Angoysses*, which, as Wood notes, casts him in a similar role to the monk as a wise counsellor to the irrational lover.<sup>156</sup> Guenelic has learned of the death of Hélienne and, distraught, blames the "infelice planete qui esclaira à ma nativité", "the unlucky planet which shone upon my birth" (*Ang.* 473) for his misfortune. Drawing heavily on contemporary works on theology and astrology,<sup>157</sup> Quezinstra delivers an eight-page oration in which he reprimands Guenelic for his heresy and insists on the necessity of exercising free will. Quezinstra concedes that the stars have some effect on the dispositions of men (in the same way that the monk concedes to Hélienne that the temptations of passion are hard to resist), but it is nevertheless in our power to resist their workings:

"[...] pour ces choses est la question precedente absolue. C'est à scavoir que les impressions des estoilles sont causes aulcunement dispositives de la variation et diversité des meurs: mais non pas necessaires ne suffisantes: car on a liberal arbitre avecq l'ayde de dieu, pour resister".

"For these reasons the preceding question is resolved. That is that the influence of the stars has some dispositional effects on the variation and diversity of morals, but not necessary or sufficient effects: *for one has a free choice, with the help of God, to resist*".<sup>158</sup>

(*Ang.* 480-1)

Hélienne's insistence on the responsibility of the individual for their own actions is not, therefore, gender specific, but applicable to both men and women.

When Dido admits her responsibility for her downfall in the *Eneydes*, she is admitting that, despite the insidious and powerful nature of passion (and the divine manipulation behind the scenes to which she is not party, but blames on Fortune), she should have exercised her free will. She thus reinforces the didactic message that runs throughout Hélienne's corpus, that love is a powerful and destructive force, but can be resisted.

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<sup>156</sup> Wood 2000: 132-5.

<sup>157</sup> Quezinstra makes references to St Paul's letters (*Corinthians, Philipians and Romans*), *Psalms*, the gospels (especially *John* and *Matthew*), Augustine's *City of God*, Caviceo's *Peregrino* and David de Finarensis' *l'Epitome de la vraie astrologie et de la reprouvée*. For a full discussion of the authorities cited by Quezinstra, see Wood 2000: 133-4.

<sup>158</sup> Emphasis my own.



The qualities of Dido stressed throughout the *Eneydes* (accentuations of those already present in Virgil and the poetic memory of the historical Dido) underline Hélienne's didactic message that everyone has free will. Dido is a powerful and wise ruler, who has taken control of her destiny by fleeing Tyre and building a new life for herself and her people in Carthage, yet she still falls victim to the power of passion. We know that she has agency and autonomy, because she demonstrates these so palpably in other areas, but she chooses not to exercise them when it comes to resisting passion. A brief examination of three passages of Hélienne's translation will allow us to see this approach more clearly.

At *Aeneid* 1.418-449, Virgil describes Aeneas and Achates making their way along the path upon which Venus has set them, towards the temple of Juno. From their high position, Aeneas and Achates are able to survey the city of Carthage and Aeneas marvels at the progress of the city that Dido has established (*Aen.* 1.421-425),<sup>159</sup> the laws she has introduced (*Aen.* 1.426) and the energetic activity of the inhabitants, whose industry Virgil likens to the industry of worker bees in the hive (*Aen.* 1.430-436).<sup>160</sup> Aeneas, yet to find the ordained site of his new city, envies Dido and the city she has established: "*O fortunati, quorum iam moenia surgunt!*", "Oh, fortunate are those whose walls already rise!" (*Aen.* 1.437).

In her translation of this passage in Book One, Chapter 18 of the *Eneydes*, Hélienne accentuates considerably the magnificence of the city of Carthage and, by extension, the qualities of Dido as its founder and ruler. While Virgil tells us that Aeneas marvels at the city, he nevertheless speaks of it in rather plain terms:

*Iamque ascendebant collem, qui plurimus urbi  
imminet, adversasque adspectat desuper arces.  
Miratur molem Aeneas, magalia quondam,  
miratur portas strepitumque et strata viarum.*

"And now they climbed the hill, which looms large  
over the city, and looks down from above and the facing citadels.  
Aeneas marvels at the greatness, once huts,  
he marvels at the gates and the noise and the paving of the streets"  
(*Aen.* 1.419-422)

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<sup>159</sup> *Miratur molem Aeneas, magalia quondam*, "Aeneas marvelled at the greatness, once huts" (*Aen.* 1.421). The contrast between *molem* and *magalia* underlines how much Carthage has developed from its small beginnings.

<sup>160</sup> For an analysis of the bee simile and its effectiveness, see Cairns 1989: 40.

Hélisenne's rendering of these lines is far more evocative in expressing the grandeur of the city, as Aeneas admires the "altitude des spacieux edifices", "the height of the spacious buildings", the beauty of which not only "à grande admiration les commeust", "moved them to great admiration", but also "la jugerent de merveilleuse estimation digne", "judged it worthy of great admiration" (I, f. xvi, r). Virgil's *urbs* is hyperbolically rendered as "la tres incylte & populeuse cité qui de triomphe & excellence toute remplye", "the famous and populous city which is entirely full of triumph and excellence" (I, f. xv, v). Even Virgil's *viae* become "belles rues", "beautiful streets" (I, f. xvi, r). In his work on the *Aeneid*, Philip Hardie argues convincingly that Virgil's identification of Dido with her city and its inhabitants is so strong that it is "as if they were an inseparable extension of her own person".<sup>161</sup> The connection is evident, Hardie argues, not only in the cessation of activity that results from Dido's preoccupation with Aeneas,<sup>162</sup> but also the fact that Dido's death on the funeral pyre prefigures the destruction of the city itself.<sup>163</sup> Hélisenne retains this figurative connection between Dido and her city and exploits it, so that the praiseworthiness of the city reflects praiseworthiness upon its founder and ruler.

There is, moreover, increased emphasis in Hélisenne's translation on Dido's success as a law-maker. In Virgil, it is the Carthaginians in general who are given credit for drawing up laws: *Iura legunt*, "they choose laws" (*Aen.* 1.426). But Hélisenne subtly turns this around, stressing that the Carthaginians live "en pacifiques concorde soubz loix commune", "in peaceful concord under common law" (I, f. xv, v-xvi, r). Hélisenne thus not only allows us to imagine that Dido is responsible for creating the laws, but also that those laws are judicious and bring harmony to her people. As a reflection of their leader, the city and its inhabitants, with their successfully functioning legal system, characterise Dido as a prudent and just leader.

We find a similar strategy at play in Hélisenne's rendering of the story of Dido related to Aeneas by Venus (*Aen.* 1.335-370). In the course of her speech, Virgil's Venus briefly alludes to the story of the bull's hide cut into strips to appropriate a large area of land upon which to establish Carthage. As we have noted, this was a key element of the historical Dido's story, yet, as Margaret

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<sup>161</sup> Hardie 1986: 284.

<sup>162</sup> Hardie 1986: 271-282.

<sup>163</sup> Hardie 1986: 283.

Ferguson observes in her survey of the literary manipulation of Dido, Virgil reduces Dido's agency and shrewdness by almost obscuring her role as instigator of this cunning plan.<sup>164</sup> In particular, it is Virgil's attribution of the act to an undefined group of Carthaginians that denies Dido her agency:

*Devenere locos, ubi nunc ingentia cernis  
moenia surgentemque novae Karthaginis arcem,  
mercatique solum, facti de nomine Byrsam,  
taurino quantum possent circumdare tergo.*

"They arrived at the place where you now see  
the huge walls and the rising citadel of new Carthage,  
and they bought land, called Byrsa from the name of the deed,  
as much as they could surround with the hide of a bull".

(*Aen.* 1.365-8)

When Hélienne renders these lines in the *Eneydes*, she explicitly reinstates Dido as the *auctor* of the plan: "Dido achepta autant de terre qu'ung cuyr de Biche se pourroit dilater & estendre", "Dido purchased as much land as a bull's hide could be spread and extended" (I, f. xiii, v). Given the link we explored earlier between Dido's appropriation of land and Hélienne's attempt to claim a space for herself in the literary field, we might also see her restoration of Dido at the centre of this story as part of her own self-positioning in the humanist tradition.

One final scene in which Hélienne can be seen to delicately shift the dynamics of action is at the start of the hunt, leading up to the cave scene. Here Virgil offers a resplendent and vivid depiction of the hunting party as it is about to set out:

*Oceanum interea surgens Aurora reliquit.  
it portis iubare exorto delecta iuventus,  
retia rara, plagae, lato uenabula ferro,  
Massylique ruunt equites et odora canum uis.  
reginam thalamo cunctantem ad limina primi  
Poenorum exspectant, ostroque insignis et auro  
stat sonipes ac frena ferox spumantia mandit.  
tandem progreditur magna stipante caterua  
Sidoniam picto chlamydem circumdata limbo;  
cui pharetra ex auro, crines nodantur in aurum,  
aurea purpuream subnectit fibula uestem.*

"Meanwhile Aurora arising leaves Ocean.  
Once her rays appear, the chosen men pour from the gates,

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<sup>164</sup> Ferguson 2003: 20.

with fine nets and wide-meshed nets, hunting spears with a broad blade,  
and the Massylian horsemen rush out and a pack of keen-scented hounds.  
The Carthaginian leaders wait for the queen at the threshold,  
while she lingers in her chamber, her horse stands there,  
with trappings in purple and gold, and fierce, it champs at the foaming bit.  
At last she appears, with a great crowd around her,  
wearing a Sidonian robe with an embroidered hem.  
Her quiver is of gold, her hair knotted with gold,  
a golden brooch fastens her purple tunic”.

(*Aen.* 4.129-139)

A particularly striking and intriguing feature of this passage is Dido’s delay before she steps out to join the hunt (*Aen.* 4.133). In a scene full of colour and energy, Dido’s hesitation stands out in sharp relief and brings a curious note of solemnity. But what is the reason for Dido’s delay? In his commentary, Servius suggests that Dido was taking the time to primp herself before seeing Aeneas, and a number of nineteenth and twentieth century scholars follow Servius’ interpretation without question.<sup>165</sup> More recently, Charles Segal has offered an ingenious discussion of Dido’s hesitation, reading it as a kind of perverted bridal ritual and arguing that Dido hesitates as a bride would hesitate.<sup>166</sup> Segal sees the threshold at which the leading Carthaginians wait as a symbolic threshold between her former role as self-sufficient queen and city-builder and the role into which she will soon find herself cast, as abandoned woman in love.<sup>167</sup> Dido’s hesitation and reluctance to leave thus become “a last saving instinct, a natural pull back to the safety of her home”.<sup>168</sup> Putting the delay in the context of the divine manipulations – even though Dido is unaware of the powers at work – this quiet moment seems to enact an unconscious resistance against the goddesses who control her, a momentary refusal to accept the fate that lies in store.

When Hélienne translates the prelude to the hunt in Chapter Eight of her *Eneydes*, she departs significantly from Virgil. The focus is entirely on Dido as the author ignores the details of the weapons and the horsemen and the dogs, and instead cuts straight to Dido herself. She also completely inverts Dido’s moment of hesitation, making her rush out in eagerness to join the hunt:

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<sup>165</sup> Servius, *A. ad. loc.* For scholars who follow Servius, see, for example, Conington and Nettleship 1884, Cartault 1926: 309 and Pease 1935: 183-4.

<sup>166</sup> Segal 1990: 10. In a Roman wedding the bride’s resistance to leaving her family home assured onlookers of her chastity, suggesting that she had, until then, lived a suitably cloistered life. On the reluctance of the bride as a constituent of Roman wedding ritual, see Hersch 2010: 144-7.

<sup>167</sup> Segal 1990: 11.

<sup>168</sup> Segal 1990: 6.

“Incontinent apres ceste chose entre les déesses déterminée, la royne Dido stimulée d’imiter sa Fortune ne voulut faillir d’au desduict de la chasse assister: parquoy sans dilation estant associée de grande multitude de gens notables, de son triumpant & magnifique palais elle descendit”.

“Immediately after these things had been decided among the goddesses, queen Dido, driven to follow her Fortune, did not want to miss joining the setting out of the hunt: therefore, without delay, accompanied by a great number of notable people, she came down from her triumphal and magnificent palace”.

(IV, f. lxxxii, v)

The scene could not be more different from Virgil’s as the delaying queen (*cunctantem*), who finally (*tandem*) steps forth, is replaced by a queen who leaves her palace immediately (“incontinent”) and without delay (“sans delation”). With the reference back to Juno and Venus’ agreement on creating an alliance between the Trojans and Carthaginians (*Aen.* 4.90-128), Hélienne explicitly reminds us of the divine forces at work in the *Aeneid*. Nonetheless, by removing Dido’s unknowing moment of resistance and the concomitant suggestion that, for one instant, she might frustrate the goddesses’ intrigues,<sup>169</sup> Hélienne increases the sense that Dido exercises her free will, unwittingly choosing to accept her fate. It is worth noting, of course, that by this point Dido is only too well aware of her love for Aeneas. It is not simply the case that Hélienne has Dido passively swept up in the vigorous activity and exuberance of the hunt; she actively and eagerly rushes out to join it. She may already be the victim of higher powers, but she offers no resistance and as she rushes to join the hunt, she also rushes headlong towards the cave scene – the scene that the reader who already knows Virgil’s story will recognise as the cause of death and misfortune (*ille dies primus leti primusque malorum / causa fuit*).

