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The Tragedy of Women in Power: La Araucana and Sixteenth-Century Neo-Senecan Theatre

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Résumé de l'article

In cantos 32 and 33 of the third and final part of La Araucana, the narrator digresses from the matter of the Arauco War to recount the story of Queen Dido of Carthage in the anti-Virgilian, historiographic tradition whereby she was a chaste and prudent monarch who sacrificed herself for the good of her people. Ercilla's version of Dido dialogues with contemporary Neo-Senecan tragedy, particularly two plays on the same subject: Cristóbal de Virués's Elisa Dido (c. 1585) and Gabriel Lobo Lasso de la Vega's La honra de Dido restaurada (1587). All three texts explore the tragedy that inevitably befalls commonwealths when women sit on the throne. We study these texts in light of the connections between epic and tragedy in Spanish letters of the late sixteenth century, the history and ideas surrounding women on the throne in early modern Spain, and the episodes of Ercilla's poem that flank the Dido one.

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The Tragedy of Women in Power: *La Araucana* and Sixteenth-Century Neo-Senecan Theatre

En los cantos 32 y 33 de la tercera y última parte de La Araucana*, el narrador se desvía de la materia de la guerra de Arauco para narrar la historia de la reina Dido de Cartago siguiendo la tradición anti-virgiliana e historiográfica, según la cual fue una monarca casta y prudente que se sacrificó por el bien de su pueblo. La versión de Dido que da Ercilla dialoga con la tragedia neosenequista coetánea, en particular con dos obras sobre el mismo tema: la* Elisa Dido *(h. 1585) de Cristóbal de Virués y* La honra de Dido restaurada *(1587) de Gabriel Lobo Lasso de la Vega. Los tres textos exploran la tragedia que inevitablemente recae sobre las comunidades políticas cuando las mujeres ocupan el trono. Los estudiamos a la luz de los vínculos entre la épica y la tragedia en las letras españolas de finales del siglo XVI, la historia de y las ideas en torno a mujeres en el trono en la España de la Edad Moderna, y los episodios en el poema de Ercilla contiguos al de Dido.*

Palabras clave: La Araucana*, Dido en la literatura española, tragedia en España, Cristóbal de Virués, Gabriel Lobo Lasso de la Vega*

In cantos 32 and 33 of the third and final part of La Araucana*, the narrator digresses from the matter of the Arauco War to recount the story of Queen Dido of Carthage in the anti-Virgilian, historiographic tradition whereby she was a chaste and prudent monarch who sacrificed herself for the good of her people. Ercilla's version of Dido dialogues with contemporary Neo-Senecan tragedy, particularly two plays on the same subject: Cristóbal de Virués's* Elisa Dido *(c. 1585) and Gabriel Lobo Lasso de la Vega's* La honra de Dido restaurada *(1587). All three texts explore the tragedy that inevitably befalls commonwealths when women sit on the throne. We study these texts in light of the connections between epic and tragedy in Spanish letters of the late sixteenth century, the history and ideas surrounding women on the throne in early modern Spain, and the episodes of Ercilla's poem that flank the Dido one.*

Keywords: La Araucana*, Dido in Spanish literature, Spanish tragedy, Cristóbal de Virués, Gabriel Lobo Lasso de la Vega*

In the final epistle of his *Filosofía antigua poética*, Alonso López Pinciano imagines the interlocutors of his dialogues spending an afternoon at the theatre. The three friends know that two plays are being staged in Madrid that afternoon, a comedy and a tragedy. Undecided over which to see, they opt for whichever is nearest, which turns out to be the tragedy *Iphigenia*. As they wait for the play to begin, discussing moral and practical issues of performance, Fadrique wonders why the theatre is filling up so slowly, given that the play is "nueva … y nunca en la corte representada" (3: 267). Pinciano, a kind of everyman in the dialogues, suggests that the public are instead enjoying the feats of Buratín, a tightrope-walker, and adds ruefully, despite his learned friends' opprobrium, that "si a mí me dieran a escoger, bien sé lo que eligiera" (3: 269).

Published in 1596 but most likely set somewhat earlier, the exchange makes clear that in the formative years of the commercial Spanish *corrales*, from the late 1570s to early 1590s, tragedy was one of several forms of performance jostling for precedence and custom (see also García García 37-42), which by the 1590s was struggling to compete but still very much present. The tragedy which López Pinciano cites, a Spanish adaptation of Euripides with "episodios nuevos" and many deviations from the classical form in character, staging and structure, may well be a product of his imagination, but it shares two important features with many of the tragedies performed across Spain in this period. Firstly, while deriving its origins from Greco-Roman theatre, it engages in conscious experimentation and innovation (see Hermenegildo, *El teatro* 202). Secondly, opening with the entrance of two of the female protagonists on horseback, it foregrounds the representation of women's bodies on stage, and more precisely, women who possess, are close to, or disrupt the workings of political power. While Aristotle in the *Poetics* tends to be rather dismissive about the possibility of tragic heroines, López Pinciano engages with it as a matter of regular dramatic practice, noting (albeit disapprovingly) earlier in the dialogues that any theatregoer of the period is likely to have seen "mujeres armadas" on stage (3:144).

The zenith of neoclassical tragedy in Spain coincides precisely with the years, between 1578 and 1589, when Ercilla must have contemplated and composed the *Tercera parte* (1589-90) of *La Araucana*. He remained mostly resident in Madrid during this period and can hardly have escaped some awareness of theatrical innovations in the capital.[1] The criticism of the last two decades has made clear just how eclectic a poem *La Araucana* is, both in terms of the breadth of genres and authors with which it engages, and in the kind of imitation it engages in, from extensive, sophisticated and often playful or indirect interrogation of a source, to occasional allusions, to

wholesale and almost word-for-word rewriting. Not all readers would have detected all of these allusions, but one can imagine that for some, much of the pleasure of reading the poem would have derived from these deliberate reflections of the evolving literary and intellectual culture of the second half of the sixteenth century, often in unexpected places.

One avenue that has not to date been researched, with the exception of the article of Mercedes Blanco in this same journal issue, is the relationship of *La Araucana* with the drama of Ercilla's times. This article aims to demonstrate that such a line of research is well-founded and sheds light both on the poem itself and on the sixteenth-century tragedies, whose presence in scholarship is still minimal in comparison to the *comedia nueva*. We propose that reading the "cierto y verdadero cuento" of Dido from cantos 32 and 33 in light of contemporary Neo-Senecan tragedy, particularly Cristóbal de Virués's *Elisa Dido* (1609, but written in the 1580s) and Gabriel Lobo Lasso de la Vega's *La honra de Dido restaurada* (1587), reveals one preoccupation that both dramatists and our poet share but which elicits divergent responses: the theme of women in power. Such a preoccupation, as we will show, bears great relevance when reading the episodes of Ercilla's poem that flank the Dido one. We begin with a look at the connections between epic and tragedy in Spanish letters of the 1580s before surveying the history and ideas surrounding women on the throne in early modern Spain. Then we devote a section each to analyse the treatment of Dido in the two plays and in *La Araucana*. Finally, we show what our study reveals about the rest of *La Araucana*, namely, whether it is indeed, according to the Aristotelian definition of epic, "un montón de tragedias", and if so, what kind of tragedies these are and why that matters.

SPANISH EPIC AND TRAGEDY IN THE 1580S

For Neo-Aristotelian poetic theorists, epic and tragedy were kindred forms. Alonso López Pinciano follows Aristotle's *Poetics* in concluding that tragedies originally derived from epic and defines epic, or heroic poetry, as "un montón de tragedias" (3: 218). The interlocutors disagree on which is the superior genre and, at times, on how to distinguish them. While the *Odyssey* is described as a tragicomedy, the *Aeneid* is "fina y pura tragedia en sus partes y en su todo" (3: 159). Both have protagonists of a high status, both use history to build their fiction, and both bring about a catharsis of the emotions of pity and fear through *agnición* and *peripecia*, although some incline more towards pathos (*fábula pathética*), others towards teaching moral lessons (*fábula morata*). While "poemas activos" such as dramas speak exclusively through the voice of others, and "poemas enarrativos" exclusively through the voice of the poet, epic is a "poema común" in which

"los poetas razonan por personas proprias suyas a veces, a veces por agenas" (1: 250), a hybrid between the two.

