

## Absent Presence: Comparing Dido to Ariadne and Penelope in *Aeneid* 6

As part of his journey through the underworld in book 6, Aeneas arrives at the *Lugentes Campi*. Vergil lists a number of female inhabitants assigned to this sorrowful locale in a catalogue (6.442-51) that ends with Dido, whom Aeneas then approaches for their famous final scene. It is generally agreed that the catalogue of women serves to introduce the scene with Dido (Tatum 1984, et al.). The list of heroines who inhabit the *Lugentes Campi* sets a tragic backdrop for the encounter between Aeneas and Dido and provides an ensemble of women with whom to compare to Dido.

The present paper offers two new insights to the ongoing interpretive project of how the catalogue relates to Dido. I argue that in addition to the women explicitly named in the catalogue, the principal intertext (from Homer) implies two more women as comparandae to Dido—namely, Ariadne and Penelope.

There is a clear intertextual link between Vergil's infernal catalogue of women and Homer's in *Odyssey* 11. Norden (1916) pointed out that the first line of Vergil's catalogue (445) is a "Kontamination" of *Odyssey* 11.321 and 11.326. Both catalogues list three women's names on a single line; the first two names, Phaedra and Procris, appear in the accusative as the objects of a verb of seeing, ἴδov and *cernit*. After these identical names, Vergil does not proceed with the third name in *Od.* 321, but notably replaces Ariadne with Eriphyle, who appears in the same line position five lines later in the *Odyssey*. In the intervening lines of Homer Maera and Clymene are briefly mentioned (326), but the majority of the passage elaborates Ariadne's story (11.322-5). Vergil condenses six lines of Homer into a single line; Phaedra and Eriphyle serve as bookends that encapsulate the entire missing passage. The mention of Procris after Phaedra

allows Vergil to preserve the Homeric line structure. Additionally, it creates an expectation that he will continue to follow Homer, and the third name in the list will be Ariadne.

Ariadne is conspicuous through her absence, since her absence is the primary difference between *Aen.* 6.445 and *Od.* 11.321-6. Maera and Clymene, while perhaps also evoked, play a less prominent role in *Od.* 11.321-6. Additionally, the reader has been primed for a reference to Ariadne by a clear allusion to Catullus 64 at the beginning of book 6 (27-30) and numerous references to Theseus (most recently at 6.393). Furthermore, the evocation of Ariadne here builds upon correspondences between Catullus' Ariadne and Dido in book 4 (Pease 1964, Abel 1961, et al.).

Once we recognize the context of the Homeric intertext, we might also adduce a parallel between Dido and Penelope. Part of the function of Homer's catalogue is to suggest potential situations Odysseus might encounter upon his return to Ithaca (Northrup 1980). Northrup observes that the women in the Homeric catalogue present different potential narratives to map onto Penelope. References to Penelope surrounding the catalogue (11.223-4; 441) create an association between her and the catalogue's heroines. In the *Aeneid*, Dido's climactic position within the catalogue itself prompts the association between her and the other women. The overarching function of the Vergilian catalogue situates Dido in the same position as Penelope. Both catalogues offer alternate storylines to compare and contrast with the main female character.

This introduces another paradigmatic relationship to compare to Aeneas and Dido's—Odysseus' and Penelope's. Commentators have thoroughly noted parallels between Odysseus and Aeneas (e.g. Knauer 1964, Lyne 1987, Starr 2009) as well as correspondences between Penelope and Dido (Kopff 1977, Starr 2009) in other sections of the *Aeneid*. Aeneas' journey to

the underworld itself invites comparison between him and Odysseus. Dido's analogous position to Penelope in the catalogue of women may activate Aeneas' Odyssean narrative, but unlike in Homer's *Odyssey*, the hero and heroine are eternally separated.

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