It is important to note that while Dido’s failure to resist passion is presented critically, her agency is not, in itself, presented in negative terms. The second half of this section will explore more thoroughly the way in which Hélienne accentuates the praiseworthiness of Dido’s status as a *virago*. This, I will suggest, supports Hélienne’s didactic aims, by showing that women can and should exercise their agency in a morally commendable way and, in turn, bolsters Hélienne’s defence of her own *virago* status.

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<sup>169</sup> Dido does, of course, eventually frustrate their plans, dying in a way that deceives even the gods.

During Venus' speech to Aeneas, in which she relates the history of Dido, the goddess tells of the dead Sychaeus' appearance to Dido to warn her of the danger posed by her tyrant brother Pygmalion (*Aen.* 1.353-359). Venus particularly underlines Dido's role as commander of the flight of her people from Tyre, explicitly placing emphasis on her gender:

*His commota fugam Dido sociosque parabat:  
conveniunt, quibus aut odium crudele tyranni  
aut metus acer erat; navis, quae forte paratae,  
corripiunt, onerantque auro: portantur avari  
Pygmalionis opes pelago; dux femina facti.*

"Shaken by this, Dido prepared her flight and her companions: They gathered, either those who had cruel hatred of the tyrant or bitter fear; and they seized ships, which were by chance prepared, and they filled them with gold. The riches of Pygmalion were carried on the sea; the leader of the expedition was a woman".

(*Aen.* 1.360-4)

On the surface, *dux femina facti* is not a particularly strong statement about the character or nature of women, but it does give us some indication of the underlying assumptions about female character and the 'marked' way in which *femina* is used in the *Aeneid*.<sup>170</sup> The only explicit statement being made here is one of differentiation between male and female; the use of *femina* is marked in that it is not the subject and norm of epic, but something different, something exceptional. The implicit suggestion made by the use of the word is the exceptionality of having a female *dux facti* and, by drawing our attention to the gender of the *dux*, Virgil consciously stresses the fact that it overturns the more conventional gender oppositions constructed throughout the text.<sup>171</sup> There is, of course, no real need to reiterate Dido's gender, when we already know that she is a woman and that she leads the flight from Tyre.<sup>172</sup>

I would argue, however, that Virgil offers no guide as to how to interpret this exceptionality. It certainly problematises the gender code of the text, but what are we to make of it? Is the tone one of admiration, derision, incredulity perhaps?

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<sup>170</sup> On the marked use of *femina* and its cognates in the *Aeneid*, see Keith 2000: 23-7.

<sup>171</sup> A number of scholars have pointed out the way in which the gender oppositions in the *Aeneid* are not as stable as they might appear. See, for example Keith 2000: especially 30-35 and Sullivan 1992.

<sup>172</sup> Dido's gender is apparent from the feminine participle *profecta* in the first line, which mentions her name: *imperium Dido Tyria regit urbe profecta*, "Dido is in command, having set out from the city of Tyre" (*Aen.* 1.340).

Williams suggests a tone of admiration,<sup>173</sup> but this is not abundantly apparent from the Latin itself. It is essential to note, of course, that the line is voiced by Venus and we have to consider it within the context of Venus' speech. Venus is trying to console Aeneas here, as he complains bitterly about the misfortunes the Trojans have endured. She tells him the story of Dido, whose fate was similar to his own in that she had to flee her city and find a new homeland for her people, and her speech is full of pity for Dido:

*Huic coniunx Sychaeus erat, ditissimus agri  
Phoenicum, et magno miserae dilectus amore,  
cui pater intactam dederat, primisque iugarat  
ominibus. Sed regna Tyri germanus habebat  
Pygmalion, scelere ante alios immanior omnes.  
Quos inter medius venit furor. Ille Sychaeum  
impius ante aras, atque auri caecus amore,  
clam ferro incautum superat, securus amorum  
germanae; factumque diu celavit, et aegram,  
multa malus simulans, vana spe lusit amantem.*

“Sychaeus was her husband, the richest in land of the Phoenicians and adored with great love by the wretched girl, whose father gave her as a virgin to him, and joined them in her first marriage. But her brother Pygmalion held the kingdom of Tyre, more monstrous than all others in wickedness. Madness came between them. He, wickedly and blinded with love of gold, before the altars, secretly killed the unwary Sychaeus with a knife, indifferent to his sister's affections; and he concealed his actions for a while, and he deceived the lovesick girl, with many evil pretenses and false hope”.  
(*Aen.* 1.343-352).

Virgil's use of language here, describing Dido as a wretch (*misera*) and a love-sick girl (*aegram amantem*), deceived by her heartless and impious brother, is surely intended to elicit sympathy for Dido. It would follow then that *dux femina facti* should be read with admiration for Dido's achievement in spite of her difficult circumstances, and this concurs with the fact that Venus is attempting to encourage Aeneas to overcome his own misfortunes.

Nevertheless, the late fourth-century grammarian Servius, commenting on the line *dux femina facti*, instructed *pronuntiandum quasi mirum*, “it should be

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<sup>173</sup> Williams 1972: 188. Williams interprets the line, along with Dido's character in the rest of Book One, as being indicative of the fact that Dido is “in every way equal to facing danger and assuming responsibility”.

pronounced as if astonishing”.<sup>174</sup> Again, the instruction on how to read it is not necessarily laden with connotation; *mirum* in itself is not particularly instructive, since we might question whether the astonishment is couched in positive or negative terms.<sup>175</sup> Nevertheless, what Servius’ comment does is to place an even heavier emphasis on the male-female opposition and Dido’s transgression of it. Tiberius Claudius Donatus, author of an early fifth-century paraphrase of the *Aeneid* entitled *Interpretationes Vergilianae*, offers a much more instructive guide on how to interpret the line: *certe et hoc ad insultationem Pymalionis positum possumus intellegere*, “certainly we can also understand that this was included to mock Pygmalion” (1.80.2-3). Donatus clearly reads *dux femina facti* in a derisory way, with a negative sense of astonishment that Pygmalion’s plans to steal Sychaeus’ riches are frustrated by a woman, conveying a sense of incredulity that a woman might prove so effective a leader. As Keith puts it, “To Donatus’ androcentric gaze, the effectiveness of a female leader necessarily implies the concomitant inadequacy of the male who should master her”.<sup>176</sup> Donatus thus brings out a misogyny that is not necessarily present in the original. It is important to note at this point that, although we cannot know which edition of Virgil Hélienne consulted, sixteenth-century editions of Virgil’s works often included late-antique commentaries (alongside more recent ones) around the Latin text, as noted above. It is likely then that, whether directly or via references in other works, Hélienne had some awareness of the commentary tradition of late-antiquity.

In Hélienne’s translation of this section, Dido’s leading of the expedition is still presented in exceptional, but also undoubtedly admirable, terms:

“Et ainsi furent transportez leurs tresors, ausquelz la cupidité de l’avaricieux Pygmalion tant aspirait. Mais à cest inconvenient, femme seule excogita le moyen d’y obvier”.

“And thus their treasures were transported, which the covetous Pygmalion so desired. But in the face of this danger, a lone woman devised the means of avoiding it”.

(I, f. xiii, r)

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<sup>174</sup> Serv. A. 1.363.

<sup>175</sup> Keith seems to suggest that it must be read in a negative, critical way, as she goes on to say “Donatus offers still less charitable comment [...]”. See Keith 2000: 24. Servius’ treatment of gender more generally, which tends to impose misogynist readings on Virgil’s more fluid constructions of gender, may be more instructive as to how we read his comment.

<sup>176</sup> Keith 2000: 24.



In Hélienne's rendering, Dido's exceptionalism as the leader of the flight from Tyre is underlined by the fact that, as one individual, she ensures the safety of her people; it is not just that she is a woman, but is *one* woman. The stress Hélienne places on the danger of the threat posed by Pygmalion emphasises this further, and Virgil's description of the flight seems almost matter-of-fact in comparison. Hélienne thus presents Dido not just as the mastermind of a cunning plan, but the saviour of her people from sure and certain danger.

It is tempting to suppose that Hélienne might be, to a certain extent, responding to the misogynist readings imposed by the commentary tradition upon Virgil's *dux femina facti*. What is clear is that, by expressing Dido's exceptionalism in admirable terms, she renders the threat posed by a *virago* doubtful. This is undoubtedly not only a defence of Dido, or even all women who transgress the expectations made of them, but of Hélienne herself and her pursuit of a literary career. Dido's agency and self-determination, emphasised by her appropriation of land and her role as a city builder, are a necessary part of her exemplary function and underline Hélienne's insistence upon free will. Dido's free will is made most demonstrable in her rush headlong towards the hunt and her fate, thus the wisdom and prudence that she exhibits as the founder and ruler of her city make her submission to passion all the more unexpected. That someone with such exceptional qualities should fail to exercise their free will to resist serves to underscore further the dangers of passion – a recurring topos of Hélienne's works that finds expression again in the *Eneydes*.

### 5.5.3 The dangers of unbridled passion

During the course of three consecutive chapters in Book Four, Hélienne consistently presents strong moral condemnation of Dido and Aeneas' relationship by underlining its sexual nature and abandonment to passion. Then, in Chapter Nine, Hélienne translates Virgil's description of Rumour spreading abroad the story of the love of Dido and Aeneas, which eventually reaches Iarbas' ears. Virgil's rendering of Rumour's report is as follows:

*uenisse Aenean Troiano sanguine cretum,  
cui se pulchra uiro dignetur iungere Dido;*

*nunc hiemem inter se luxu, quam longa, fouere  
regnorum immemores turpique cupidine captos.*

“Aeneas has come, born of Trojan blood,  
a man with whom beautiful Dido deigns to unite  
now they are enjoying winter together, all its length,  
forgetting their kingdoms, trapped by shameless passion”.

(*Aen.* 4.191-194)

The tone of condemnation in Virgil is already quite strong and the calculated terms in which Rumour speaks seem designed to inflame Iarbas' anger deliberately. When Hélienne renders this passage, however, the tone is all the more disapproving, as Hélienne stresses the erotic aspect of their relationship. They are not just “trapped by shameless passion”, but enjoying the “suave delectation [...] en la fruition d'amour”, “the sweet pleasure in the enjoyment of sex” (IV, f. lxxxiii, r). Moreover, Hélienne subtly alters the subject of Virgil's phrase so that, instead of them both “enjoying the winter together”, it is Dido who is described as “vivant avec luy en voluptueuse lascivité & immunde luxure”, “living with him in wanton lascivity and impure luxury” (IV, f. lxxxiii, r). The language clearly denotes excess and Dido is the one who indulges in it.

In the subsequent chapter, Hélienne repeats the idea of excessive passion in Iarbas' complaint to Jupiter and she adds in an extra line not found in the *Aeneid*, in which Iarbas complains that Dido and Aeneas' ‘marriage’ “les mettes de raison excede”, “exceeds the limits of reason” (IV, f. lxxxv, r).

It is significant that Hélienne's Iarbus should accuse both Dido *and* Aeneas of failing to exercise reason over passion, since this accords strongly with the defence of women's intellect that Hélienne has offered in the *Songe* and recalls the debate enacted there between the allegorical figures of Sensualité and Raison. The *Songe* performs a similar didactic function to Hélienne's other works, aiming to illustrate the dangers of love and encourage virtue, but here it does so through abstract allegory rather than exempla. In the fourth section of the allegorical dream sequence, Hélienne is witness to a debate between Sensualité and Raison, in which Sensualité is trying to win back the young woman who, as the narrator Hélienne observed at the start of the dream, is suffering from love sickness (*Songe* 65). Raison steps in to defend the woman and Sensualité is no match for the moral authority of Raison, who cites theological doctrine in defence of women's intellect

(*Songe* 70-82).<sup>177</sup> As Diane Wood suggests in her analysis of this debate, Raison's triumph is intended to challenge the misogynist stereotype that women are ruled by passion and men by reason, one of the key issues explored by the participants in the *querelle des femmes*.<sup>178</sup> Héli-senne clearly adopts the same stance here in the *Eneydes*: Dido's passion must be emphasised to illustrate the danger of passion and the cause of her downfall, yet it must be seen not to be a uniquely female trait, so as to defend women's intellect (including, of course, Héli-senne's own).

In the next chapter, we find for the third time that Héli-senne adopts the same strategy of explicitly asserting the sexual nature of Dido and Aeneas' relationship, but here she specifically condemns Aeneas' passion. At *Aeneid* 4.219-237, Jupiter orders Mercury to remind Aeneas of his destiny and the need to leave Carthage:

*uade age, nate, uoca Zephyros et labere pennis  
Dardaniumque ducem, Tyria Karthagine qui nunc  
expectat fatisque datas non respicit urbes,  
adloquere et celeris defer mea dicta per auras.*

“Off you go, my son, call the winds and glide on your wings,  
and talk to the Trojan leader who now delays in Tyrian Carthage  
and gives no thought to the cities granted by fate,  
and carry my words there on swift breezes”.