López Pinciano was writing after Ercilla, and there is no evidence of direct influence in either direction, but both are writing in the wake of a generation of tragedians and epic poets in Spain who reached their height in the 1580s.[2] Hermenegildo termed their dramatic production the "tragedia del horror" (*La tragedia* 156) much of which was never printed and is not extant; because of this, and the fact that many of the tragedians withdrew into "un desdeñoso y polémico aislamiento" after the rise of the *comedia nueva*, Stefano Arata has called them a "generación perdida" (9). Its authors, who included Jerónimo Bermúdez, Andrés Rey de Artieda, Cristóbal de Virués, Diego López de Castro, Lupercio Leonardo de Argensola, Juan de la Cueva, Gabriel Lobo Lasso de la Vega, and Miguel de Cervantes, writing primarily in Madrid, Seville, and Valencia, experimented with a range of subject matters, meters, stage arrangements and number of acts, but are strongly influenced by Senecan tragedy. Their protagonists, often tyrants, tend to be ruled and possessed by their passions, which unleash catastrophes and allow for a Neostoic exploration of the perils of passion in the political sphere. As in Seneca, some of these anti-Stoic figures are at once compelling and repulsive. While many of Seneca's tragedies, such as *Hercules furens*, took the theme of constancy in suffering, as the hero takes on the task of recognising that he has erred yet carries on, this is less apparent in the Spanish plays, which tend to end in the total destruction of the society depicted and an orgy of deaths. While violence is generally not represented on stage (although it can be, especially in the dramatic unveiling of a cadaver towards the denouement) it is conveyed through excessive, violent language and rhetoric. The leading characters construct their own identity, compete with and manipulate others through the malevolent power of language (see Valencia, "*Furor*" 106), with a proliferation of conspiracies, ruses and betrayals which bring about rape, murder, and political turmoil.

A reading of these plays reveals that, beyond their connections in poetic theory, epic and tragedy developed as parallel forms in practice in this period. The tragedies, while often polymetric and predominantly in *arte mayor*, frequently make extensive use of the same meter as the majority of Renaissance epics, the hendecasyllabic octave (see Hermenegildo, Introduction to *Antología* 77), and weave in multiple allusions to the epic tradition. Theatrically, they are often rather static and rely extensively on long, grandiloquent monologues which recall the set-piece speeches of epic. Many of their authors, including Bermúdez, Virués, Lobo Lasso, Artieda, and Cervantes, had served as soldiers and exhibit a particular interest in

questions of warfare, sometimes deviating from classical prescriptions to take as their subject recent wars or historical conflicts which have a strong parallel with contemporary concerns, and even to depict battles on stage, as in Juan de la Cueva's 1579 *Comedia del saco de Roma*, Lobo Lasso's 1587 *La destruyción de Constantinopla*, or Cervantes's *La Numancia* and (attributed) *La conquista de Jerusalén*, both dated in the 1580s. They thus formed part of what Miguel Martínez has called the "soldierly republic of letters" (1) in which many epic poets also participated. Some authors, in fact, cultivated both forms. The Valencian Virués, a *capitán de tercios* who consistently appears with his military title in the remarks of contemporaries as well as his printed works, wrote a number of tragedies, published in 1609 but which were performed and circulated between 1579 and 1590 as well as a religious epic, *El Monserrate* (1587). Lobo Lasso, who left Madrid in 1573 to serve as a soldier in Italy, thought better of it, but nonetheless ended up with an honorary military position as a *contino* or member of the king's guard in Madrid and, self-fashioned as a former "soldado" (Franco Carcedo 4, 11), penned an epic on Hernán Cortés, the *Primera parte de Cortés valeroso o la Mexicana* (1588), later reworked as *La Mexicana* (1594), as well as the two tragedies of *Primera parte del romancero y tragedias* (1587). Juan de la Cueva wrote a number of historical, classical and novelesque tragedies and comedies, as well as the 1603 epic *Conquista de la Bética*.

Ercilla had in all likelihood encountered some of these plays, whether in performance or in early manuscripts and printed editions. The literary circle of Madrid in this period was relatively small, and Ercilla, even if he never considered himself to be primarily a man of letters (Blanco, "Lyric"), was certainly regarded as one by his contemporaries (Valencia, *The Melancholy Void* 58, 87-88). He acted as a prestigious *examinador de libros* for the Council of Castile from 1580 until his death in 1594, penning at least twenty-three *aprobaciones* (Medina 219-42). He was certainly acquainted with Lobo Lasso, who stayed at Ercilla's house for almost two years as a youth between 1571 and 1573 (Franco Carcedo 625-26). Both had served as pages to Philip II and were on the aspirational fringes of the court. Lobo Lasso clearly modelled his epic in part on *La Araucana* and would later praise Ercilla in his *Varones y hombres doctos, eminentes e insignes en letras* (ca. 1614-15) for his "dulce y elegante estilo" (44). Ercilla in turn wrote the *aprobación* which Lobo Lasso chose to include in the second edition of his epic in 1594.[3] Virués, too, was based in Madrid during this period and formed part of the capital's literary circles.[4]

These two authors are particularly significant because both composed tragedies on Dido of Carthage in the years just preceding Ercilla's own retelling of the legend in his *Tercera parte*: Virués's *Elisa Dido* and Lobo

Lasso's *La honra de Dido restaurada*. The two also represent, according to Hermenegildo, opposing political ideologies among this generation of tragedians. Virués's view of the court and regal power is much more negative and critical, while the socially aspirational Lobo Lasso offers "una visión consolidadora del orden establecido" (Introduction to *Tragedia de la destruyción* 11). In *La destruyción de Constantinopla*, for instance, the sinful Greek people rather than rulers or courtiers bear responsibility for the fall of Byzantium.[5] Unlike earlier Dido tragedies, including the mid-century Italian works of Alessandro Pazzi, Giambattista Giraldi Cinzio, and Ludovico Dolce as well as the anonymous Spanish *Tragedia de los amores de Eneas y de la Reina Dido*, all modelled on the fourth book of Virgil's *Aeneid*, both Lobo Lasso and Virués base their plot on the pre-Virgilian Dido legend. The main source for this is Justin's *Epitome* of Pompeius Trogus, which was widely disseminated in medieval and Golden Age Spain and also reworked in Florián de Ocampo's adaptation of the medieval Alfonsine material in his 1541 *Crónica de España*. Ercilla, too, although drawing primarily on Francisco de Enzinas's additions to his translation of Livy rather than Justin, as Luis Gómez Canseco has recently demonstrated, also follows the historiographic, pre-Virgilian tradition of a chaste Dido, who commits suicide not after being abandoned by Aeneas but to escape marriage with the African king Iarbas and preserve her vow to her murdered husband Sychaeus.

