

Dottorato di Ricerca in

***Italianistica. La letteratura tra ambiti storico-geografici ed interferenze  
interdisciplinari***

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Sulle tracce di Didone.

Origini e sviluppo del mito: dalle fonti classiche al “primo dramma” di Pietro Metastasio.

**Abstract**

This is a in-depth study of the figure of the Queen of Carthage, bothin the myth and in the Italian literature, i.e. from the Classical Age up to the melodramatic development that are the kernel of Metastasio’s first opera (*La Didone abbandonata*, 1724).Here are the titles of the singles chapters:

- I) Didone: origini e connessioni del mito
- II) L’età d’oro del mito: la Didone di Virgilio e Ovidio
- III) Didone nella Patristica e nel Medio Evo: la ricezione del mito
- IV) Didone nella tradizione umanistica. Nel segno di Elissa: donne abbandonate, maghe e incantatrici
- V) Didone a corte e a teatro
- VI) Verso i fasti del melodramma

Starting from the fragments of Timaeus of Tauromenium, my analysis of Dido’s story uses bothsynchronic and diachronicapproaches to the sources, looking from different perspectives with a critical choice as regards the “historical” or “poetical” side of Dido’s death. If on one hand I investigate about the more famous version that since Virgil comes to Metastasio, on the other hand, moving from *Epitoma* of Justinus, great care is dedicated to the other version of the legend, where is brought to light the less know vulgate in which, aside from Aeneas, the Carthaginian queen appears as chaste and *amatrix univira*. Exactly on this version will build the fortune of Dido in the writings of patrology, in turn so important for the Latin works of Boccaccio.

In the first chapter, after a critical reflection about the double etymology of the two names used by Virgil (“Dido” and “Elissa: Semitic root in the first case >771 [N D D]Δειδὼ /double hypothesis >’ēl ’iššā [female deity] – ’ēl ’eš/’ēl ’eššā [“in the fire”]in the second case), the aim is to find elements of similarity and divergence between Dido and other famous women of the classical literature, such as Helen, Antigone, Nausicaa, Circe, Andromache, but the attention is also focused on the links between Didoand the figure of Arianna by Catullus, without forget some heroines of Seneca’s tragedies.

In the second chapter, the Virgilian text (books IV and VI of *Aeneid*) is analised in a methodological way based on the simultaneous comparison between the versions made by Annibal

Caro, Vittorio Alfieri and Rosa Calzecchi Onesti, sometimes adding Giovanni Pascoli's translation and comment. A paragraph is centered on the comments on Dido's episode in the Virgilian poem made by Fulgentius and Bernard de Silvestre, whose allegorical *integumenta* will be very important for Dante. My interest is also centered on the version *larmoyante* of the Dido story given by Ovidius at first in *Heroides VII*, but the survey also covers the others *loci* of Ovidian works where Dido/Elissa is quoted.

Departing from the comment by Servius (*Dido id est univira*), in the third chapter the aim of the research is to investigate how much luck, and in which terms not only poetic, but also ethical and moral, Dido had in the Patristic literature. Above all, for what will be the interpretation of Dante, are the critical readings by Jerome and, conversely, by Tertullian to be highlighted. With reference to Dante, in *Canto V* of *Inferno* if it is substantially kept the Virgilian *lectio* (and could not be otherwise, being Virgil to indicate Dido into the ranks of *lussuriosi*), it is interesting the assimilation of the Carthaginian queen with Cleopatra and Semiramis, also a founder of a city: the three women appear already united by Herennianus in the *Historia Augusta*. The interpretation of Dante's text is conducted using multiple comparisons with various comments (Jacopo Della Lana, Benvenuto da Imola, Pietro Alighieri, Alessandro Vellutello). The presence of Dido in Dante's works is as well discussed in relation to the *Rime petrose* (CIII), in the *Convivio* and the *De Monarchia*. Starting from the *Esposizioni sopra la Commedia*, the discussion moves to the presence of Dido in the work of Boccaccio. Dido appears as one of Boccaccio's beloved figure. As proof of what I have said we can see the name of Elissa, attributed to one of seven young women members of the «lieta brigata», as well the clear reminiscence of the IV book of the *Aeneid* related to the dedication of the «IV giornata» to the unhappy loves, where the series opens with the tragic «novella» of Ghismonda. Besides the obvious similarities between Dido/Ghismonda and Madonna Fiammetta in the homonymous *Elegia*, also for the direct influence of the Ovidian model, it is in the Latin works that Boccaccio most conspicuously deviates from the model by Virgil/Dante to recover in full the dignity of the «historical» condition of Dido's widowhood, in keeping with the Patristic tradition, as shown by widely in *Genealogia deorum gentilium*, *De claris mulieribus* and *De casibus virorum illustrium*. Even with regard to Petrarch, I have focused different relationships and the influence between the Virgilian hypotext and Petrarch's works both in *volgare* (*Trionfi*, *RVF*) and in Latin language (*Africa*, *Secretum*, *De remediis utriusque fortunae*, *Seniles*). In *Triumphus Pudicitie*, Petrarch, like Boccaccio shows preference for the interpretation of Dido's story practiced in the Patristic field, declaring Dante's / Virgil's reading worthy of the *volgo ignorante*.

In the fourth chapter, moving from the observations on the interpretation about Dante's *Comedia*, I analyze how much importance this reading has in the works and in the correspondence of Christopher Landino and Coluccio Salutati and Vegio Maffeo. Moreover, Dido's model (together with that of Medea and Circe) is crucial for the image of the witch and sorceress Armida in Tasso, after the previous of Ariosto's Alcina, acting in both cases the Carthaginian Queen's original reference to the figure of the woman who wants to distract the hero from his prescribed fate.

If in the fifth chapter I analyze the plays of the Renaissance in which the protagonist is Dido (1524, Alessandro Pazzi de' Medici, 1543, Giraldi Cinthio, 1547, Lodovico Dolce), in the sixth and final chapter I focus my attention on Busenello's *Didone* (thereby concentrating on various passages of Francesco Cavalli's 1641 opera) and finally on *Didone abbandonata*, Metastasio's 1724 masterpiece. Here are brought to light some classical sources and links, literary as well as musical.

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