(*Aen* 4.223-6)

Héli-senne's Aeneas, we are told, is not delaying in Carthage, but “trop lascivement se maintient”, “remains there too lasciviously” (IV, f. lxxxv, v). The word “lascivement” can, though need not necessarily, imply sexual excess,<sup>179</sup> but given Héli-senne's prior use of it in unequivocal association with the “suave delectation en la fruition d'amour”, it seems likely that the reader would take it here, only two chapters later, to carry the same force. We can see then that Dido is not the only one who is condemned by Héli-senne for submitting to desire over reason – a significant manoeuvre on Héli-senne's part to ensure that she conveys to the reader that this unrestrained passion is not a quality inherent to the female sex. We recall again Héli-senne's insistence on the individual's free will and, in this respect, both

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<sup>177</sup> For a full discussion of the authorities cited by Raison, who include Augustine, Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, see Wood 2000: 112-3.

<sup>178</sup> Wood 2000: 113.

<sup>179</sup> Huguet 1925-67: s.v. “lascivement”.

Dido and Aeneas must be seen to choose to yield to their passion and fail to exercise their will to resist.

The didacticism of Dido's unbridled passion is reinforced by the bitter regret she exhibits in her final speech, discussed above, in which she acknowledges the part she played in bringing about her suffering. Dido leaves little room for doubt here that it was not love for Aeneas that caused her to dishonour her vow to Sychaeus, but erotic desire, and this emphasis on passion is anticipated in the prelude to her speech. In the *Aeneid*, Virgil describes Dido's final moments as she climbs upon the funeral pyre and sees Aeneas' clothing and the bed they had shared:

*hic, postquam Iliacas uestis notumque cubile  
conspexit, paulum lacrimis et mente morata  
incubuitque toro dixitque nouissima uerba.*

“Then after she saw the Ilian clothing and the familiar couch,  
and had lingered a short while, in tears and thought,  
she fell upon the bed, and spoke her very last words”.

(*Aen.* 4.647-50)

But Héli-senne's rendering of this scene makes much more explicit the erotic associations that the bed recalls. Dido sees, in her final moments, the causes of her downfall made manifest in front of her: “Aussi reconneut le cubile ou plusieurs & diverses fois, elle miserable avoit à l'exercice de Venus prins son delectable plaisir”, “She also saw the bed where on many different occasions, she took delightful pleasure in the affairs of Venus” (IV, f. xcix, v). Once more, it is noteworthy that Héli-senne's Dido looks at the bed in which *she* (not they) took delightful pleasure, thus accepting full responsibility and admitting to the pleasure she gained from her sexual experience.

During her final speech, Dido once again adopts an almost self-consciously exemplary tone, as she laments: “[...] la concupiscence, qui contre la raison insiste, m'inferroit telle guerre que finalement me feroit submerger en la mer periculeuse de delectable passion”, “desire, which insists against reason, waged such a war on me that it finally submerged me in the dangerous sea of delightful passion” (IV, f. c, r). Again, we see the insistence on the need to exercise reason over passion. Weakness, Dido insists, is no excuse: “Or ne fault il doncques que sur la fragilité humaine je m'excuse: puisque tout ce mal me succede pour non avoir avec

prudence vertueusement à l'appetit sensual résisté", "I must not excuse myself on the grounds of human weakness: since all this misfortune befalls me for not having virtuously resisted, with wisdom, my sensual appetite" (IV, f. c, v).

Hélisenne makes the sexual nature of Dido and Aeneas' relationship more prominent than in the *Aeneid*, leaving the reader with little doubt that Dido's passion is the cause of her downfall. Through the consistent focus on their sexual relationship, Hélisenne conveys the sense of Dido's complete abandonment to passion and offers strong moral condemnation of lasciviousness. Hélisenne, like many other participants in the *querelle des femmes*, discusses passion in traditional terms as the opposite of reason and shows throughout her translation both Dido and Aeneas indulging their sensual appetite in order to demonstrate that both men and women alike can fall victim to the power of passion should they fail to exercise reason. Inherent in this lesson then, we can also see a defence of women's intellect against the traditional stereotyping of their susceptibility to passion.

#### 5.5.4 Aeneas objectified

By shifting the dynamics of Virgil's narrative and consistently focussing on the agency and passion of Dido, Hélisenne makes Aeneas almost a secondary character in what essentially should be his own story. And to a certain extent we might view this as reflecting the fact that Hélisenne only translates the first four books of the *Aeneid*, which obviates the sense in which Dido is actually a relatively brief, though undoubtedly significant, part of Aeneas' long and arduous travails as he seeks a new home for himself and his people. But this shifting of dynamics – particularly with regard to the power relations between Aeneas and Dido – is also borne out in more understated ways in her translation of those first four books. This section will therefore consider the way in which this is achieved through Hélisenne's manipulation of Virgil's verbal, and then visual, subject-object relations.

Even on the relatively straightforward level of lexical choice, Hélisenne is able to subvert the power relations between Dido and Aeneas, as apparent in her rendering of Iarbus' complaint to Jupiter. When Iarbas learns of their relationship through the malicious report of Rumour, he furiously asks Jupiter to intervene, questioning whether his worship is in vain (*Aen.* 4.205-18). The cause of his complaint is expressed in the following terms:

*femina, quae nostris errans in finibus urbem  
exiguam pretio posuit, cui litus arandum  
cuique loci leges dedimus, conubia nostra  
repulit ac dominum Aenean in regna recepit.*

“A woman, who, wandering within our borders, founded a small city for a price, and to whom we granted a shoreline to plough and laws of tenure, scorned marriage with me, and received Aeneas in her kingdom as her master”.

(*Aen.* 4.211-214)

Virgil makes Iarbas' exasperation and contempt keenly felt through the emphatic position of *femina*, the belittling of Dido's achievements (*urbem exiguam*) and the insistence upon the debt of gratitude she owes him since he welcomed her as an exile (*errans*) and gave her land. Iarbas reserves his greatest scorn, however, for the last line of his complaint, where, by referring to Aeneas as *dominum*, he stresses that the queen of Carthage has allowed herself to become subjugated to the man she took in and welcomed as her guest. Dido herself sees the situation quite differently, when she later expresses her regret at giving Aeneas *a share* in her kingdom, suggesting a much more even balance of power: *regni demens in parte locaui*, “madly I made him a partner in my kingdom” (*Aen.* 4.374). Iarbas goes on in his complaint to liken Aeneas and Dido to Paris and Helen: *et nunc ille Paris [...] rapto potitur*, “and now that Paris [...] is master of what he has taken” (*Aen.* 4.215-7). This very much confirms Aeneas' dominion and, as Richard Monti notes, conforms precisely to what Juno had expected of the union of Dido and Aeneas when she said to Venus: *liceat Phrygio seruire marito*, “let her be a slave to a Phrygian husband” (*Aen.* 4.103).<sup>180</sup>

Although these are the subjective words of the scorned Iarbas and by no means an authoritative comment by the narrator of the *Aeneid* on the power dynamics of Dido and Aeneas' relationship, Hélienne nevertheless sees fit to remove the suggestion of Dido's subjugation. Initially, Hélienne follows Virgil quite closely as Iarbas berates Dido's ingratitude for refusing his hand after he welcomed her so hospitably and allowed the Tyrians to build their new city. However, when it comes to line 114, Hélienne departs significantly from Virgil, writing: “Et outre cela, ce qui plus me donne d'anxiété & tristesse, c'est que par son imprudence a en son royaume accepté le profugue Troyen Eneas”, “And

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<sup>180</sup> Monti 1981: 46.

besides that, what gives me more concern and sadness is that on account of her foolishness she welcomed into her kingdom the Trojan exile Aeneas” (IV, f. lxxxiii, v-lxxxv, r).

It is significant that Héli-senne’s Iarbas calls Aeneas an exile, reminding us that when he arrived on Dido’s shores he was subject to the queen and her hospitality. This calls to mind the moment when Aeneas comes forth from the cloud and Dido sets eyes upon him for the first time, when he is very much aware of his status and gratefully expresses his thanks to Dido for welcoming him and his followers. In the *Eneydes* then, even in the eyes of the furious Iarbas, this status has not changed, as it has so emphatically in Virgil’s *Aeneid*. Furthermore, it is also maintained by Héli-senne’s subtle reworking of the association of Aeneas with Paris. Since she does not translate *rapto potitur*, Iarbas’ likening of Aeneas to Paris rests entirely on the slight upon their shared luxuriant effeminacy. Where in the *Aeneid* he is said to wear a foreign and effeminate Maeonian cap (*Aen.* 216),<sup>181</sup> Héli-senne renders Aeneas’ headwear more easily recognisable to a sixteenth-century audience – a “precious crown” – but retains the idea that his hair drips with unguents (IV, lxxxv, r). The key point of comparison that Iarbas makes in the *Aeneid* – that Aeneas is another Paris abducting another Helen – is thus removed.

It is not only through verbal signals, however, that Virgil directs the reader’s understanding of Dido and Aeneas’ relationship. In his work *The Primacy of Vision in Virgil’s Aeneid*, Alden Smith convincingly argues that the amatory gaze between the two lovers functions as a figurative illustration of their relationship.<sup>182</sup> By juxtaposing vision and verbal communication, Smith suggests, Virgil is able to play out the development of their affair and the widening gap in their interpretation of it.<sup>183</sup>

We can see this figurative association from the very first encounter of Aeneas and Dido. Aeneas gazes upon the scenes of the Trojan war on the Carthaginian temple of Juno, the last of which is the image of Penthesilea, and Dido enters the scene, likened by Virgil to Diana:

*Ducit Amazonidum lunatis agmina peltis  
Penthesilea furens, mediisque in milibus ardet,*

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<sup>181</sup> On the associations of the Maeonian cap, a foreign headdress worn especially by women, see Williams 1972: 350.

<sup>182</sup> Smith 2005: 98.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

*aurea subnectens exsertae cingula mammae,  
bellatrix, audetque viris concurrere virgo.  
Haec dum Dardanio Aeneae miranda videntur,  
dum stupet, obtutuque haeret defixus in uno,  
regina ad templum, forma pulcherrima Dido,  
incessit magna iuvenum stipante caterva.  
Qualis in Eurotae ripis aut per iuga Cynthi  
exercet Diana choros, quam mille secutae  
hinc atque hinc glomerantur oreades; illa pharetram  
fert umero, gradiensque deas supereminet omnis:  
Latonae tacitum pertemptant gaudia pectus:  
talis erat Dido, talem se laeta ferebat  
per medios, instans operi regnisque futuris.*

“Raging Penthesilea leads the file of Amazons,  
with crescent shields, and shines out among her thousands,  
fastening her golden girdle beneath her exposed breasts,  
a warrior woman, and a virgin, she dares to fight with men.  
While these wonderful sights are viewed by Trojan Aeneas,  
while amazed he hangs there, rapt, with fixed gaze,  
Queen Dido, most beautiful in appearance, reached the temple,  
with a great crowd of youths accompanying her.  
Just as Diana leads her throng along the banks of the Eurotas  
or over the ridges of Cynthus, round whom a thousand Oreads,  
following her, gather on this side and that;  
and she carries a quiver on her shoulder, and she towers above  
all the other goddesses as she walks: and delight  
thrills her mother Latona’s silent heart.  
Such was Dido, such she bore herself joyfully  
among the people, encouraging their work for their future kingdom”.

(*Aen.* 1.490-504)

Philip Hardie notes that Aeneas’ intent gaze upon Penthesilea directs us to focalise the Diana simile through Aeneas’ eyes “so that the reality of Dido’s person itself is cloaked, both for Aeneas and the reader, in a mist of romantic pictures of glamorous women stored in memory and art”.<sup>184</sup> When the simile is interpreted in this way, Latona’s delight at her daughter Diana figuratively represents the admiring gaze of Aeneas upon Dido. Smith reads this passage in the same way, suggesting that the focalisation of the Diana simile through Aeneas, who at this point along with Achates is obscured from view by cloud, makes him a hidden voyeur.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Hardie 2002: 261.

<sup>185</sup> Smith 2004: 98.



As Smith observes, when Aeneas finally steps forth from the cloud and Dido lays eyes upon him, Virgil notes her visual reaction first and then her verbal response:

*Obstipuit primo aspectu Sidonia Dido,  
casu deinde viri tanto, et sic ore locuta est:  
'Quis te, nate dea, per tanta pericula casus  
insequitur? Quae vis immanibus applicat oris?*

“Sidonian Dido was startled at the first sight of him,  
And then at the man’s great misfortune, and she spoke thus:  
What misfortune pursues you, son of a goddess, through  
so many dangers? What force turns you to these wild shores?”

(*Aen.* 1.613-6)

Dido’s amazement is caused by her first sight of Aeneas,<sup>186</sup> and as she catches sight of him he is transformed from hidden voyeur into *voyant-visible*, one who is visibly motivated to action by his vision. The mutual gaze they share at this point thus marks the beginning of their relationship.<sup>187</sup>

Significantly, however, in Hélienne’s translation of this passage the gaze is rendered considerably less mutual and, rather than marking Aeneas’ transformation into *voyant-visible*, Hélienne prolongs Dido’s gaze, so that she now becomes the voyeur and Aeneas the object of her admiring gaze. Where Virgil’s Dido was amazed at Aeneas’ appearance, Hélienne describes this appearance for us at length, focalised through Dido’s gaze:

“Lors Eneas demourant tout debout fut remply d’une irradiante lumiere qui grandement le decoroit & en ses gestes, contenance, membres & face, similitude de creature celeste & pleine de grace divine representoit: Car la maternelle sollicitude avoit donné à ses cheveux une peinture convenable en laquelle elle avoit adapté choses odoriferantes & souefes, aussi avoit appliqué dedans sa face une gracieuse couleur rosée, qui estoit propice pour jeune, tendre & bien dispose la demonstrier, & ses yeulx avoit remply de doux attractif & plaisans regardz”.