While both Gómez Canseco (15) and Victoriano Roncero López (160) have dismissed Lobo Lasso's tragedy as a direct source for Ercilla's poem, when seen as part of a network of tragic correspondences within the final part of *La Araucana*, the comparison with sixteenth-century Neo-Senecan drama is nonetheless a productive one. To begin with, as Jonathan Thacker has written:

> [T]heatre history should not be treated like literary history. The development of the epic, the novel, or lyric poetry can be traced through influences which are confined to the page … However, theatre is only in part a written text … Much of the transmission of new ideas to practising dramatists came through what they saw and heard in the theatre itself. (3-5)

In other words, a different approach to reception is needed here. The influence of the tragedies on the poem may be less a question of concrete verbal imitation than of shared images, ideas, dramatic structures and affects, which are by their nature difficult to quantify. Blanco ("Un episodio trágico") shows how the episode of Andresillo's betrayal of the Araucanians and their devastating loss at the battle of Cañete in cantos 30-32 of the epic can be persuasively read as a tragedy in three "acts" itself embedded within

the broader tragedy of Caupolicán's demise, with its carefully constructed *fábula*, its moments of *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*, its dramatic speeches, virtuous but flawed cast, and its conjuring of intense pity and fear. We might add that the tragic action is brought about here primarily through the rhetoric of the leading characters, malevolently in the case of Andresillo, and ingeniously but unsuccessfully in the case of Pran and Caupolicán, as in Ercilla's dramatic counterparts, and that the three-act division is, according to Lope de Vega (143) an innovation particularly associated with Virués. Moreover, Ercilla's is an experimental and atypical engagement with the tradition: he makes the final battle scene, the representation of warfare which most obviously distinguishes epic from tragedy and the one part of his tale which, as the theorists were well aware, cannot adequately be performed on stage, the culmination of the tragic action and the catharsis it brings about. His is not a passive response to the tragic tradition.

Tragedy is by no means absent from the first two parts of the poem: many of the episodes involving female characters in particular (Guacolda, Tegualda) might be read in this light and indeed went on to inspire a subsequent generation of dramatists (see Choi, "The Spectacle of Conquest"). Nevertheless, there is a definite heightening of the tragic content in the 1589-90 *Tercera parte*, in tandem with theatrical developments, and this article focuses primarily on this final part. The Dido episode, which maps onto other encounters with mourning women throughout the poem and bears relation to the capture and execution of Caupolicán, carries out a reflection on gender and political power which responds to the prominence of this question in the politics and the theatrical production of the period.

WOMEN AND POWER IN EARLY MODERN SPANISH THEATRE

In late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Spain, women were often either in or very close to monarchical power. Isabella I of Castile and her daughter Joanna of Castile and Aragon ruled in their own right, from 1474 to 1504 and from 1504 to 1555 respectively, although the latter did so only in name. In the next few decades, two Spanish queens played prominent political roles. Beginning with her marriage to Charles V in 1526 and until her death in 1539, Empress Isabella of Portugal frequently acted as ruler of Spain during her husband's many absences. Joanna of Austria, for her part, served as regent between 1554 and 1559 while her brother Philip II ruled in England. As Theresa Earenfight writes, "Spanish royal women were more likely to be active in the governance of the realm. They exercised considerable legitimate authority more often, more publicly, and more directly than queens elsewhere in Europe" (xiii). In a broader sense, the letters, petitions,

and briefs that concern power written in Spain during the early modern period demonstrate that "women did not have a marginal presence in contemporary politics, but were as actively involved as men" (Romero-Díaz 238).

On the other hand, as Magdalena S. Sánchez explains, while "it was clear to their contemporaries that women had political roles … these political roles were thought to be subordinate to those of men; women were to express their political sentiments only when and if these sentiments were in the service of the traditional male hierarchy" (4). Moreover, in political treatises and conduct manuals, monarchical power was gendered masculine (Earenfight xxvi), and as the sixteenth century wore on, "the increasingly visible activity on the part of women" generated a considerable backlash (Quintero 12). The issue was not so much whether women could rule well: theorists acknowledged the abundant evidence in the affirmative. "Rather, the issue pressed by most male authors was that women's rule should be predicated on the imitation of and submission to that of men" (Cruz and Suzuki 3). In the face of the reality of women in monarchical power, theorists seem to have wanted it both ways: for women monarchs to display virtues considered virile, and therefore be unwomanly, but at the same time demonstrate subservience to men and perform traditional womanly behaviour. "The discourses that circulated on this topic, both popular and learned, were intended, for the most part, to allay male anxieties about female sovereignty by exhorting women to behave 'as women' even while lauding them for acting in a virile manner" (Cruz and Suzuki 3). Thus, good female rulers possessed a paradoxical gender fluidity. Exemplary female rule was all about chastity, yet, as María Cristina Quintero writes, "By cherishing and maintaining the virtues of virginity and chastity, a woman supposedly raised herself up to the moral level of a man. Indeed, the pursuit of these feminine virtues led to a kind of transgendering" (21, 32).

The subject of Dido in Ercilla's *La Araucana* and Lobo Lasso and Virués's eponymous tragedies drew from this discussion surrounding women and monarchical power in early modern Spain. As theatre, the plays in particular had much to contribute to it. Given that female parts in Spain were played by women, to tackle the subject of women and monarchical power was to display feminine bodies on stage (Quintero 25). Reflecting prevailing political thought, monarchical power in the theatre is gendered as masculine, and so when bad monarchical governance is portrayed, as Quintero observed, "these disturbing manifestations of power are directly related to questions of gender, masculinity, and femininity" (5). In other words, monarchical trouble in early modern Spanish theatre is often figured as gender trouble, and the staging of a crisis of monarchical power is the

staging of a crisis of masculinity. Moreover, the masculinist anxiety surrounding women and monarchical power was linked to the anxiety surrounding women on stage, women among the audience, and the supposedly feminizing effects that frequenting the theatre could have on male spectators (see Quintero 13, 16).

In the context of the 1580s, two historical figures undoubtedly activated anxieties surrounding women in and close to monarchical power: the courtier Ana de Mendoza y de la Cerda, Princess of Éboli, who was placed under house arrest in 1581 for the 1578 murder of Juan de Escobedo (Dadson 169); and Queen Elizabeth I of England, the notorious Virgin Queen and one of the Hispanic Monarchy's most tenacious enemies, against whom Philip II launched the so-called Invincible Armada in 1588 after years of planning (see Quintero 41), in which Ercilla's only son Juan perished at twenty years of age (Medina 155). Virués's *Obras trágicas y líricas* (1609), which contains his five tragedies, includes among the lyrical pieces an Italianate *canción* "Al Rei Felipe II" (fols. 207v-09v) and a sonnet "A la Inglesa" (fol. 209v). In the *canción*, Virués's poetic persona calls the king's attention to the plight of the British people:

una muger le engaña,
(miseria estrema) una muger infame
al triste tiraniza i avassalla,
i fuerça a ser cual ella orrible, inorme,
pero que tal muger, muger se llame
error pienso que sea, i que llamalla
ira de Dios, que su vengança forme,
nombre sera mas propio i mas conforme. (lines 7-14)

Here the censure of tyranny that characterises Virués's tragedies falls entirely on Elizabeth I (Hermenegildo, "Cristóbal de Virués" 400). Moreover, it casts the English monarch's religion and policies as deviations from properly feminine behaviour. In the sonnet that follows, the poetic persona apostrophizes her directly and again centers on her gender.

Ingrata Reina, de tal nombre indina,
maldita Gezabel descomulgada,
que, turbas la divina paz amada?
que, turbas la christiana paz divina? (lines 1-4)

As Jesús Jerez-Gómez writes, "Virués exploits the derogatory image of the queen ... deposing her of royal status by reducing her to the condition of her gender" (95).

