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# Women's Networks in Vergil's *Aeneid*

Alison Keith

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- 1 Several episodes in Vergil's *Aeneid* portray female characters, both divine and human, soliciting aid and/or information from other female characters. Thus Juno seeks the help of Venus to consolidate a marriage alliance between Dido and Aeneas (4.90-128); she later summons the Fury Allecto to her assistance in order to rupture an imminent alliance between the Trojans and Italians (7.323-40); and Allecto duly reports back to the goddess about her successful disruption of friendly relations between the two peoples (7.540-71). Elsewhere in the poem Juno sends Iris disguised as the Trojan *matrona* Beroe to persuade the Trojan women to fire the ships (5.604-63) and she incites Juturna, in the last book of the poem, to break a treaty between the Trojans and Latins as it is being enacted (12.158-9). Entirely on the mortal level, Dido consults her sister Anna about the political consequences of her growing love for Aeneas (4.6-55), while Amata inflames the Latin women with her own hostility to the proposed marriage of her daughter Lavinia to the Trojan stranger (7.395-405).
- 2 These scenes have usually been discussed in relation to Greek and Latin literary models. The interview between Juno and Venus in *Aeneid* 4 (90-125), for example, has been recognized by Georg Knauer as alluding to the scene in which Hera requests the loan of Aphrodite's girdle in *Iliad* 14 (153-225),<sup>1</sup> and by Damien Nelis as also alluding to the visit Athena and Hera pay to Aphrodite in Apollonius' *Argonautica* (3.7-112).<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the scene in which Dido confides her love for Aeneas to her sister Anna has been shown to be modelled on passages in Apollonius' *Argonautica* in which Medea's sister Chalciope takes her into her confidence,<sup>3</sup> as well as the confidante scenes of Greek drama.<sup>4</sup> As Richard C. Monti has argued in connection with the Dido episode, however, "even after literary imitations are securely identified ... one must further consider how Vergil integrates the imitations into the ensemble of his poem,"<sup>5</sup> including the social and political values of the epic. This paper therefore reconsiders passages in the *Aeneid* in which female characters act in concert with other female characters by situating these

episodes in the context of the codes and conventions governing social relations among elite Roman women.

- 3 Let us begin with two passages in *Aeneid* 4, where first Dido and Anna and then Juno and Venus discuss the advisability of establishing a marriage alliance between Dido and Aeneas. The advantages of the union are considered by Dido and her sister Anna in a passage of remarkable subtlety at the outset of book four. Dido initiates the conversation by enumerating Aeneas' attractions as a prelude to admitting that she would consider remarriage with him (Verg. *Aen.* 4.10-23):

quis nouus hic nostris successit sedibus hospes,  
quem sese ore ferens, quam forti pectore et armis!  
credo equidem, nec uana fides, genus esse deorum.  
degeneres animos timor arguit. heu, quibus ille  
iactatus fatis! quae bella exhausta canebat!  
si mihi non animo fixum immotumque sederet  
ne cui me uinclo uellem sociare iugali,  
postquam primus amor deceptam morte fefellit;  
si non pertaesum thalami taedaeque fuisset,  
huic uni forsán potui succumbere culpa.  
Anna, fatebor enim, miseri post fata Sychaei  
coniugis et sparsos fraterna caede Penates  
solus hic inflexit sensus animumque labantem  
impulit.

[What a stranger has entered our halls here; how well he looks, how brave his bearing, how strong his arms! Indeed I believe – no vain credence! – he's sprung from the gods. Fear proves unworthy minds. Alas, buffeted by what fates! What wars he tells of having survived! If it were not my purpose – fixed and immovable – not to ally myself with anyone through marriage after first love failed me, deceived; if marriage chamber and torches didn't fill me with disgust; to this one reproach I could, perhaps, have yielded. For I confess, Anna – after the death of my poor husband Sychaeus, after our household gods were besmirched by his slaughter at the hands of our brother, this man alone has attracted my interest and drawn my wavering attention.]