“Then Aeneas, remaining standing, was full of a radiant light which greatly enhanced him, and in his mannerisms, behaviours, limbs and face he appeared as the likeness of a heavenly being, and full of divine grace. For his mother’s care had given his hair a becoming appearance, to which she had

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<sup>186</sup> Austin argues that *primo* is a causal adjective of *aspectu*, rather than adverbial, thus heightening the force of *obstipuit*. See Austin 1971, *ad. loc.*

<sup>187</sup>On the transformation of Aeneas into *voyant-visible*, see Smith 2004: 104. Smith borrows the term *voyant-visible* from Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological theory of the role of vision in the proper understanding of the world. See further Smith 2004: 4-7.

added sweet and fragrant things. She had also applied a rosy colour to his face which was suitable for making it appear young, tender and kindly and she had filled his eyes with sweet, attractive and pleasant looks”.

(I, f. xxi, v)

The emphasis on Aeneas’ divine appearance likens him to Dido and her resemblance of Diana, and thus Hélienne reinforces the reversal of gaze. Later in the *Aeneid*, as Aeneas sets out for the hunt, Virgil likens him to Apollo, first in his composure and the majesty of his movement and second in his beauty (*Aen.* 4.143-50) – an association clearly reminiscent of the Dido-Diana simile. But Hélienne makes the connection even more explicit, describing Dido in this scene as well-equipped for “l’exercice de Dyane”, “the exercise of Diana” (IV, f. lxxxii, v). Furthermore, Hélienne alters Virgil’s Aeneas-Apollo simile, omitting the comparison of their movement and focusing entirely on their beauty instead. Again, she describes Aeneas’ appearance at length, enumerating admirable features such as his youth, his attractive eyes and the light that seems to radiate from him, and culminating in the statement that “Nature must have been delighted to make him exceed all others in every perfection” (IV, f. lxxxiii, r).

Aeneas therefore becomes in the *Eneydes* the erotic object of Dido’s (and the reader’s) unrelenting gaze and we are almost compelled to forget his mission and his destiny. If we consider Dido to have assumed the masculine role of the elegiac lover, then Aeneas effectively assumes the role of the cruel mistress.<sup>188</sup>

Hélienne’s reduction of Aeneas to Dido’s lover is underscored by the way she presents the Aeneas Mercury finds as he flies down to Carthage to convey Jupiter’s message. Virgil describes not only what Aeneas is doing, but also his dress and accoutrements:

*Aenean fundantem arces ac tecta novantem  
conspicit. Atque illi stellatis iaspide fulva  
ensis erat Tyrioque ardebat murice laena  
demissa ex umeris, dives quae munera Dido  
fecerat, et tenui telas discreverat auro.*

“He saw Aeneas establishing fortifications and building new homes.  
And he had a sword studded with yellow jasper

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<sup>188</sup> In elegy the beloved generally figures as an object the lover can then attempt to control. For further discussion, see Kennedy 1993: especially 70ff. This dynamic is problematised somewhat by the elegist’s frequent use of the metaphor of erotic enslavement to their mistress, although Ellen Greene (1998) has successfully argued that the apparent servility of the elegist can be considered part of their (often unsuccessful) seduction strategy.

and a cloak shone with Tyrian purple  
hung from his shoulders, gifts which rich Dido  
had made, and she had interwoven the texture with fine gold”.

(*Aen.* 4.260-4)

But Hélienne subtly reworks this scene, so that we first see the robe that was a gift from Dido, and then Aeneas’ sword:

“Il estoit tout splendissant, tant en excellence de beaulté naturelle, comme d’accoutremens d’or & de pierres precieuses, sa robbe estoit de pourpre decorée de Thir, merveileusement riche: laquelle avoit donnée Dido du principe que de luy elle avoit eu cognoissance. Et pour singulier aornement, l’avoit de fil d’or tres riche tissue & ennoblye: il portoit une fort belle espée ou la preciosité de l’or & des pierreries estoit par grande prodigalité adaptée”.

“He was most splendid, as much in the excellence of his natural beauty, as in his accoutrements of gold and precious stones; his robe was decorated with Tyrian purple, wondrously rich, which Dido had given him as soon as she had met him. And for outstanding decoration, she had woven and enriched it with very fine golden thread. He carried a very beautiful sword to which the exquisiteness of gold and gems was affixed through great extravagance”.

(IV, f. lxxxvi, v)

Again, Aeneas is subject here to an admiring gaze that fixates upon his beauty. Most significant, however, is Hélienne’s reversal of the order in which Aeneas’ accoutrements are described. By presenting the cloak that Dido gave him first, and his sword second, Hélienne presents us with an Aeneas who is defined primarily by his relationship with Dido and secondarily by his role as hero.

Hélienne thus subtly manipulates Virgil’s depiction of the power relations between Dido and Aeneas in such a way as to stress Dido’s agency and her passion. As a result, Aeneas is reduced to the object of her sexual desire, and this is reflected in the prolonged episodes where Hélienne forces us to linger upon Aeneas’ beauty in the same way that the *Aeneid* so often presents Dido as the aesthetic object of the male gaze.

## 5.6 Casting doubt on Dido’s *culpa*

Thus far I have offered an analysis of Hélienne’s treatment of Dido within the *Eneydes* that conforms to Diane Wood’s reading of Dido’s exemplary function within Hélienne’s corpus. Dido can be seen as a figure of virtue to be emulated, through her role as *virago*, and of vice to be avoided, for her abandonment of that virtue in the face of consuming passion. I suggested previously, however, that

Dido's exemplarity is far more complex than such an overview would suggest, and we have already seen some evidence that problematises Dido's didactic function. The final part of this chapter will explore the ways in which Hélienne destabilises the figure of Dido in her translation of the *Aeneid*, playing with truth and fiction to create uncertainty about who is telling the true story of Dido and Aeneas. In so doing, Hélienne not only dismantles the authority of Virgil, but also questions *all* claims to objective truth, including her own. The result is not only a challenge of masculine textual authority and a defence of the women it has slighted, but also an erudite exposition of a female intervention into the humanist tradition.

### 5.6.1 Bringing out the Ovidian Dido in the *Eneydes*

Although Hélienne's Dido explicitly and unequivocally claims responsibility for her downfall, when we look back at the cave scenes we cannot help but question how justified she is in blaming herself. We have considered above some of the ways in which Hélienne's Dido might have more reason to interpret the events in the cave as she does, but there are also other subtle signs that suggest Hélienne might not have expected the reader to take Dido's admission of culpability at face value. Such elements seem to downplay Dido's responsibility and question her interpretation of events.

Let us consider, for example, the storm that leads Dido and Aeneas towards the fateful cave in Book Four of the *Aeneid*. Juno deliberately sends the storm so that Dido and Aeneas will be forced to seek shelter, as she has reported to Venus when she related the plan to her (*Aen.* 4.120-5). The storm comes with a great roar of thunder, rain and hail (*Aen.* 4.160-1) and events transpire according to Juno's plan, as Aeneas and Dido make for the same cave (*Aen.* 4.165-6). Despite her insistence on free will, Hélienne consistently draws attention to the necessity of their refuge and, by implication, Juno's manipulation of the events that occur. We see this for the first time in her rendering of Juno's plan. Virgil's Juno says:

his ego nigrantem commixta grandine nimum,  
dum trepidant alae saltusque indagine cingunt,  
desuper infundam et tonitru caelum omne ciebo.

"I will pour down on these dark rain mixed with hail,  
while the troops hurry and surround the woodland with nets,  
and rouse the whole sky with my thunder".

(*Aen.* 4.120-3)

Hélisenne's Juno, on the other hand, promises a storm altogether more foreboding:

“En ung instant, nues obscures & tenebreuses je feray accumuler: dont tout subit emanera pluye & gresle accompaignées des plus espouventables tonneres & fouldres que jamais furent par les Ciclopes fabriquées. Et lors gentilz hommes, chasseurs & consors estans agitez de grande perplexité, voyant que le temps nubileux de tenebreuse obscurité leur fera couverture, ne sçavront aultre chose faire que d'eulx reduyre en fuite”.

“In an instant, I will make dark and shadowy clouds gather: from which, all of a sudden, rain and hail will fall, accompanied by the most dreadful thunder and lightning bolts that were ever made by the Cyclopes. And then noble men, hunts and companions, being troubled by great fear, seeing that the cloudy weather will bring the cover of shadowy darkness, will not know what to do except flee”.

(IV, f. lxxxii, r)

With such fearful weather promised, the cave really will prove for Dido and Aeneas, as Hélisenne suggests, their “ultime refuge”, “last refuge” (IV, f. lxxxii, r). When the storm finally comes, in the following chapter, Hélisenne makes it every bit as fearful as Juno had assured, and the hunters “furent par urgent necessité stimulez & constraintz estre diligens investigateurs de seure retraicte”, “were stimulated and forced by urgent necessity to be diligent searchers of safe retreat” (IV, f. lxxxiii, v). By stressing the absolutely necessity of Dido and Aeneas' refuge and reminding us of the scheming divine powers that conspire to bring about the storm, Hélisenne appears to prompt the reader to question how we might reconcile this with Dido's *culpa*.

Such prompting on the part of the author is made most evident in the way Hélisenne translates the word itself. I noted above the way in which Hélisenne remains very close to the Latin when she translates Dido's *culpa*, rendering it as “coulpe”. But what is most significant is that, while Virgil never applies the word *culpa* to Aeneas, Hélisenne twice refers to Aeneas' “coulpe”.

After Aeneas has told Dido of Mercury's appearance and the necessity of his departure, she reproaches him with hatred and scorn and finally prays for vengeance (*Aen.* 4.365-387). The vengeance she seeks is that Aeneas should be wrecked upon the sea, haunted by her shade for evermore, and that even in death she should know of his fate: *dabis, improbe, poenas. | audiam et haec Manis ueniet mihi fama sub imos*, “You will be punished, cruel one. I will hear of it and this report will come to me deep in the underworld” (*Aen.* 4.386-7). When Hélisenne

translates this in Chapter Seventeen of Book Four, she evocatively recalls Dido's reference to her own "coulpe" as she tells Aeneas exactly how he will be punished and why: "ton corps pour la coulpe de ton cueur infidele, continuelle peine souffrira", "your body will suffer continual pain for the fault of your faithless heart" (IV, f. xc, r). Later, when Virgil's Dido calls upon Juno as witness to her *curarum* "cares" (Aen. 4.608), Héli-senne's Dido again refers to Aeneas' "coulpe", asking Juno to take it into consideration and so deprive him of all future happiness (IV, f. xcvi, r). It is significant that Héli-senne should have Dido in particular apportion "coulpe" to Aeneas, when she then goes on to so forcefully assert that: "à mon indiscretion la coulpe se doibve attribuer", "the blame must be attributed to my indiscretion" (IV, f. c, v). On the one hand, we might see this as part of Héli-senne's attempt to create psychological depth, as Dido waivers between anger at Aeneas and self-reproach. On the other hand, when we consider this alongside the other uncertainties that the text poses, Dido's blame of Aeneas seems to function at more than just the level of characterisation.

Let us examine the idea that Héli-senne problematises Dido's admission of culpability in greater depth by exploring further her response to the speech in which Aeneas tells her he must depart for Italy. Aeneas attempts here to justify his departure, stressing above all the divine plan:

*sed nunc Italiam magnam Gryneus Apollo,  
 Italiam Lyciae iussere capessere sortes;  
 hic amor, haec patria est. si te Karthaginis arces  
 Phoenissam Libycaeque aspectus detinet urbis,  
 quae tandem Ausonia Teucros considerare terra  
 inuidia est? et nos fas extera quaerere regna.  
 me patris Anchisae, quotiens umentibus umbris  
 nox operit terras, quotiens astra ignea surgunt,  
 admonet in somnis et turbida terret imago;  
 me puer Ascanius capitisque iniuria cari,  
 quem regno Hesperiae fraudo et fatalibus aruis.  
 nunc etiam interpret diuum Ioue missus ab ipso  
 (testor utrumque caput) celeris mandata per auras  
 detulit: ipse deum manifesto in lumine uidi  
 intrantem muros uocemque his auribus hausit.  
 desine meque tuis incendere teque querelis;  
 Italiam non sponte sequor.'*

"But now Grynian Apollo has ordered me to strive for great Italy, and the Lycian lots order me to strive for Italy. This is my love, this is my fatherland. If the towers of Carthage and the sight of your Libyan city occupy you, a

Phoenician, why then do you begrudge the Trojans settling in the land of Ausonia? It is right for us too to search for a foreign kingdom. The troubled spirit of my father Anchises warns me in my dreams and terrifies me, as often as night covers the earth with dewy shadows, as often as the burning stars rise. My son Ascanius troubles me too, and the wrong done to a person so dear, whom I cheat of a Hesperian kingdom and his fated fields. Now even the messenger of the gods, sent by Jupiter himself (I swear on both our heads), has brought down commands through the swift breezes; I myself saw the god in the clear light of day entering the city walls and I drank of his words with these ears. Stop rousing yourself and me with your complaints. I do not make for Italy of my own free will".