Given the historical context and these two poems, we find it not entirely unsurprising that all five of Virués's tragedies revolve around the problem of women and monarchical power. Josep Lluís Sirera already noticed that the driving characters of these plays are women ("Cristóbal de Virués" 285). In Virués's theatre, tragedies befall commonwealths when these women, whether wicked like Semíramis in her eponymous play, or virtuous like Dido in hers, are in power; when women dare choose their own sexual partners in spite of the wishes of the men in their families, as when Casandra clashes with her brothers so she can marry Leandro; when women are too close to the seat of power and have the opportunity and the ability to manipulate male courtiers and princes inflamed by lust, as Semíramis does to her husband Menón and Emperor Nino in act 1 of *La gran Semíramis*, Casandra to her brothers and the Prince of León in *La cruel Casandra*, Flaminia to King Atila in *Atila furioso*, and Felina to the gang leader Formio in *La infelice Marcela*; or even when the love of a virtuous, feminine woman who knows her place drives princes and courtiers to excess, as happens to Landino for the sake of Marcela in *La infelice Marcela*, and to Iarbas, Seleuco, and Carquedonio for the sake of the queen in *Elisa Dido*. The tyrant that Virués's tragedies warn audiences and readers about is not Philip II, as Hermenegildo insisted without textual evidence (e.g., Introduction to *Antología* 13), but rather Love or Cupid – that is, the allegory of *cupiditas*, which is sexual desire in the private sphere, and lust for power in the public one. *Atila furioso* opens with a monologue in which the Prologue personified inveighs against "el gigante a quien llaman niño ciego" (35) as a monstrous hybrid of male and female, brute force and artifice, who causes all vice: "Éste es quien vence al más sagaz maestro" (40).[6] The Chorus of *Elisa Dido* fleshes out the political relevance of this idea when it blasts Cupid as "falso amor tirano" (2.1075) and Ismeria blames him for the calamity that has befallen her country (3.1455-64; 4.1625-36). Emperor Nino situates Cupid as the source of all tyrannical actions undertaken by any king:

viendo que le fuerza
al rey otro rey mayor
y en su pretensión se esfuerza,
qu'es el poderoso amor
contra quien ni hay ley ni fuerza. (*La gran Semíramis* 1.418-22)

In that sense, Virués's tragedies align with Senecan Stoicism, as Sirera observed ("Cristóbal de Virués" 288); and moreover, "su misoginia … deriva de su condena del amor pasión" (299). In *La cruel Casandra*, the eponymous character entwines her aspiration to make decisions about her civil state with the ultimate political ambition, making clear that in Virués's tragedies, women who claim power constitute a threat of the highest magnitude: "del estado seré y de mí señora" (3.1751).

In like manner, characters in several of these plays consistently figure monarchical power as gendered masculine. The courtiers of Babylon in *La gran Semíramis* chalk up the titular empress's wise and good actions to her manliness in spite of her gender. In the eulogy, Diarco praises "la fortaleza y varonil prudencia / que la Reina mostró" (3.2137-38). Even before she ascended to the imperial throne, when her then-husband credits her for the scheme that has delivered victory to their camp, he says, "ella dio el orden / … / para hacer la varonil hazaña" (1.289-91). When her actions are bad, they blame them on her gender. Her son Ninias admits, "Yo, yo tengo la culpa, que permito / que reine una mujer engañadora" (3.1602-03). As Celabo concludes, Semíramis's tyrannical tendencies derive directly from her gender.

Aunque esta ni por ser dichosa osa,
ni por ser valerosa o avisada,
sino por ser soberbia y ambiciosa
y verse en real silla entronizada,
por ser mujer, por verse poderosa,
por tener la cruel tiranizada
esta infelice y grande monarquía,
que estar en mano varonil debría. (3.1738-45)

Along similar lines, Atila in the eponymous tragedy defends his hallmark anger and the brutal violence he inflicts on subjects and his adversaries alike as pieces of a necessary performance of masculinity, which he claims is the source of monarchical legitimacy: "A quien la injuria el ánimo no ofende / no le den entre hombres de hombre nombre" (1.240-41). Therefore he hopes that

Aborrézcame el mundo, y aborrezcan
mi nombre y mi presencia mis vasallos,
…
que es cosa de mujeres ser amables
y de varones es el ser temidos. (1.359-60, 363-64)

Atila's anxieties about his masculinity are brought to the fore by his affair with Flaminia. So that he can see her often and keep the relationship secret, he compels her to dress as a man, Flaminio. Jealous of the favour that "el rapacillo vano" enjoys, courtier Roberto hints at the king's homosexuality and therefore effeminacy when he refers to Flaminio as "su querido" (2.849, 856). Toward the end of the play, as he descends into murderous madness, the king has transgendered his lover: "La terneza como un monte / tiene en mi cuerpo Flaminio" (3.1453-54).[7] Soon after Flaminio perishes and his true female gender with him.

VIRUÉS'S *ELISA DIDO* AND LOBO LASSO DE LA VEGA'S *LA HONRA DE DIDO RESTAURADA*

Contrary to King Atila, the Prince of León, Formio ruling over his bandits, Prince Landino when driven to murderous rage by the poisoning of fair Marcela, and most crucially Queen Semíramis, Dido is a ruler of the utmost virtue in the non-Virgilian and historiographic tradition that Virués, Lobo Lasso and Ercilla followed, with some variations. According to this version, Dido was the sister of King Pygmalion of Tyre and married her maternal uncle Sychaeus, the High Priest of Hercules and consequently the second authority of the state. Covetous of his brother-in-law's vast treasure, Pygmalion orders his assassination. Devastated by grief but obeying the command of her beloved husband's ghost, Dido resolves to flee secretly, using a ruse to persuade the king to send her a fleet of ships and then make her escort believe that she has thrown her treasure in the sea. After securing the abduction of eighty maidens in Cyprus, she leads her followers to the African shore, where she uses her riches to purchase land. Through an ingenious ruse involving an ox hide, the size and value of that plot far surpasses the amount paid. There she establishes the new city of Carthage, whose prosperity and power quickly grow until the Mauritanian King Iarbas proposes marriage. In the face of her rejection, he wages war on Carthage. To at once save her people and preserve her chastity in widowhood, she commits suicide.

In Virués's *Elisa Dido*, despite the queen's considerable virtues and political skill, her gender makes her an ultimately detrimental monarch to the welfare of the Carthaginians. As in all early modern texts on Dido in the anti-Virgilian vein, Virués's version of the queen combines three sets of virtues: while her husband still lives, those of a good wife, namely beauty and marital fidelity; after his murder and his apparition as a ghost, those of a good widow, namely obedience and chastity; and as queen, those of a wise and successful ruler, namely prudence and what her courtiers call "industria" (3.1260, 1290) – that precious skill at plotting, feigning and

dissembling when advancing one's goals. Dido's claim to power and legitimacy derives from her identity as a wronged widow. Chastity thus is the virtue that Dido must project to the wide world in order to claim power and, lest a new husband replace her as reigning monarch, in order to keep power. As Sirera explains, "la gobernante teme ceder ante sus pretendientes, por miedo a que su poder le sea arrebatado ... porque si llegase felizmente a su término, tarde o temprano el amante – dada su condición de varón – acabaría substituyéndola en el trono. Sólo existían, por consiguiente, dos alternativas: la ocultación de su sexo (Semíramis) o la exaltación de la castidad como disuasión para posibles pretendientes" ("Elisa Dido" 169).

But, in true tragic fashion, her greatest virtue constitutes her flaw: the performance of chastity brings about her downfall. She is the supreme synecdoche of Carthage, and precisely because of the qualities that render her a good female monarch, a male monarch like Iarbas and even her male subjects will desire her in ways that harm the Carthaginian polity. The play takes place once Carthage has been laid siege because

> … la fama
> de discreción, riqueza y hermosura
> de Elisa comenzó a volar de suerte
> y a colocarla en opinión tan alta
> que este bárbaro Rey de Mauritania
> se encendió en vivo fuego de deseo
> de juntarse con ella en matrimonio. (4.1692-98)

Tellingly, Dido herself cannot discern in Iarbas's desire where private love ends and political ambition begins, and therein resides Virués's point about women in power: "si es cudicia o si es amor, o juntas / si estas dos cosas son su fuerte intento" (1.43-44). She admits that to save her realm, she must either kill herself, as she ultimately does, or make herself sexually available to Iarbas, as she initially announces: "Hoy venga … / a tomar posesión de Elisa Dido" (1.85-86). In a side plot, one of her generals, Seleuco, confesses in a soliloquy that both he and his comrade Carquedonio love the queen and again, the private and political goals are muddled: "Amor hasta aquí en ambos encubierto, / y en ambos fuerte, de ambición valido, / con pretensión de rey" (1.208-10).