(*Aen.* 4.345-361)

Aeneas begins by appealing to Dido's reason and reminiscence of her own search for a new homeland for herself and her people. The rhetorical formality of Aeneas' reply here has been well-noted by scholars and attributed to his attempt to control his emotions in order to put forward a logical and persuasive case.<sup>189</sup> As Williams observes, it is the appearance of Mercury that Aeneas seems to consider most likely to convince Dido of the necessity of his departure, since this is where he employs his most persuasive rhetoric.<sup>190</sup> Aeneas tells Dido that Mercury was sent by the highest authority (*Iove ipso*) and confirms its veracity by swearing on both their heads (*testor utrum caput*).<sup>191</sup> Furthermore, Aeneas describes the message carried by Mercury as *mandata*, which suggests absolute obligation with no room for interpretation. Aeneas also effectively contrasts Mercury's appearance with the appearance of his father in his dreams, insisting that Mercury's appearance was not a dream but happened "in the clear light of day" (*manifesto in lumine*).<sup>192</sup> As Mackail notes, Aeneas is suggesting here that the visions of his father and son made little impression on him and could not, therefore, be expected to justify sufficiently his departure to Dido; it was only when he saw Mercury in broad daylight and heard his words with his own ears that he fully appreciated the necessity of continuing for Italy, hence his reasoning that this will be most likely to convince Dido, too.<sup>193</sup>

Despite Aeneas' attempt at persuasion, however, Dido remains unconvinced and rages at him with scorn (*Aen.* 4.365-87). In the midst of her frenetic reply, she

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<sup>189</sup> Servius notes that the rhetorical devices Aeneas uses are reminiscent of a *controversia*. See Serv. *A. ad. loc.* On the necessity of Aeneas' formality, see Austin 1963: *ad. loc.*

<sup>190</sup> Williams 1972: 364.

<sup>191</sup> On the strength of swearing on one's head in the ancient world, see Frisch 1976: 61.

<sup>192</sup> On the stress laid in antiquity upon the clearness with which objects in visions appeared, see Henry 1878: 393.

<sup>193</sup> Mackail 1930: *ad. loc.*

specifically rejects Aeneas' argument that he is compelled by divine command, recalling the words he spoke:

[...]nunc augur Apollo,  
nunc Lyciae sortes, nunc et loue missus ab ipso  
interpres diuum fert horrida iussa per auras.  
scilicet is superis labor est, ea cura quietos  
sollicitat. [...]

"Now the augur Apollo,  
now Lycian lots, and now a messenger of the gods, sent by Jupiter himself,  
brings terrifying commands through the breezes.  
Evidently that is the work of the gods, that concern  
disturbs them at peace".

(Aen. 4.376-380)

The use of *scilicet* adds a note of mockery to Dido's scorn and disbelief that the gods should concern themselves with the trivial affairs of humans. Given her disbelief of Aeneas' insistence on the divine *mandata*, her modification, *horrida iussa*, underlines the sarcasm of her response, though she stops short of explicitly telling Aeneas that he is lying.

In *Heroides* 7, Ovid's Dido similarly mocks Aeneas' justification and mimics the Virgilian Dido's response:

"sed iubet ire deus!" vellem, vetiusset adire  
Punica nec Teucris pressa fuissent humus.  
Hoc duce nempe deo ventis agitaris iniquis  
et teris in rapido tempora longa freto.

"But a god orders me to go!" I wish he had forbidden you to come  
and that Punica lands had not been trodden by Teucrians.  
Without doubt, with this god leading you, you are driven by adverse winds  
and you waste a long time on the swift sea.

(Ov. Her. 7.141-44)

Ovid thus, as Desmond suggests, queries the divine plan, by stressing the irony inherent in the toils that Aeneas has had to suffer in the course of his divine-ordained mission and questioning why a man supposedly under divine protection has had to endure so long and difficult a journey.<sup>194</sup> Ovid presents us then with an astute Dido, who asks the questions Virgil's Dido fails to ask.

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<sup>194</sup> Desmond 1994: 41-2.



When Hélienne renders these lines, although she remains fairly close to Virgil in terms of questioning why the gods would bother to disturb their peace to intervene in human affairs, she also presents us with a Dido whose disbelief of Aeneas is more strongly articulated and overtly challenging. Hélienne's Dido tells us in no uncertain terms that, not only does she not believe Aeneas, but she also cannot believe that he expects her to. Instead, she accuses him of saying it to torment her:

“Car pour plus me crucier et tourmenter, tu dis ta fuite par Apollo estre exhortée, & que Mercure, associé des ventz t'a denoncé qu'il convient que plus oultre tu chemines: mais certes je mesmerveille comme te puis estimer, que par tes persuasions chose si alienée de la verité je puisse croire”.

“For, to torture and torment me more, you say that your flight is commanded by Apollo and that Mercury, accompanied by the winds, announced to you that you should travel on: but at any rate, I am amazed that you can think that, through your persuasion, I might believe something so far from the truth”.

(IV, f. xc, r)

Hélienne makes it unequivocal here that Dido does not just question the truth of what Aeneas says, but knows it to be false and explicitly tells him so, asserting that it is “si alienée de verité”. Similarly, Hélienne's Dido questions Aeneas' use of *mandata*, which she had translated above as “expres commandement” (IV, f. lxxxix, r). Modifying his words, Dido diminishes the sense of express divine command by rendering Virgil's *iussa* as something that Apollo had “exhortée”, and recounting that Mercury had reported it “fitting” (il convient) to depart, rather than “nécessaire”, as Aeneas had explicitly related to her (IV, f. lxxxix, r).<sup>195</sup> Furthermore, Hélienne's Dido seems to possess the same kind of insight here that Ovid's Dido possesses in hindsight; not only does she distrust and suspect Aeneas, but she can also see through his persuasive strategy and again tells him so (“te puis estimer, que par tes persuasions”). We can see then that, in the *Eneydes*, behind the Dido who acknowledges her wrongdoing is another Dido who raises doubt over such an understanding of events. This adds another layer of interpretative possibility to Dido's exemplary function.

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<sup>195</sup> Aeneas had told Dido: “Je t'atteste & jure que Mercure l'interprete coeleste m'a annoncé expres commandement de l'exalté Juppiter, que sans dilation d'icy je parte & que la volonté des dieux altissimes j'accomplisse”, “I avow and swear that Mercury, the divine messenger, announced to me the express command of Jupiter: that I leave here without delay and accomplish the will of the highest gods” (IV, f. lxxxix r).

### 5.6.2 Defending Dido's chastity

I argued above that Dido's *culpa* in the *Eneydes* is her failure to exercise the free will to resist sexual desire and that this reflects the didactic message conveyed throughout Héli-senne's corpus. However, upon closer examination, it will become apparent that such a reading – as we might now expect – is not entirely unproblematic. In this section, therefore, I will explore the idea that, although Héli-senne's Dido explicitly states before her death that she should not have given way to her "appetit sensual", the picture Héli-senne has painted throughout is of a Dido whose love for Aeneas is based on much more than sexual desire alone. Moreover, I will suggest that Héli-senne's persistent stress on Dido's former chastity makes her submission to passion uncharacteristic and unexpected to such an extent that it gives cause for the reader to consider more carefully the divine manipulation at work.

Our first indication that it is not only passion that stirs Héli-senne's Dido comes at the very start of Book Four. Here, in the *Aeneid*, when we learn that Dido is consumed with love for Aeneas, Virgil takes care to demonstrate that she is moved by the qualities of Aeneas as well as his appearance:

*multa uiri uirtus animo multusque recursat  
gentis honos; haerent infixi pectore uultus  
uerbaque nec placidam membris dat cura quietem.*

"Many times the hero's courage returns to mind, and the nobility of his race: his face and his words cling fixedly to her heart, and love will not grant restful calm to her limbs".

(*Aen.* 4.3-6)

Virgil's portrayal of the lover's anguish has been likened to Apollonius' portrayal of Medea in *Argonautica* 3. However, as Williams notes, the description of Medea's thoughts of Jason are entirely visual and based solely on his appearance.<sup>196</sup> What is noticeable in Héli-senne's rendering of this passage is that her Dido does not think of Aeneas' face at all, only the "vertu & modestie de cestuy homme", "the virtue and modesty of this man" (IV, f. lxxviii, r). It is worth noting that this comes after Aeneas has been the subject of Dido's admiring gaze, when she first sets eyes on him in Book One. It is thus made explicit by Héli-senne that, although Dido has

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<sup>196</sup> On the similarities between Dido and Apollonius' Medea and this vital difference, see Williams 1972: 335-6. For Medea's thoughts of Jason, see Ap. Rh. 3.453-63.

noticed and admired Aeneas' appearance, it is still his qualities rather than his face that strike her: her thoughts of him are not driven by her "appetit sensuel" alone.

This is reiterated in the following chapter of the *Eneydes*, when Dido confesses her love for Aeneas to Anna. Here, Virgil's Dido exclaims to Anna: *quis nouus hic nostris successit sedibus hospes, | quem sese ore ferens, quam forti pectore et armis*, "what a man he is this stranger who has just come into our house! What a look he has on his face! What strength he has in his heart and in warfare" (*Aen.* 4.10-11). Again Virgil's Dido expresses here a specific reference to Aeneas' appearance in *quem sese ore ferens* and again, in her translation of this passage, Héli-senne has her Dido focus on the qualities of Aeneas rather than his face, describing him as a man in whom "tant de louables vertus resident", "so many virtues reside" (IV, f. lxxviii, v). Héli-senne's Dido then continues to elaborate on these virtues, still without mention of Aeneas' looks: "il est si prudent & discret en tous cas & en modestie & gracieux entretien tous aultres excede", "he is most wise and discreet in all cases and in modesty and gracious behaviour he exceeds all others" (IV, f. lxxviii, v). The consistency of Héli-senne's omission of Dido's fixation upon Aeneas' face builds up a subtle picture of a Dido who is less subject to her passion and less easily swayed by sexual desire than the image Virgil seems to present.

This is further underlined by Héli-senne's frequent addition of references to Dido's chastity and reminders of the vow she made to remain an *univira*, which appear to reflect that the historical Dido has become an emblem of chastity. We see this, for example, in the description of the reawakening of her heart to love by Cupid. At *Aeneid* 1.721-2, Virgil describes how Cupid, mindful of Venus' instructions, "tries to capture with living love her long unstirred mind and her unaccustomed heart" (*vivo temptat praevertere amore | iam pridem resides animos desuetaque corda*). This suggests that Dido has simply forgotten what it is to love, an idea she herself supports later in the *Aeneid*, when she tells Anna: *agnosco ueteris uestigia flammae*, "I recognise the traces of the ancient flame" (*Aen.* 4.23). Héli-senne reminds us that Cupid's task is considerably more difficult and is not just a case of rekindling Dido's desire, but overcoming the vow she had made to stay faithful to the dead Sychaeus and remain an *univira*: it is not Dido's unaccustomed heart that Cupid needs to change, but her "pudicque deliberation premiere", "former chaste determination" (I, f. xxv, v).

Furthermore, long after Dido has yielded to her passion, Hélienne continues to remind us of her former chastity and her vow to Sychaeus. After Dido confesses her love to Anna, Virgil tells us that Anna's encouragement *solvit pudorem*, "dissolved her sense of shame" (*Aen.* 4.55). The Roman concept of *pudor* as a sense of shame arising from the awareness of the way in which one's actions are subject to "the moralising gaze of the community", as argued by Langlands, helps us understand how Anna has encouraged Dido to lay aside her concern about the way in which the breaking of her vow to remain an *univira* will be morally scrutinised.<sup>197</sup> While this concern is implicit in Virgil's *solvit pudorem*, Hélienne states much more explicitly the concern to which Dido's shame relates, referring to it as "la honte avec laquelle preteritement en grande observance de chaste pudicité elle vivoit", "the shame with which she once lived in great observance of unblemished chastity" (IV, f. lxxx, r). Likewise, when Dido later reproaches Aeneas for damage he has caused to her reputation (*Aen.* 4.321-3), Hélienne takes the opportunity to reiterate once again what Dido's reputation was – that is, remaining chaste after the death of Sychaeus:

"J'ay toute verecondie & honte repulsée, dont apres leur absence a esté totalement obtenebrée & extincte la Fame & renommée qui au premier m'imposa le nom de pudicque".

"I drove out all disgrace and shame, through which, after their absence, the fame and renown which first applied to me the name of chastity, have been overshadowed and extinguished".

(IV, f. lxxxviii, v)

Through these persistent references to Dido's former chastity and the vow she kept to Sychaeus before the arrival of Aeneas, Hélienne invites the reader to compare Dido's former moral behaviour with the choices that she makes in her relationship with Aeneas. The result is not only, as I have previously suggested, that the reader gets a starker warning of the dangers of passion, but that they are more strongly encouraged to join in the community that morally scrutinises Dido's actions. Under such scrutiny, the discrepancy between Dido's former constancy and her subsequent abandonment to passion cause us to reflect upon the divine forces at work. And as such, Hélienne appears to call into question Virgil's account of Dido's passion, for its failure to address the ease with which Dido falls in love,

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<sup>197</sup> Langlands 2006: 18.

given her former steadfast resistance. At the same time, the reliability of the admission of Hélienne's Dido is also rendered uncertain by this discrepancy, and we see once again that the distinction between truth and fiction in the *Eneydes* remains markedly blurred.