Dido's gender not only attracts an external threat to Carthage, but what is worse, her male subjects act badly because of it. Carquedonio confesses that out of love, "Por ella fui a mi Rey traidor" (2.1004); that is, back in Tyre, he placed the navy at Dido's disposal so she could abscond with the treasure.

Even if we recognize that Carquedonio's betrayal of Pygmalion was justified because of the king's tyranny, it still stands that his motivating reason was the wrong one. During the events of the play, he and Seleuco launch a rash and counterproductive attack on the Mauritanian army out of a combination of jealousy as unrequited lovers, frustration as subjects kept in the dark, and misogyny as men who mistrust a female monarch. Pirro, a fellow courtier, describes Carquedonio and Seleuco's attack as

> Intempestiva guerra y peligrosa,
> operación frenética de celos,
> rabia mortal de inmenso amor, horrenda
> furia de un frágil corazón. (3.1446-49)

Indeed, because of Dido's gender, the objections that her apparent decision to marry Iarbas raises among her subjects are cast in misogynistic terms. Regarding her announcement at the beginning of the play, Seleuco grouses to Carquedonio, "¡Oh, femenil ingenio, cuán mudable!" (1.180). Pirro likewise makes a misogynistic accusation in reference to her decision, with which he too disagrees: "Ella se pierde en entregarse a un bárbaro" (2.507). As these comments reveal, in the eyes of her subjects, Dido is all woman when she governs badly. Predictably, she is all man when she governs well. For Seleuco, were Dido to marry and thus make either him or Carquedonio king, she would act like a man, which is to say wisely; but by seemingly choosing Iarbas, she acts like a woman, which is to say poorly: "como la Reina / varonilmente entre ambos escogiera, / como escogió, como mujer, a Yarbas" (1.210-12). Even Ismeria, a female courtier, praises in her account of Dido's past deeds the "varonil valor" that the queen showed in obeying the command of her dead husband's ghost; in truth, "No pudiera el varón más sabio y fuerte / hacer más ni decir que Elisa entonces" (3.1244, 1248-49).

Caught in that bind, Dido keeps her subjects in the dark about her true decision and suppresses debate. That, as we have seen, leads to disunity and disarray. As Sirera observes, therein lies the properly tragic conflict of the play ("Elisa Dido" 169-70). It bears repeating: Dido would not need to be tyrannical to her subjects if she were a man; she is in a bind because of her gender.

In Lobo Lasso's *La honra de Dido restaurada*, the queen's gender matters but in politically more ambiguous ways. Even though in this play she too wields power autocratically, as shown in a flurry of decrees at the beginning of act 3, her subjects approve of her governance and never bring up their monarch's gender. Instead, Dido herself calls attention to her gender as a way to earn credibility and move her intended listeners. At the

beginning of act 1, in dialogue with her husband Sychaeus, she casts herself as a woman so deeply in love that she cannot speak eloquently (1.139-42), and as an obedient and self-effacing wife (1.159-62). Later, in two key speeches she adopts a distinctly lyrical voice and deploys famous lines from Garcilaso de la Vega as refrains, thus tapping into lyric's well-known connection to sincerity and the emotive function. Each stanza of her lament upon the death of Sychaeus closes with "salid sin duelo, lágrimas, corriendo" (1.531, 544, 557, 570), which is the refrain of Salicio's lament in Garcilaso's eclogue 1. Moreover, the very form of the lament – an Italianate *canción* in four hendecasyllabic and heptasyllabic *estancias* (1.519-70) – evokes the lyric genre and contrasts sharply with the preceding octaves (1.399-518). Likewise, her farewell monologue, uttered just before she commits suicide and thus preserves her chastity, ends each of its octaves with "¡ay, dulces prendas! quando Dios quería" (3.1750, 1758, 1766, 1774, 1782), which adapts the famous first two lines from Garcilaso's sonnet 10: "¡Oh dulces prendas por mi mal halladas, / dulces y alegres cuando Dios quería[!]" (lines 1-2). Those two hendecasyllables, in turn, constitute a translation of the first hexameter of Dido's final lament in Virgil's *Aeneid*: "dulces exuviae, dum fata deusque sinebat" (4.651).[8] Early modern musicians and readers recognized that lament as one of the supreme exemplars of the lyric (see M.ª J. Vega 35). Garcilaso, for his part, had been proclaimed by the 1580s as the supreme Spanish poet qua lyric poet (see Valencia, *The Melancholy Void* 66), so to speak in recognisably Garcilasian verse was to speak in a recognisably lyrical way. These connections matter because the lyric genre in general and Garcilaso's verse in particular were closely associated with the feminine sphere in sixteenth-century Spain (see Valencia, *The Melancholy Void* 16-17).

Once she and her followers have arrived in Africa, Dido's gender is foregrounded as one of her most effective tools to wield power but also what dooms her rule. When she needs Iarbas to sell her some land, Dido leverages her gender with an appeal to chivalrous masculinity.

Vna muger desterrada,
biuda y de fauor desnuda,
¿dónde es justo, rey, acuda
sino a ser de ti amparada?
Este, señor, es tu officio
y, quando hombre solo fueras,
y no rey, aun me deuieras,
como a muger, ser propicio. (2.925-32)

Later, after Iarbas has laid siege to Carthage because Dido refuses his marriage proposal, the Carthaginian commander Marcio pointedly reminds him of that chivalric obligation toward a lady (3.1571-74). Thus, Dido's gender in Lobo Lasso's play does not make her a bad ruler, unlike in Virués's version. And yet it inevitably dooms her. If her subjects do not hold her gender against her, the unrequited lover Iarbas does. Stymied in his erotic and political pursuit by her fidelity and chastity, he deploys misogynistic arguments: "Firmeza estraña, por cierto, / cosa agena de muger" (3.1557-58). This reminds audiences that were it not for Dido's gender, the fledgling Carthaginian polity under her rule would be safe from the predation of the mighty African one.

The difference in the treatment of the political consequences of Dido's gender in *Elisa Dido* and *La honra de Dido restaurada* derives from their differing goals. *La honra de Dido restaurada* has a literary one: to exemplify a better kind of poetry, one that conveys true historical teachings, hence the denunciation of Virgil's libellous take on Dido in the "Argumento" and in Diana's speech at the end of act 3 (3.1803-10); and one that is elegantly written by highborn and well-read knights like Lobo Lasso de la Vega, and not by churls of coarse diction like the "torpe aluardero" and the "cómicos rudos, ignorantes" mercilessly mocked in the "Introyto" (17, 41). A complementary appeal to proper Castilian diction and courtly savoir-faire occupies the "Introyto" of *La destruyción de Constantinopla*. On the other hand, *Elisa Dido* aligns with the rest of Virués's tragedies in its forceful denunciation of "falso amor tirano" and the dangerous proximity of women to monarchical power, which inevitably feeds Love's dreadful dominion over men.

THE "CIERTO Y VERDADERO CUENTO" OF DIDO IN *LA ARAUCANA*: NOT (QUITE) A TRAGIC TALE

In *La Araucana*, "el cierto y verdadero cuento / de la famosa Dido disfamada" (33.54) is inserted as a tale told by the character Ercilla to his comrades in Arauco as they travel back from a raid to the fort at Cañete. Like Lobo Lasso's play, it belongs in part to the medieval tradition of a *defensión de las donas*. Stressing Dido's "honra" and his need to restore it by retelling her true history in opposition to the falsehoods of Virgil's *Aeneid* (32.52-53), Ercilla embarks on an excursus of about 800 lines, spread across two cantos. Like many tragedies of the period, Ercilla's interpolated tale has a prologue and epilogue, and is also interrupted in the break between cantos by his customary exordium, using Pygmalion as an *exemplum* of decline from virtue. The prologue and epilogue, with their apologetic, anti-Virgilian emphasis and stress on the truth of the story, contain reminiscences of

Enzinas's framing of the story in his "Addicion" but also of Lobo Lasso's "Argumento" (83-90) and Diana's epilogue (3.1803-22) in *La honra de Dido restaurada*, all of which describe Virgil's account as an "error" in need of correction. Like Enzinas, Ercilla refutes the *Aeneid* as an anachronism, impossible because of the lack of coincidence in dates, and not at all justified by the need to "hermosear su Eneas" (32.46; in Enzinas, "hazer hermoso a su Eneas", fol. CXXV^{v}). Ercilla seems to borrow from Lobo Lasso, on the other hand, the poet's stated mission to restore the queen's honour, and the presentation of Virgil's story as the erroneous opinion of the *vulgo*. As Lobo Lasso puts it, he aims to "deshazer la común y er/rada opinión en que están / los que ignoran la verdadera historia de la casta Dido, / a quien Vergilio, en su Eneyda, fabulo/samente y con siniestra relación agra/uia" (83), which Ercilla renders very similarly as

Visto, pues, el agravio tan notable
y la objeción siniestra del soldado
…
pareciéndome cosa razonable
mostrarle que en aquello andaba errado
él y los más que me escuchaban
que en la misma opinión también estaban (32.45)

and later, as a "falsa opinión / … / del rudo común, mal informado" (32.48).

The embedding of the story within the broader narrative of the defeat of Caupolicán has led to some divergence among scholars. Inserted between the beginnings of the search for the Araucanian *toqui*, who has gone into hiding after the slaughter at Cañete, and his betrayal, capture and gruesome execution, it also falls between encounters with two indigenous women. Ercilla's discovery of the wounded Lauca, whose longing for death after seeing her husband die on the battlefield incites his remarks on the "fe de las indias y constancia / de muchas (aunque bárbaras)" (32.43) which he explicitly compares to Dido's "fe", precedes the story. It is followed by the contrasting appearance of Caupolicán's wife Fresia, who, contrary to the expectations generated by all the other Araucanian women so far, "no reventó con llanto la gran pena / ni de flaca mujer dio allí la muestra" (33.76). Instead, after repudiating her husband for allowing himself to be captured alive, Fresia casts down their fifteen-month-old son before him. David Quint reads the Dido episode and those of other Araucanian heroines as a digression heading away from epic teleology towards "stories of romantic love", which in this case "collapses dichotomies between male and female, West and East, civilization and barbarism, and, not least, epic and romance"

(184). Both he and Ramona Lagos (181) see Dido as a foil to the vices of the Spaniards, modelling a successful conquest unmarred by greed. Karina Galperin takes this further, arguing that Dido is not so much associated with the defeated Araucanians as with the "contemporary Islamic world" (34) and that this and other episodes are anti-war, anti-conquest and anti-empire altogether. For Cyrus Moore and Irene Weiss, the Dido episode is intimately connected with its first-person framing by Ercilla, and forms a kind of climax of the poet's own self-fashioning.[9] In his recent unveiling of Ercilla's close rewriting of the hitherto-unknown source of Enzinas, Gómez Canseco is skeptical about all such interpretations, suggesting that this part of the poem, which was seen by at least some contemporaries as a disproportionate hotch-potch of materials, was put together in an improvised fashion, bulked up with digressions borrowed substantially from other sources in order to "alargar los rendimientos que el poema le había venido dando a lo largo de los años" (16).

A reading of the episode against the backdrop of tragedy informs and qualifies some of these views.[10] While Ercilla uses Enzinas as the backbone of his plot, he fashions the story into something quite different through his political and moral commentaries on the story, his character developments, and above all by adding to the stanzas adapted from Enzinas a strand of several long and carefully developed speeches. Directing his reader's attention to these speeches as a highlight, Ercilla calls them "razonamientos" in the "Tabla de las cosas más notables desta *Tercera parte*".[11] In other words, his own additions to his source take the story in a distinctly dramatic direction, alternating the narrator's voice with that of others, true to the hybrid nature of epic as López Pinciano would describe it a few years later. In Ercilla's rendition, the *fábula* falls into two parts: the first, the family drama that develops between Dido, Sychaeus and Pygmalion until her successful flight, and the second Dido's foundation and rule of Carthage leading up to her suicide, each of which falls (although not quite neatly; Ercilla generally prefers the Ariostesque technique of overlapping action) into one of the cantos dedicated to the tale.

The first part of the *fábula* elicits initial expectations of a dynastic and courtly tragedy very much in the style of Virués. Pygmalion, who makes a cameo appearance as an archetypal greedy tyrant in most versions of the Dido legend and is only developed as a character in Lobo Lasso, although in quite a different way, evolves into a more complex figure here. The narrator stresses his "codicia", but also shows him undergoing a process of moral decline: after showing many "señales de virtud" in his youth, the young king initially preserved fraternal harmony with Dido before being corrupted by greed. Even then he conceals the murder and still appears to be "a la virtud

aficionado" (33.1-3), crafting him into a cunning, Machiavellian ruler, as well as outlining a tragic *peripeteia*, from familial harmony to sacrilegious murder. Dido herself, on the other hand, presents him in her soliloquy as possessed by passion and fury and in violation of all the laws of heaven for having killed his uncle (32.61-68).

¿Cabe en razón, es cosa permitida,
que, siendo tú traidor, siendo tirano,
perverso, atroz, sacrílego, homicida,
tengas con estos nombres el de hermano? (32.65)

The *culto*, bombastic lexis is very reminiscent of the Neo-Senecan tragedies, while the emphasis on internecine familial strife reminds us of Aristotle's suggestion that catharsis is best achieved when the sufferings occur among intimates, "as when brother intends to kill brother or does some other such thing or mother son or son mother" (14.1453b19-22). While at first Dido's grief is expressed in the lyrical language of Garcilaso, as "soltó con doloroso y fiero llanto / de lágrimas un flujo en larga vena" (32.57), immediately afterwards she is consumed with fury, full of "odio y rencor", "ira muda", "reprimida rabia" (32.60). Her lament is not a pathetic and lyrical song, but the tirade of a tragic heroine possessed by passion, who bitterly inveighs against the injustice of the heavens (although, as in Enzinas and unlike Lobo Lasso and Virués, there is no presence of gods or the supernatural). Initially Dido can only contemplate a lover's suicide, harking back to the story of Lauca just before, or "venganza." The fact that she utters this speech at Sychaeus's "sepultura sumptuosa", where she is said to continuously offer sacrifice and evoke his spirit, is an allusion to Virgil's Dido, who after hearing of Aeneas's abandonment, frequents the shrine she has dedicated to Sychaeus and, in torment, hears him calling to her (4.457-63). This is precisely the moment at which Virgil begins to bring about Dido's transition into a frenzied, tragic heroine; her night-time terrors are shortly afterwards compared in two epic similes to Pentheus and Orestes when they, too, surrender to the infernal furies.