### 5.6.3 Mutabilité and simplicité: closing down gender oppositions

One of the criticisms Hélienne's Dido directs at Aeneas that we do not find in Virgil's *Aeneid* is his changeability, which forms a significant part of his culpability. In the tradition of Virgilian commentary, changeability was something readily associated with women, and in particular the figure of Dido, as commentators understood and presented lines such as the famous *varium et mutabile semper / femina* (*Aen.* 4.569) as definitive statements about the nature of women. Hélienne challenges such essentialising statements, and this has important implications both for how we respond to Dido's *culpa* and how we understand Hélienne's treatment of gender in the *Eneydes* more generally. Here we find Hélienne again bringing the Ovidian Dido's perspective into the Virgilian account in such a way as to both defend women against authoritative (but incorrect) misogynist claims about their nature, and to challenge the way in which Dido has been represented, since she is a figure through whom much of this masculine textual authority has been asserted.

I begin with the aforementioned example. In Book Four, as Mercury appears to Aeneas a second time and encourages him to leave immediately, he tells him that *varium et mutabile semper / femina*, "a woman is fickle and ever changeable" (*Aen.* 4.569-70). In the use of the general *femina* rather than a specific reference to Dido, this statement appears to be an essentialising statement about the nature of women, and this has been taken by some commentators to be the voice of Virgil himself inveighing against women.<sup>198</sup> It is, however, essential to consider the context in which it appears. It is part of Mercury's persuasive rhetoric, an attempt to convince Aeneas that the tranquility he currently enjoys at Carthage will not last. Nevertheless, the tone of contempt cannot be denied, particularly given the use of the neuter adjectives *varium* and *mutabile*, which Pease argues dehumanise woman: "[...] woman is viewed less as a person than as a physical phenomenon".<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Jerome, for example cites the phrase out of context in his *Commentarius in Michaeum Prophetam* (2.6) as Virgil's thoughts on women, to lend authority to his interpretation of Micah 7: 5-7.

<sup>199</sup> Pease 1935: 460.

The interpretation of this statement is also made problematic by the actual behavior of the female characters in the *Aeneid*. Heinze uses this particular example to underline his insistence on the correlation between Virgil's general characterisation of women and their actual actions in the *Aeneid*, citing the regret of the Trojan women after they have set fire to their ships in despair (*Aen.* 5.678) as Virgil's proof of the changeability of women expressed in Mercury's *sententia*.<sup>200</sup> But while Heinze's argument is, to an extent, upheld by the changeability of the Trojan women, it is important to remember that Mercury is actually talking about Dido here and, as such, it is surely more useful to ask whether Dido upholds the generalisation applied to her.

Dido herself admits to wavering in her resolve at the start of Book Four, when she confesses to Anna:

[...] *miseri post fata Sychaei  
coniugis et sparsos fraterna caede penatis  
solus hic inflexit sensus animumque labantem  
impulit.*

"After the death of my poor husband Sychaeus  
and my penates were spattered by my brother's slaughtering,  
this man alone stirred my senses and drove my mind to waiver".  
(*Aen.* 1.20-23)

For now, Dido is only *thinking* of breaking her oath to Sychaeus, but later of course she *will* go on to break it and, just before the passage in which Mercury appears to Aeneas for the second time and utters this *sententia*, Dido explicitly acknowledges her changeability: *non seruata fides cineri promissa Sychaeo*, "I have not kept the faith which I promised to the ashes of Sychaeus" (*Aen.* 4.552).

Alison Keith argues that the changeable Dido stands in opposition to the steadfast Aeneas, exemplifying the antithesis between male and female found throughout the *Aeneid*.<sup>201</sup> This clearly downplays some of the subtlety of Virgil's characterisation of Dido, however, as Denis Feeney has suggested.<sup>202</sup> For while Dido is changeable in her vow to Sychaeus, as we have seen above, later, in her resolve to die, her will is absolutely steadfast. Having made the decision to end her life (*Aen.* 4.450-503) as she watches Aeneas and the Trojans sail away, Dido

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<sup>200</sup> Heinze 1928: 221.

<sup>201</sup> Keith 2000: 25. Keith suggests that Aeneas holding to his course as he sails away at 5.1-2 is metonymous with his steadfast purpose.

<sup>202</sup> Feeney *apud* Keith (*per litteras*) 2000: 25 n. 47.

appears, for a moment, to waiver in her resolve, as she contemplates following and attacking the Trojan ships and orders her citizens: *ite,| ferte citi flammās, date tela, impellite remos!* "Go, bring fire quickly, get weapons, drive on the oars!" (*Aen.* 4. 593-4). But no sooner has she given the commands than she comes to her senses and reproaches herself: *quid loquor? aut ubi sum? quae mentem insania mutat?* "What am I saying? Where am I? What madness changes my resolve?" (*Aen.* 4.595). The word *mutat* resonates with the earlier *mutabile* and, despite her moment of doubt, Dido's determination to carry through her intention provides at least a partial refutation of Mercury's *varium et mutabile semper femina*.

Furthermore, Aeneas cannot always successfully function in the *Aeneid* as the steadfast opposite to the changeable Dido. After Mercury's first appearance to him, as Aeneas ponders what to tell Dido, he effectively admits to his own changeability, as he desperately searches for an excuse for the *rebus...novandis*, "the change of plan" (*Aen.* 4.290). His decision to leave also comes with surprising alacrity. When Mercury arrives in Carthage, Aeneas and Dido have spent the whole winter together (*Aen.* 4.193) and Mercury finds him constructing towers and building new dwellings (*Aen.* 4.260). The impression is that Aeneas has very much settled in Carthage, so his eagerness to leave is rather unexpected: *ardet abire fuga dulcisque relinquere terras*, "he was eager to depart in flight and leave the sweet lands" (*Aen.* 4.281).

The same charge of changeability might also be applied to other male characters in the *Aeneid*. For example, when the Trojan shepherds bring in the Greek Sinon, who eventually persuades them to accept the wooden horse, the Trojan men rush in at first, eager to see and mock the prisoner (*Aen.* 2.63-4). Scarcely has Sinon begun his deceit, however, than the Trojans, moved by pity, immediately change their minds and put a stop to any violence (*Aen.* 2.73-4).

It is apparent then, that this seemingly definitive statement about the nature of women – *varium et mutabile semper femina* – cannot be interpreted in a straightforward way in Virgil's *Aeneid*. It seems to have an air of contempt, but could just be the sharp caveat of a calculating god. It sometimes rings true for Dido and other female characters of the *Aeneid*, but sometimes their actions call it into question. And *varium et mutabile* could just as easily apply to Aeneas or other male characters, which demonstrates the subtleties of gender opposition in the *Aeneid*.

Significantly, the ancient and medieval commentary tradition failed to account for any such subtleties.<sup>203</sup> Instead, they stressed further the opposition between male and female, magnifying Virgil's generalisations about women and interpreting them in a misogynistic way. The reception of *varium et mutabile semper femina* in this tradition clearly illustrates the point and a borrowing of the phrase *varium et mutabile semper femina* in Isidore of Seville's *Origines* in particular demonstrates the way in which Virgil's gender subtleties could be closed down. Isidore takes the phrase out of the context of Mercury's persuasive strategy, where it is applied to Dido, and makes it very definitely a general characteristic of female nature that can successfully be applied to all women. It appears in a passage about Roman law and the reliability of witnesses, where it is cited to discredit female witnesses:

*Testis autem consideratur condicione, natura et vita. Condicione, si liber, non servus. Nam saepe servus metu dominantis testimonium subprimit veritatis. Natura, si vir, non femina. Nam (Virg. Aen. 4. 569): varium et mutabile semper femina.*

“But a witness is judged by condition, nature and life. By condition [means] if they are free, not a slave. For often through fear of his master a slave suppresses evidence of the truth. By nature, if they are a man not a woman. For (Virgil, *Aen.* 4.569): a woman is fickle and ever changeable”.

(*Orig.* 18.15.9).

When we turn to Hélienne's rendering of this passage, she makes no obvious attempt to reject or refute this, despite her heated defence of women elsewhere, as though she too considers it an essentialising statement. Though it is likely that Hélienne may have been familiar with the ancient commentary tradition, she appears to read Virgil in a rather less reductive way. Instead of attempting to refute Mercury's words, she responds subtly to them, showing that they cannot be upheld, not even when applied to Dido, let alone all women. More significantly, drawing on Ovid's *Heroides* 7, Hélienne instead has Dido throw exactly the same accusation of changeability back at Aeneas when she accuses him of faithlessness, as we shall see.

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly for someone who seeks to defend the nature of women throughout her work, Hélienne renders Mercury's epigrammatic *varium et mutabile semper femina* as “*toujours mobile, variable & instable est la*

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<sup>203</sup> For a full discussion, see Keith 2000: 23-34.



condition feminine”, “the feminine condition is always mobile, changeable and unstable” (IV, f. xcvi, r). Her use of a third adjective of changeability seems to underline further, rather than refute, what Mercury says. Ovid’s *Heroides* 7, I would argue, is instrumental in understanding the strategy Hélienne employs here.

As Ovid’s Dido reproaches Aeneas for abandoning her, in line 51 she says to him: *tu quoque cum ventis utinam mutabilis esses*, “if only you too were as changeable as the winds” (Ov. *Her.* 7.51). The *quoque* here explicitly reveals that Dido is referring back to an allegation, and it is clear that this line responds directly to Mercury’s words *varium et mutabile semper femina* in the *Aeneid*. This also serves as another reminder of the retrospective knowledge Ovid’s Dido possesses, for it is only by sharing the same privileged point of view as the narrator in the *Aeneid* that she could possibly know what Mercury said and have the opportunity to respond to it.

Hélienne’s Dido appears to possess a similar kind of retrospective knowledge, for, almost as if in anticipation of the charge Mercury will make against her, she preemptively accuses Aeneas of the very same thing. As soon as Hélienne’s Dido senses that Aeneas is preparing to leave, immediately after Mercury’s *first* visit to Aeneas, she addresses him: “O homme sceleré et prompt à mutabilité”, “Oh wretched and changeable man” (IV, f. lxxxviii, r). The use of the word “mutabilité” is significant here, since Virgil’s Dido only calls Aeneas *perfide* (4.305) and it seems that Hélienne deliberately employs it to echo the Latin *mutabile* in Mercury’s *sententia*. Hélienne’s Dido doesn’t just wish that Aeneas was changeable, as Ovid’s did, but insists that he *is*. Her assertion of the changeability of Aeneas in the *Eneydes* paints her as the wronged woman, the abandoned victim of a feckless love – an image we recognise only too well as a reflection of the Ovidian Dido. In light of this, the reader is again given cause to question how culpable Dido is, or at least how much we can rely upon her admission of responsibility.

Hélienne underscores Aeneas’ changeability even further with another reference later in the same chapter. Virgil’s Dido, as noted above, orders her citizens to pursue and set fire to the Trojan ships, before changing her mind. Reproaching herself, Dido realises that it is too late for action: *Tum decuit, cum sceptrā dabas*, “It should have been done then, when you were offering him a share

in your power” (*Aen.* 4.597). But Hélienne’s Dido expands considerably upon this, saying to herself:

“Tu devois cecy determiner & y faire l’effect en suivre, quand la chose en ta puissance consistoit & si ainsi l’eusse fait tu ne te fusses presentement lamentée de la varieté de ceste humaine virile condition”.

“You should have decided this sooner and made it happen when you were able, and if you had thus done it, you would not now have lamented this changeable manly condition”.

(IV, xcvi, r)

The “virile condition” explicitly recalls and responds to Mercury’s earlier pronouncement on the changeability of the “condition feminine”, and there are discernable echoes of the Ovidian Dido here who so truculently responds to Mercury’s comments.

Furthermore, this use of generalising statements about the male and female condition demonstrates that Dido’s assertion of Aeneas’ changeability is not simply designed to cast doubt on her culpability. By taking a generalising statement about women – a statement that is also specifically targeted at her – and inverting it, Dido does not defend just herself, but all women. Hélienne’s Dido argues that she has been misrepresented as a changeable woman and that women have been unfairly maligned by the representation of changeability as a trait inherent in the female sex. And this strategy might show, at least in part, an awareness of and response to the commentary tradition that tried to read *varium et mutabile semper femina* as a straightforward statement about the nature of women. What it definitely does, however, is destabilise such seemingly authoritative statements by considering them from various gendered perspectives. Thus these perspectives leave the reader on particularly uncertain ground when interpreting Dido’s culpability, the truth of her story, and the lesson it is supposed to impart.

We see a similar strategy at play in Hélienne’s treatment of the question of “simplicité” throughout the *Eneydes*. A key aspect of Dido’s acknowledgement of her *culpa* is the fact that she, like Ovid’s Dido, reproaches her own naivety for not seeing through Aeneas and anticipating his faithlessness. Again, as with the previous example of changeability, Hélienne’s Dido expresses this in such a way that it does not seem to coincide with the defence of women that Hélienne offers elsewhere. Dido’s insistence on her naivety challenges the way the reader might

view Dido's self-perception when compared to the wisdom she has displayed elsewhere, which raises further uncertainties, particularly about how seriously we should take her claim to naivety, but more broadly about whether her version of her own story is any more reliable than the one Virgil or any other masculine textual authorities relate.