Ercilla's Dido does not complete this transition, however. From the moment she makes use of her "prudencia y discreción" to set in motion the ruse against her brother instead of opting for a fruitless suicide or doomed vengeance, she masters her passions and becomes a figure characterised by prudence (as in Enzinas and Virués) and constancy. The latter seems to be an addition of Ercilla's with clear Stoic connotations, somewhat paradoxically as the Stoic sage is almost invariably a man. This emphasis is also stressed by Ercilla in the wordplay and allusions he engages in on the

concept of *culpa*. Famously, Virgil refers twice in the fourth book of the *Aeneid* to Dido's *culpa*, often read by later scholars as a hint at her tragic *hamartia*. In response, Ercilla's prologue begins by criticising Virgil's "ficción", which "infama y culpa su inculpable vida" (32.52). After fleeing, Dido contrasts her own innocence to her brother, who would be capable of murdering his ministers too and adding "culpa a culpa" (32.85). In her response to Iarbas's embassy, she refuses to answer immediately to avoid falling into "error" and "culpa" (33.41). Thus, she transforms from a tragic heroine into a Stoic and epic one. In her exchange with the Senate over Iarbas's proposal, she displays an "alegre rostro y grave risa / aunque sentía en el ánimo otra cosa" (33.27) before beginning a speech which alludes no less than to Aeneas's famous exhortation of encouragement to his own shipwrecked companions (see Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.195-207). What should be the tragic ending of her suicide does not evoke pity or fear, and does not, unlike in the tragedies, follow in the wake of any other deaths or the ravages of war, but is instead the logical conclusion to her exemplary political rule and the beginning of a new chapter in Carthage's history, as it transitions into a republican city state:

Y aborreciendo el nombre de señores
muerta la memorable reina Dido,
por cien sabios ancianos senadores
de allí adelante el pueblo fue regido. (32.53)

In the second part of Ercilla's story, the notorious "fe" of Dido, present in all the sources and an allusion to Virgil's own Dido, who rues her "non servata fides" to Sychaeus (4.552) while also taking to task Aeneas's lack of faith towards her, takes on a less exclusive meaning, referring not only to her fidelity in widowhood, but to the "fe con juramento establecida" (32.90) between Dido and her citizens, directing the focus more towards her political than personal and distinctively feminine virtues.[12] It is implied, although not stated outright, that this generic shift away from tragedy back towards something more like epic is in part the consequence of the move from a courtly society of secrecy and intrigue in Phoenicia to a more open, pseudo-republican one in the new Carthage. Both *Elisa Dido* and *La honra de Dido restaurada* contain subplots centered on the erotic pursuits of the queen's courtiers. In the former, those intrigues synecdochically signify a flawed polity, and in the latter, an incomplete one. For his part, Ercilla takes from Enzinas the observation that Carthage converts into a republic on Dido's death, but also extends elements of this system back into earlier parts of the narrative to suggest that this is a gradual and natural rather than a

sudden transition. From the foundation of the city, Dido does not rule alone but in conjunction with the Senate. In her speech as she flees from Tyre, asking them to pledge their allegiance to her as sovereign, she promises to her followers the franchise, that is, a seat at the table when it comes to making decisions and reaping benefits:

[Q]uien quisiere seguir mi compañía
no se verá de mí desamparado,
mas de todo el provecho y bien que espero
será participante y compañero. (32.86)

Although both she and the Senate engage in "artificio" (33.20) and some degree of manipulation when faced with crises, their rhetoric is directed towards positive communication rather than soliloquies and speculation, and their temporary deceptions fall on the right side of the delicate early modern line between simulation and dissimulation. Repetition between the two parts of Ercilla's episode stresses the shift, as Pygmalion's impious sacrifice of Sychaeus at the beginning is redeemed by Dido's Christlike sacrifice of herself at the end. As a tragic heroine, Dido is ultimately a victim of fate, but as an epic one, she is able to come out on top in the struggle against a malignant fortune.

In contrast to *La honra de Dido restaurada* and particularly *Elisa Dido*, in *La Araucana* neither Dido nor her subjects mention her gender. Yet it still plays a key role in her fall. For starters, Dido's political identity is built around the projection of virtuous femininity centered on sexual chastity. She is by antonomasia "la casta fenisa" (32.45); hers is the supreme example of "una vida casta" (32.48). And her feminine beauty is inseparable from her political virtues:

Y aunque era tal su ser, tal su cordura,
que por diosa vinieron a tenella,
ninguna de su tiempo en hermosura
pudo ponerse al paragón con ella. (33.15)

That incomparable "hermosura" contributes decisively to Iarbas's desire for her (33.16-17), as in both tragedies. Within Ercilla's Carthaginian polity, Dido's "fe", as we observed, has two facets. It is marital "fe … y constancia" to her dead husband, hence Ercilla's mention of her in regard to Lauca. And it is also political "fe y juramento establecida" to her new subjects. Both facets are inseparable. The "fe" that she sustains for her husband and the corresponding chastity holds together the pact made at the end of canto 32,

and the undoing of the former would entail the undoing of the latter. As we saw regarding Virués's tragedy, marital faith and chastity are what allow her to remain in power: were she to take a new husband, the patriarchal norm would push her aside as reigning monarch.

Dido's doom in *La Araucana* is that her subjects, or more accurately, her governing partners, expect her to marry. The Senate delegation that presses her to respond to Iarbas's marriage proposal reminds her that she must produce an heir, abandoning her "casto infrutuoso presupuesto" and "dándonos con el tiempo prosperado / la sucesión y fruto deseado" (33.35-36), suggesting that the union with Iarbas would lead to the fulfilment of that obligation. Her eventual suicide so she may avoid breaking the "fe" (33.49) – a word that, it bears repeating, inextricably twines marital fidelity and the political compact she proposed originally – demonstrates to the Carthaginian Senate that monarchical succession is a problem and will likely continue being a problem, especially when a woman reigns with "casto infrutuoso presupuesto." This helps explain the transition to a republican regime.

In conclusion, the dramatic texture of the *Tercera parte* of *La Araucana* derives in large part from its experimental engagement with the tragedies of the era. The poem is not a "montón de tragedias" per se: true to Ercilla's eclecticism throughout, it engages with many other authors and genres and has a wide range of emotional tones, including even some comic vignettes. Three important strands, however, can be read as embedded engagements with tragedy, even if they are not limited to this: the betrayal of Andresillo leading to the defeat at Cañete, as analysed by Blanco; the Dido episode; and the final demise of Caupolicán. While Hermenegildo argued that the tragedies of this period were "moratas" rather than "pathéticas" because of their lack of verisimilitude and distancing effect on the spectator, these three episodes contain both varieties, and are predicated on verisimilitude of character and events: the two involving Caupolicán bring about cathartic reactions of pity and fear which are explicitly represented in the narrator himself, his projected readers and listeners, and the intradiegetic spectators, whereas Dido's is placed in a more didactic frame.

None of these "tragedies" are conventional, however. The Andresillo episode turns what should be the archetypal domain of epic, a major Spanish victory in battle, into the tragic climax and the main agent of catharsis. The Dido episode sets out to make a historiographic and poetic argument, like Lobo Lasso, then almost veers into a Viruesian tragedy of intrigue, secrecy and sacrilegious passions, before ending up exalting a Stoic heroine whose dominating virtues, her "fe" and "constancia", are paradoxically gendered feminine, placing her and her people in a Viruesian

bind which is nonetheless resolved without catastrophe in the transition to a republican polity. Thus, in a counterpart to the Andresillo episode, a story that early readers would likely be conditioned to read as a tragedy resolves as an epic, even though it is conspicuously lacking in warfare.

Fresia, who appears immediately after, is consumed with an unsexing rage. In her address to the imprisoned Caupolicán, by asking whether he remains "aquel varón" (33.77) of mighty deeds whose "mujer" she was (33.78), she effeminises him and divests herself of attributes of femininity, most notably motherhood. Referring to their son, she says,

Cría, críale tú que ese membrudo
cuerpo en sexo de hembra se ha trocado;
que yo no quiero el título de madre
del hijo infame del infame padre. (33.81)

Fresia is a character worthy of Neo-Senecan tragedy. She speaks "de furia y viva rabia llena" (33.76). Upon finishing her speech, whose octaves match those of similar speeches on the contemporary Spanish stage, she performs a horrific action.

Diciendo esto, colérica y rabiosa,
el tierno niño le arrojó delante,
y con ira frenética y furiosa
se fue por otra parte en el instante. (33.82)

She stands as a tragic heroine but Caupolicán, tellingly, does not.[13] His eventual fate is narrated, as Lucas Marchante-Aragón and Ricardo Padrón have pointed out to different effect, in a highly paradoxical way.[14] On the one hand, his feminisation through Fresia's castigation and through his impalement, which is figured as a kind of rape, is chilling and grotesque. On the other, he undergoes this suffering and ignominy with a serenity and impassivity which is in part the fruit of his baptism and in part that most Stoic of ideals, apathy: he ascends to the scaffold "sin mudanza y señal de sentimiento" (34.21). This elevates his punishment to the stature of the ultimate Stoic victory over passion and external perturbations, but one which reaches its culmination precisely when, like Dido and entirely unlike the conventional Stoic sage, he is gendered feminine. In all of these tragedies, the usual logic of *hamartia* and suffering is turned on its head, as neither Dido, Caupolicán nor Pran bear the primary *culpa* for the unravelling of events, but they are its principal victims.[15]

There are some common features in the twists to all these tragedies. Firstly, Ercilla implies that what would usually be the material for either a tragic or an epic *fábula* plays out rather differently in a polity which is republican or not conventionally monarchical, like Arauco or Carthage: hence, the victory at Cañete has a tragic colour, Dido's suicide preserves rather than destroys the city state, and Caupolicán's victory over passion only breeds further destructive anger and vengeance in Fresia and the rest of the Araucanians.[16] Secondly, his treatment of the passions differs from many of the Neo-Stoic tragedians, most notably from Virués. While for Virués the dominating tragic passion and flaw is that of *cupiditas*, that slippery lust for sex and for power which brings all his courtly edifices crashing down and means that the proximity of women to the throne, however virtuous, is *always* dangerous, Ercilla has an "Erasmian vision of love as conjugal, chaste and freely given" (Moore 36). As Choi analyses elsewhere ("La presencia oculta"), the dominating tragic passion in this part of *La Araucana* is instead one that is emblematically epic, but also seen as the worst of vices in Seneca's *De ira*: that of anger, whose lexis here is very extensive (*furor/furia*, *rabia*, *ira*, *furioso*, *cólerico*, *frenético*) and whose virtuous counterparts are clemency and compassion. Dido, Caupolicán and Ercilla master their anger and display a Stoic reason and clemency which divert the dramas they act in away from tragedy, but Andresillo, Fresia, Pygmalion, Iarbas, and most of the other Spaniards and Araucanians do not even try to overcome it.

The *tragedia del horror* of this period has usually been read through the lens of politics, but we argue that much of this politics cannot be understood without relation to gender. The same gendered dilemmas appear in Ercilla, but are resolved differently, in part as he pits a tragic vision of masculinity or femininity as consumed by passion against a Stoic one. The *Tercera parte* is, of course, fragmented, but this is far from being a mere product of accident, careless composition, and uncritical imitation. The many strands within the plot are densely and consistently tied together through an intratextual network of repetitions, images, and symbols, such as the image of the ship beset by storms, which recurs throughout. It is noteworthy that the tragedies embedded within the narrative do have a unified plot according to Aristotelian standards, with a clear beginning, middle and end. It is the surrounding epic framework, whose frequent figuration as an "estrecho camino" suggests a narrative teleology and destination, which is left incomplete and open-ended, like the conquest of Portugal or of Arauco, or only leads to a dead end, as in Ancud. One disconcerting implication here is that similar embedded tragedies may well continue to repeat themselves as the epic action continues. The whole of this third and last part of *La*

Araucana, in fact, undergoes a kind of peripeteia, veering at least emotionally if not structurally away from epic towards tragedy. At the outset, there is an optimistic overview of the Spanish advance but by the end, the narrator breaks down the epic distance and invites the reader to join him in a sharing of tears: "de aquí adelante / será razón que llore y que no cante" (37.76). Such an invitation, as Thomas Greene realizes, contains "that intuition of vulnerability and loss that can make a communion in sorrow conceivable" (196) across time, place and culture.

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NOTES

1 See Medina 140-59. Ercilla visited Catalonia and Aragon to accompany the Dukes of Brunswick in 1578, travelled to Portugal during the Philippian annexation, and was absent for another year which is as yet unaccounted for in 1585-86.

2 On the other hand, the two were contemporaries in the literary scene of Madrid and it is quite possible that they were acquainted. It seems that they shared at least one mutual acquaintance, Gabriel Lobo Lasso de la Vega, who boasted a laudatory sonnet from López Pinciano in his *De Cortés valeroso y Mexicana*. For another comparative discussion of the *Filosofía antigua poética* and *La Araucana*, see Firbas, 91-97. As Firbas points out, when it comes to epic, López Pinciano engages little if at all with contemporary innovations in the genre.

3 *Aprobaciones* were legally required to print a book in the Crown of Castile, but it was not mandatory to print them (García Aguilar 90-92).

4 Both *El Monserrate* and *Obras trágicas y líricas* were printed in Madrid. The former was financed by Blas de Robles, a prominent Madrid book seller, and the *aprobación* is penned by the prolific Pedro de Padilla, one of the mainstays of the Madrid literary scene in the 1580s.

5 In this light, it is perhaps worth noting that Lobo Lasso has not a word of praise for Virués in the aforementioned literary encyclopaedia, which according to María Heredia Mantis aims to construct a literary canon.

6 All references to the plays by Virués and Lobo Lasso contain line number preceded, when appropriate, by act number.

7 For an opposite take on women in power in Virués's tragedies, see McKendrick 69-71.

8 All references to Virgil's *Aeneid* are to book and line number.

9 Moore, somewhat bizarrely, reads the episode as a kind of surrogate "self-justification" (99) against Ercilla's own defamation during his imprisonment by García Hurtado de Mendoza in Chile and elevates it to being "the heart of the poem" (96). Weiss's two articles see Ercilla's use of this historical *exemplum* as a way of asserting narratorial authority and taking a "distanciamiento crítico, respecto de la expansión colonizadora" ("'Por raro ejemplo'" 190), and, more tenuously, critiquing Papal power and a providential view of empire.

10 It is worth noting here that Dido is not only the protagonist of two tragedies in this period, but a common reference point in others: Argensola compares the (otherwise very different) eponymous heroines of both his *Alejandra* and *Isabela* to Dido, for instance, suggesting that the figure acts as an emblem more generally for reflections on tragic heroines, chastity, and power.

11 Blanco ("Un episodio trágico") notes a similar structuring principle at work in the Andresillo episode.

12 The term also engages with Tasso's skepticism towards the existence of faith and loyalty among non-Christians: see Choi, "La presencia oculta," 89-95.

13 For another approach to the Fresia episode, which in passing also notes that Fresia's recollection of the "prenda desdichada" (33.80) that once united her and her husband evokes the "dulces prendas" of Virgil and Garcilaso's laments, see Legnani. In the context of our argument, this allusion shows Fresia as decisively different from either version of the Dido legend while also establishing a further intratextual link between the various female heroines: she is not the "amada desesperada" of Virgil, because she repudiates the emotional and social "prendas" that once bound her to her captured lover; but unlike Ercilla's Dido, she makes no effort to control her passionate anger.

14 For Padrón, the sterile rape of Caupolicán is the ultimate icon of the fruitlessness of the Spanish conquest in Chile (578), while for Marchante-Aragón it critiques the cruelty of the conquistadors while demonstrating that the desirable qualities of the Araucanian hero have been mystically "married" to the Spanish Crown and empire (175-76). We find the former reading more convincing, since there is nothing else in the text to indicate that Caupolicán's execution is anything other than counter-productive in the earthly realm; if he is mystically transported at the end, it is to an exclusive, transcendental union with God, not to the Spanish polity which has already rejected his offer of alliance.

15 Caupolicán warns the Spaniards that to kill him instead of accepting his offer of a pact "error sería" (34.10); the exordium castigating treachery makes it clear that neither Caupolicán nor Pran could have guarded against "la más fea maldad y condenada" (31.1) perpetrated by Andresillo.

16 For more on Ercilla's fascination with republicanism, see Choi (Sutton), "'De gente.'"

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