As with "mutabilité", Héli-senne applies the trait of "simplicité" to Aeneas as well as Dido. This not only levels out gender oppositions and avoids generalisations, but also associates the characters of Dido and Aeneas more closely with each other, so that they can be seen to share the same qualities, as well as the blame. A brief consideration of two examples will demonstrate the way in which the reader is invited to compare Dido and Aeneas' respective behaviour and traits in close connection with their gender; a comparative process, I will argue, that ultimately results in an uncertainty about gender constructions and more specifically about the representation of the two lovers, and one that applies to the authority of the *Eneydes* just as much as it does to that of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

Let us turn then to Héli-senne's use of "simplicité". In Book Four of Virgil's *Aeneid*, after Aeneas has told Dido that he is leaving her for Italy following Mercury's appearance to him (*Aen.* 4.333-361), Dido replies with an outburst of scorn. Rejecting Aeneas' arguments, Dido calls down curses upon him, wishing that he should become wrecked on the rocks, returning to the maritime danger from which he emerged in Book One (*Aen.* 3.365-387). This is in stark contrast to her previous speech, full of pathos, in which she pleads with Aeneas, still hopeful that she might persuade him to stay. During her scornful reply to Aeneas, Dido rails at his deceitfulness and apparent hard-heartedness, wondering how Aeneas can act with impunity and castigating his ingratitude for the help and welcome she gave him when he arrived at Carthage with his companions:

*nec tibi diua parens generis nec Dardanus auctor,  
perfide, sed duris genuit te cautibus horrens  
Caucasus Hyrcanaeque admorunt ubera tigres.  
nam quid dissimulo aut quae me ad maiora reseruo?  
num fletu ingemuit nostro? num lumina flexit?  
num lacrimas uictus dedit aut miseratus amantem est?  
quae quibus anteferam? iam iam nec maxima Iuno  
nec Saturnius haec oculis pater aspicit aequis.  
nusquam tuta fides. eiectum litore, egentem  
excepi et regni demens in parte locaui.*

“You do not have a divine mother, nor was Dardanius the founder of your line, you traitor, but the rough Caucasus fathered you on the harsh rocks and Hyrcanian tigers offered you their teats.  
For why should I pretend or for what worse things should I restrain myself?  
Did he sigh at my weeping? Did he turn his gaze?  
Overcome, did he weep or pity the woman who loves him?  
Where shall I begin? Even now neither great Juno  
nor the father, son of Saturn, look upon these things kindly.  
Nowhere is truth safe. For I received him, a castaway on my shore, and in need, and mad I settled him as a partner in my kingdom”.

(*Aen.* 3.365-374)

The *demens* in the last line of this passage is significant, since it shows that Dido is reproaching herself for being so easily deceived, as much as she is castigating Aeneas for his deception.

Dido is not simply decrying her naivety or foolishness here, but suggesting that she must have been out of her mind to have been fooled by Aeneas and to have taken him in. The use of asyndeton in the passage emphasises Dido’s distressed state of mind and the strength of the word *demens* is underlined by the way in which it is used by Virgil elsewhere in the *Aeneid*. At 2.77-104, the Greek Sinon relates his deceitful story of how he was about to be put to death by the Greeks, to persuade the Trojans to accept the wooden horse. Telling how he brooded over the death of his friend Palamedes, he reports that, in a state of frenzy (*demens*), he swore vengeance (*Aen.* 2.94-6). In Book Four *demens* is used twice to convey the strength of Dido’s infatuation with Aeneas: first, as she asks at the end of each day to hear the story of the sufferings of Troy once more (*Aen.* 4.78), and second – after she has resolved to kill herself and dreams of Aeneas pursuing her – when Virgil likens her to a demented Pentheus, driven by Dionysus to see two suns and two cities of Thebes (*Aen.* 4.469).<sup>204</sup>

We can see then that *demens* generally means to be uncharacteristically out of one’s mind and describes an ordinarily rational person acting in an unusual way, driven by some extreme emotion, be it anger or passion or confusion. When Héli-senne translates this passage in Chapter 17 of Book Four, however, she attributes her deception not to madness, but feminine naivety:

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<sup>204</sup> For a sophisticated discussion of the multidimensional nature of Dido’s madness as established by comparison with Pentheus, recalling both the hunted Pentheus and the pursuing Bacchant, see Hershkovitz 1998: 27.

“J’ay en ma terre recue homme profugue, fugitive, exile & spolié de tous biens par ses victorieulx ennemys, par les lachrymes & piteuses larmes, duquel par simplicité muliebre ay esté de telle compassion meue, que de mon royaulme, opulences & richesses, je l’ay fait participant”.

“I received in my land this displaced, fugitive and exiled man, despoiled of all his possessions by his victorious enemies, through whose weeping and piteous tears, on account of my womanly naivety, I was moved by such compassion that I made him a partner in my kingdom, opulence and riches”.  
(IV, f. lxxxix, v-xc, r)

Although this also seems to contradict Hélienne’s defence of women, Dido’s admission of naivety, rather than madness, affords her an amount of responsibility denied by Virgil. In the *Aeneid*, Dido suffers from an akratic madness that results from her passion (and divine manipulation, of course). In the *Eneydes*, it is mere naivety, which gives us the sense that Dido is much more in control and able to resist should she choose to. This may serve to reinforce Hélienne’s didactic message about the need to exercise free will to resist passion and the warning to be on one’s guard against the dangers of love. However, as we have seen, the didacticism is far from simple and might, in fact, be considered deliberately problematic. We have already been given ample reason in earlier episodes of the *Eneydes* to question Dido’s self-perception here, given that the emphasis throughout is on her shrewdness and wisdom. And we have seen the way in which Hélienne took great pains to underline through her translation Dido’s clever appropriation of land through the bull’s hide trick, as well as her success as a leader of a thriving and peaceful kingdom.

Significantly, Hélienne also applies the word “simplicité” to Aeneas in a way that causes the reader to re-evaluate their own (and Dido’s) response to Aeneas’ culpability. When Mercury appears to Aeneas for a second time to reiterate the necessity of his departure, he asks Aeneas:

*nate dea, potes hoc sub casu ducere somnos,  
nec quae te circum stent deinde pericula cernis,  
demens, nec Zephyros audis spirare secundos?*

“Son of a goddess, can you consider sleep in this disaster,  
do you not see the dangers which surround you, mad,  
nor hear the favourable west winds blowing?”

(*Aen.* 4.560-2)

In Héli-senne's rendering of this passage, she translates *demens* in the same way she had previously, as Mercury calls Aeneas "homme de trop grande simplicité remply", "a man of too great naivety" (IV, f. cvi, r). By rendering these in the same way, Héli-senne makes sure to attribute the same free will to Aeneas as she did to Dido. In Héli-senne's version we are led to believe that Aeneas stays not because he is out of his mind with passion and thus not yet in control of his reason, but because he is too naïve and foolish to realise the danger that awaits should he stay. Once again akratic madness is replaced in the *Eneydes* with a slighter but somehow more significant failure of reason; a failure to perceive things the way they really are, despite having the power to do so. We understand from this that Héli-senne intends to present "simplicité" as a trait inherent to neither men nor women, but the shared "simplicité" attributed to Dido and Aeneas complicates further the moralising response of the reader to their story and the question of their *culpa*. The question of whether Dido is the abandoned victim of a feckless lover, or someone whose own abandonment to passion is the cause of her tragic downfall, thus looms even larger here than in the *Aeneid*.

Just as we are given cause to question Dido's naivety in the *Eneydes*, we are surely also given cause to question the naivety of Aeneas, given the duplicity he is seen to display throughout the text. And this duplicity, I will argue, is of paramount importance for understanding the way in which Héli-senne interrogates truth and fiction, as Aeneas' deceitfulness plays out the unreliability of masculine textual authority.

#### **5.6.4 The deceit and duplicity of Héli-senne's Aeneas**

The most telling indication of the way in which Héli-senne interrogates the concepts of truth, fiction and authority is provided by her treatment of the theme of deception – and in particular deceptive words – throughout the *Eneydes*. This section will explore the way in which Dido berates Aeneas' deceitfulness when she realizes his plans to slip away and accuse him of deliberately misleading her through sweet and flattering words.

Héli-senne subtly foreshadows the accusations Dido will make against Aeneas early on, shortly after they meet. In the *Aeneid*, Dido welcomes the Trojans with a banquet and there she asks Aeneas to tell the story of his seven years of wandering:

*'Immo age, et a prima dic, hospes, origine nobis  
insidias,' inquit, 'Danaum, casusque tuorum,  
erroresque tuos; nam te iam septima portat  
omnibus errantem terris et fluctibus aestas.'*

“But come, my guest, tell us from the start  
the tricks of the Greeks”, she said, “the misfortunes of your men,  
and your wanderings: since a seventh summer now  
carries you, wandering, over every land and sea”.

(*Aen.* 1.753-6)

We see in this passage Dido’s eagerness to hear more about Aeneas’ sufferings, or at least an eagerness to prolong the evening and keep him longer at her side.<sup>205</sup> Hélienne’s translation of this passage, on the other hand, seems to present Dido’s curiosity to hear Aeneas’ story in a more genuine way, and the manner in which she requests the certainly is more keen and insistent:

“[...] ne me veuilles occulter les travaux & angustieuses peines que depuis ce temps la vertu de ton courage invincible a soustenu & toleré: Car voicy le septieme an que par mer et par terre tu n’as cessé de errer, qui ne peut estre sans grande anxieté & laborieuse fatigue. Ce que considerant, tant comme je puis te requiers, que de toutes tes infortunes ne me veuilles riens latiter”.

“[...] please do not conceal from me the labours and dreadful suffering which the virtue of your unconquerable courage has sustained and endured. For this is the seventh year that you have not ceased to wander, which must have been the cause of great distress and wearisome fatigue. Considering this, the most I can ask of you, is that from all of your misfortunes, please do not hide anything”.

(I, f. xxvi, v)

Dido’s determination at the beginning and the end of this request that Aeneas should not keep anything from her might not just be a sign of her enthusiasm for Aeneas’ story, however. The reader already familiar with the story of Virgil’s *Aeneid* (and even more so the reader familiar with Ovid’s *Heroides* 7) might read this proleptically, knowing that Dido will later realise that Aeneas has kept things from her, when she learns of his plan to depart. This subtle manipulation of Dido’s words, therefore, while it does not suggest any real distrust on Dido’s part at present, allows her to foreshadow unknowingly the deceit of Aeneas that is to come, and creates dramatic irony for the reader who knows only too well.

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<sup>205</sup> Beye 1999: 280-1. Beye points out that the narrator tells us at *Aen.* 1.748 that Dido is merely using conversation as a ploy to draw out the evening.

When Virgil's Dido senses that Aeneas is planning to depart in Book Four, she immediately accuses him of deceit for the underhand way in which he was planning to leave, asking him: *dissimulare etiam sperasti, perfide, tantum / posse nefas tacitusque mea decedere terra?*, "Faithless one, did you really hope that you could hide such wickedness, and leave my land in silence?" (*Aen* 4.305-6). Hélisenne's Dido responds with equal scorn, but her speech includes additional accusations of deceitfulness. For example, when Virgil's Dido asks whether the promise that she will die a cruel death will hold Aeneas back (*Aen.* 4.308), Hélisenne's Dido makes it explicit that this death will be caused by Aeneas' "cœur deceptive, frauduleux & fallacieux", "deceptive, fraudulent and lying heart" (IV, f. lxxxviii, r). Moreover, while Virgil's Dido begs Aeneas to stay on account of the wedding that took place between them (*Aen.* 4.316), Hélisenne's Dido now considers even this to have been part of a longer strategy of deception on Aeneas' part, cursing him for the "melliflues, douces & gracieuses parolles", "the mellifluous, sweet and kindly words" that he spoke to her (IV, lxxxviii, r). This, of course, reminds us of the protagonist Hélisenne's didactic warning to her female readers in the *Angoysses* to "n'estre si faciles d'escouter les polides, elegantes & sauves parolles", "not be so ready to listen to charming, elegant and suave words" (*Ang.* 133). It also, however, paints Aeneas as someone who deliberately manipulates words in a misleading fashion to suit his own ends, irrespective of how truthful they are.

This image of a calculating Aeneas who cleverly uses manipulative language, but is ultimately untruthful, might be considered to represent the masculine textual authority that Hélisenne attempts to challenge (in the same way that Dido clearly represents the unwitting victim of the misrepresentations created by these authorities). A consideration of one final example of Aeneas' duplicity in the *Eneydes* will shed further light on this symbolic relationship.

*At pius Aeneas, quamquam lenire dolentem  
solando cupit et dictis auertere curas,  
multa gemens magnoque animum labefactus amore  
iussa tamen diuum exsequitur classemque reuisit.*

"But dutiful Aeneas, though he longed to ease her sadness by comforting her and to rid her of pain with words, sighing many times and with a heart shaken by her great love, followed the divine command, and returned to the fleet".



Aeneas is concerned here for the grieving queen and considers how he might console her, but seems to find no words and returns to his ship. In Chapter Eighteen of Book Four, Hélienne presents an altogether less sympathetic picture of an Aeneas who, rather than realising immediately that there are no words he can say to ease Dido's grief, almost without emotion contrives to think of something consolatory and has the hubris to imagine it will work:

“Lors Eneas la voyant en telle extremité reduicte, meist son sens & subtilité pour la dolente consoler & corroborer, luy disant plusieurs suaves & melliflues paroles ymaginant par l'efficace d'icelles les regretz & plainctes sequestrer”.

“Then Aeneas, seeing her reduced to such distress, put his mind and slyness to consoling and supporting the grieving woman, saying several sweet and mellifluous words, intending through their effectiveness to rid her of her sorrows and complaints”.

(IV, f. xc, v)

Through her use of language, which stresses his cleverness with words and the manipulateness of those words, Hélienne renders Aeneas deceitful even in his attempts to offer consolation. This is reinforced by the omission of the epithet *pius*, which Hélienne fails to translate; the conflict between love and duty so keenly felt in Virgil's passage is thus significantly downplayed if not excised completely and Aeneas is every bit the feckless Ovidian lover.

What is particularly striking is that we have already been conditioned to read this passage in this way by the anticipatory phrase that preceded it: “Et lors Eneas considerant les anxietez d'icelle s'efforce avecques son artificielle eloquence d'aulcunement les angusties d'elle mitiguer”, “And then Aeneas, considering her distresses, tries with his crafty eloquence to alleviate her troubles” (IV, f. xc, v). Aeneas' “artificielle eloquence” recalls explicitly the terms with which Hélienne discredited the “artificielles & coulourées mésonges”, “false and coloured lies” of Homer in the *epistre dédicatoire*, where she questioned the veracity of his story of the Trojan War. Hélienne thus creates a link between Aeneas and his capacity for deception, and supposedly authoritative classical texts, accusing both of misrepresentation. It is not only men, however, who are shown to be capable of deception throughout the *Eneydes*.

## 5.7 The deceit of Dido and the illusory authoress

As we have noted, Hélienne tends throughout her translation of the *Aeneid* to close down gender oppositions. She often achieves this not by avoiding generalisations, but by making sure that essentialising statements are applied to both sexes and thereby implying that they cannot be upheld. Deceit is no exception, and this section will explore the way in which Hélienne attributes deceptiveness to women in general and also to Dido in particular. I will argue that Dido is ultimately shown by Hélienne to be as deceptive as Aeneas and to truly embody Ovid's statement *deceptaque decepit*. Finally, I will suggest that, if Dido is an allegorical figure for Hélienne as an author, the fact that Dido's own representation of her story can be no more trusted than Virgil's signals an invitation from Hélienne for us to question *her* authority just as much as that of the authorities she challenges.

First, let us examine the idea that Hélienne allows for women in general to be considered deceptive. As mentioned previously, when Mercury appears to Aeneas and urges him to leave, reminding him *varium et mutabile semper / femina* (*Aen.* 4.569), Hélienne adds in to Mercury's speech an extra note of scorn for women. Virgil's Mercury warns him of the danger posed by staying, suggesting that Dido is planning some contrivance in her anger (*Aen.* 4-563-5). Hélienne's Mercury makes this suggestion an essentialising statement about women, insisting that Dido is planning something through her "vulpine subtilité muliebree", "vulpine womanly slyness" (IV, f. xcvi, r).

Woman's capacity for deceit – and this time specifically Dido's – is demonstrated further in Chapter Twenty of Book Four of Hélienne's translation. In the *Aeneid*, when Aeneas has returned to the fleet and the Trojans are making preparations for their departure, in desperation Dido begs Anna to make a further appeal to Aeneas on her behalf: *i, soror, atque hostem supplex adfare superbum*, "go sister and, entreating, speak to our proud foe" (*Aen.* 4.24). Dido's instructions to Anna are specific and reflect her now powerless position: she is to speak humbly to Aeneas as a suppliant would to a proud enemy. When she translates these words, Hélienne significantly alters the tone with which Anna is told to approach Aeneas, as Dido encourages her to speak in "paroles melliflueuses, douces & attractives", "mellifluous, sweet and attractive words" (IV, xci, v). Hélienne's Dido thus asks

Anna to approach Aeneas with the same manipulative and deceitful language that she had previously inveighed against Aeneas for using.

Dido's most notable deception in the *Aeneid* is, of course, her deception of her sister Anna, whom she convinces to assist in her plan to commit suicide by pretending that she has found a magic rite that will free her from love. Virgil's Dido conceals her plan with a calm face and hope on her brow (*Aen.* 4.477). But while Hélienne's description of Dido's subterfuge is more opaque with regard to exactly how Dido concealed her plan, the language she uses to portray it is loaded: "elle usa de faintifve dissimulation pour son intention latiter", "she employed misleading dissimulation to hide her intention" (IV, f. xciiii, v). The reader may perhaps recall Dido's words to Aeneas when she asked him to recount the story of his sufferings: "ne me veiulles riens latiter", "please do not hide anything from me" (I, f. xxvi, v). Truth and fiction then, whether relating to Aeneas or Dido, are as murky as ever and words are shown to be a powerful tool for representation and misrepresentation.

This is Hélienne's real intervention in the humanist tradition then: not just to retell Virgil's story of Dido from a different perspective, but to show that all stories, however seemingly authoritative, are merely told from a particular perspective, and to prove that claims to truth cannot be upheld. This contributes to Hélienne's feminism in two distinct but interrelated ways. Firstly, her dismantling of authority questions the way in which women have been represented (and often maligned) in texts heavily embedded in learned male institutions. And secondly, Hélienne performs her own exemplary function as a defender of women's intellect and their right to a place within the field of letters, by engaging in a sophisticated and appropriative way with so authoritative a text.

## Conclusion

Epic is a genre arguably more masculine than any other and Héli-senne's *Eneydes* provides us with remarkable insight into a woman's response to Virgil's *Aeneid* long before women's engagement with classical literature was widespread and viewed without suspicion. Undaunted, Héli-senne offered a daring contribution and challenge to the male-dominated humanist tradition through her subtly appropriative translation reflects her engagement with key issues of her day including the role of women and their intellect, the prestige of vernacular literature and the question of truth and authority.

Aimed at both a learned elite and a broader reading public, her *Eneydes* explicitly engages with a range of Virgilian material from biographies to visual representations, from historical accounts to epistolary retellings, that gives us just a small glimpse of the enormously rich Virgilian tradition that Héli-senne encountered when she set about her translation.

Héli-senne is situated firmly in the forefront of the humanist drive to produce vernacular translations of the Classics. This period of vulgarisation marked the penetration of humanism into vernacular literature aimed at a popular, and no longer merely a learned, public and Héli-senne's translation takes significant pains to bridge that gap. It might be tempting to suppose that her own difficult

I hope to have demonstrated how the richness of Virgil's *Aeneid* allows for multiple interpretative possibilities that Héli-senne then exploits to her full advantage. Creating a self-styled literary persona that identifies with Dido, based on their mutual incursion into the masculine world and the criticism they endured from male detractors, Héli-senne challenges the way in which Virgil and his successors have presented women, and questions the concept of exemplarity, showing that all readings are subjective, as are all writings. Héli-senne opens her own work up to the scrutiny under which she places others to show that no claims to authority can be trusted. This strategy dismantles authority and yet at the same time clearly makes its own authoritative statement as Héli-senne defiantly refuses to sit at home and spin.

## Appendix A

The following table provides an overview of corresponding sections of Héli-senne's *Eneydes* and Virgil's *Aeneid*, matching each of Héli-senne's chapters to the equivalent lines in Virgil.

Book One		Book Two		Book Three		Book Four	
1	<i>Aen.</i> 1.1-64	1	<i>Aen.</i> 2.1-13	1	<i>Aen.</i> 3. 1-8	1	<i>Aen.</i> 4.1-5
2	<i>Aen.</i> 1.65-75	2	<i>Aen.</i> 2.13-56	2	<i>Aen.</i> 3.8-40	2	<i>Aen.</i> 4.6-30
3	<i>Aen.</i> 1.76-93	3	<i>Aen.</i> 2.57-68	3	<i>Aen.</i> 3.41-57	3	<i>Aen.</i> 4.31-53
4	<i>Aen.</i> 1.94-123	4	<i>Aen.</i> 2.69-75	4	<i>Aen.</i> 3.57-68	4	<i>Aen.</i> 4.54-89
5	<i>Aen.</i> 1.124-156	5	<i>Aen.</i> 2.76-147	5	<i>Aen.</i> 3.69-102	5	<i>Aen.</i> 4.90-107
6	<i>Aen.</i> 1.157-197	6	<i>Aen.</i> 2.148-153	6	<i>Aen.</i> 3.103-146	6	<i>Aen.</i> 4.107-114
7	<i>Aen.</i> 1.198-229	7	<i>Aen.</i> 2.154-194	7	<i>Aen.</i> 3.147-190	7	<i>Aen.</i> 4.115-128
8	<i>Aen.</i> 1.229-256	8	<i>Aen.</i> 2.195-249	8	<i>Aen.</i> 3.191-218	8	<i>Aen.</i> 4.129-172
9	<i>Aen.</i> 1.257-296	9	<i>Aen.</i> 2.250-276	9	<i>Aen.</i> 3.219-262	9	<i>Aen.</i> 4.173-205
10	<i>Aen.</i> 1.297-305	10	Digression on Hector	10	<i>Aen.</i> 3.263-288	10	<i>Aen.</i> 4.206-218
11	<i>Aen.</i> 1.306-325	11	<i>Aen.</i> 2.277-297	11	<i>Aen.</i> 3.289-309	11	<i>Aen.</i> 4.219-237
12	<i>Aen.</i> 1.326-334	12	<i>Aen.</i> 2.298-335	12	<i>Aen.</i> 3.310-343	12	<i>Aen.</i> 4.238-278
13	<i>Aen.</i> 1.335-371	13	<i>Aen.</i> 2.336-391	13	<i>Aen.</i> 3.344-355	13	<i>Aen.</i> 4.279-295
14	<i>Aen.</i> 1.372-385	14	<i>Aen.</i> 2.391-401	14	<i>Aen.</i> 3.356-368	14	<i>Aen.</i> 4.296-304
15	<i>Aen.</i> 1.385-401	15	<i>Aen.</i> 2.402-436	15	<i>Aen.</i> 3.369-426	15	<i>Aen.</i> 4.305-333
16	<i>Aen.</i> 1.402-417	16	<i>Aen.</i> 2.437-468	16	Digression on Scylla	16	<i>Aen.</i> 4.333-364
17	<i>Aen.</i> 1.418-449	17	<i>Aen.</i> 2.469-506	17	<i>Aen.</i> 3.429-462	17	<i>Aen.</i> 4.365-391
18	<i>Aen.</i> 1.450-495	18	<i>Aen.</i> 2.507-524	18	<i>Aen.</i> 3.463-505	18	<i>Aen.</i> 4.391-407
19	<i>Aen.</i> 1.496-521	19	<i>Aen.</i> 2.524-546	19	<i>Aen.</i> 3.506-558	19	<i>Aen.</i> 4.408-415
20	<i>Aen.</i> 1.522-561	20	<i>Aen.</i> 2.547-558	20	<i>Aen.</i> 3.559-589	20	<i>Aen.</i> 4.416-436
21	<i>Aen.</i> 1.562-578	21	<i>Aen.</i> 2.559-620	21	<i>Aen.</i> 3.590-612	21	<i>Aen.</i> 4.437-449
22	<i>Aen.</i> 1.579-614	22	<i>Aen.</i> 2.621-649	22	<i>Aen.</i> 3.613-654	22	<i>Aen.</i> 4.450-477
23	<i>Aen.</i> 1.615-630	23	<i>Aen.</i> 2.650-670	23	<i>Aen.</i> 3.655-718	23	<i>Aen.</i> 4.478-498
24	<i>Aen.</i> 1.631-656	24	<i>Aen.</i> 2.671-688			24	<i>Aen.</i> 4.499-503
25	<i>Aen.</i> 1.657-688	25	<i>Aen.</i> 2.689-720			25	<i>Aen.</i> 4.504-533
26	<i>Aen.</i> 1.689-722	26	<i>Aen.</i> 2.721-744			26	<i>Aen.</i> 4.534-552
27	<i>Aen.</i> 1.723-747	27	<i>Aen.</i> 2.745-789			27	<i>Aen.</i> 4.553-570
28	<i>Aen.</i> 1.748-756	28	<i>Aen.</i> 2.790-804			28	<i>Aen.</i> 4.571-583
						29	<i>Aen.</i> 4.584-621
						30	<i>Aen.</i> 4.622-629
						31	<i>Aen.</i> 4.630-641
						32	<i>Aen.</i> 4.642-662
						33	<i>Aen.</i> 4.663-692
						34	<i>Aen.</i> 4.693-705

## Appendix B

The following table indicates the correspondence between the woodcuts of the *Aeneid* and the Brant edition.

<b>Book One</b>		<b>Book Three</b>	
<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Page</b>
2	257	2	385
3	264	5	390
5	Repeat of Ch.3	6	395
7	276	8	399
9	281	10	Repeat of Ch.2
11	290	11	415
13	405	15	Repeat of Bk.1 Ch.13
18	313	16	417
19	517	18	Repeat of Ch.11
20	Repeat of Ch.18	19	Repeat of Ch.8
23	Repeat of Ch.18	20	421
27	317	23	427
<b>Book Two</b>		<b>Book Four</b>	
<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Page</b>
2	328	4	437
7	340	8	Repeat of Bk.1 Ch.18
9	347	11	Repeat of Bk.1 Ch.4
11	348	14	431
12	367	19	Repeat of Ch.14
15	358	22	Repeat of Ch.4
17	682	32	471
19	371		
21	Repeat of Ch.17		
26	375		

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