- 4 Isidore of Seville quotes part of this speech (*Aen.* 4.11-14) when he discusses the criteria commonly used to assess possible husbands (*Et.* 9.7.28), and Susan Treggiari, in her exhaustive study of Roman marriage, has shown that his seventh-century CE discussion ultimately derives from Theophrastus' lost work on marriage (*de nuptiis*).<sup>6</sup> Despite the fact that these marriage criteria make their earliest recorded appearance in a classical Greek philosophical treatise (where Theophrastus apparently posed the question of whether the wise man would marry),<sup>7</sup> however, we have considerable evidence testifying to the currency of these criteria among Vergil's Roman contemporaries, both male and female.
- 5 Of particular interest is Plutarch's report (Plut. *Cato Min.* 30.2-4) of the reaction of Cato the Younger's womenfolk to Pompey's offer of a double marriage alliance in 62 BCE between Pompey himself and a Junia (niece of Cato and daughter of the consul D. Junius Silanus and Cato's half-sister Servilia) and between Pompey's eldest son and another Junia (also a daughter of Servilia and niece of Cato):

καὶ νομίζων οὐ μικρὰ προσπαίσειν τῷ Κάτωνι μὴ φίλῳ γενομένῳ, μετεπέμψατο Μουνάτιον, ἑταῖρον αὐτοῦ· καὶ δύο τοῦ Κάτωνος ἀδελφιδᾶς ἐπιγάμους ἔχοντος ἦται τὴν μὲν πρεσβυτέραν ἑαυτῷ γυναῖκα, τὴν δὲ νεωτέραν τῷ υἱῷ. τινὲς δὲ φασιν οὐ τῶν ἀδελφιδῶν, ἀλλὰ τῶν θυγατέρων τὴν μνηστεῖαν γενέσθαι. τοῦ δὲ Μουνατίου ταῦτα πρὸς τὸν Κάτωνα καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ τὰς ἀδελφὰς φράσαντος,

αἱ μὲν ὑπερηγάπησαν τὴν οἰκειότητα πρὸς τὸ μέγεθος καὶ τὸ ἀξίωμα τοῦ ἀνδρός, ὁ δὲ Κάτων οὐτ' ἐπισχὼν οὔτε βουλευσάμενος, ἀλλὰ πληγεὶς εὐθὺς εἶπε· 'βάδιζε, Μουνάτιε, βάδιζε, καὶ λέγε πρὸς Πομπήιον ὡς Κάτων οὐκ ἔστι διὰ τῆς γυναικωνίτιδος ἀλώσιμος, ἀλλὰ τὴν μὲν εὖνοιαν ἀγαπᾷ, καὶ τὰ δίκαια ποιοῦντι φιλίαν παρέξει πάσης πιστοτέραν οἰκειότητος, ὅμηρα δ' οὐ προήσεται τῇ Πομπήιου δόξῃ κατὰ τῇ πατρίδος.' Ἐπὶ τούτοις ἤχθοντο μὲν αἱ γυναῖκες...

[Thinking it no small problem for Cato to be unfriendly to him, Pompey summoned his (Cato's) friend Munatius, and proposed marriages with Cato's two nieces, the elder for himself, the younger for his son. But some say the proposed marriages were not with his nieces but his daughters. When Munatius revealed these plans to Cato along with his wife and sisters, the women were extremely enthusiastic about the connection because of the man's stature and worth, but Cato, horror-struck, said immediately, without holding back or thinking: "Go, Munatius, go and say to Pompey that Cato cannot be caught by the women's quarters, but although he loves his (Pompey's) good opinion, and will offer him, should he act justly, the most reliable friendship in the whole world, he will not deliver hostages to Pompey's honour against his country." At this reply the women were vexed.]<sup>6</sup>

- 6 It is striking that Plutarch includes Cato's female relatives in the earliest stages of the marriage negotiations, and that the women's enthusiasm for the alliance is credited to their assessment of Pompey's "stature and worth," the very criteria to which Dido appeals in her conversation with Anna. Although Plutarch ascribes the initial offer to Pompey and its final rebuff to Cato, his report lays bare to an unusual degree the extent of female interest and discussion that could be, and presumably often was, engendered by marriage negotiations.
- 7 If the sisterly confidences of Dido and Anna find a counterpart in the enthusiasm of Cato's kinswomen for the prospective marriages with Pompey and his eldest son, the machinations of Juno and Venus later in *Aeneid* 4 have many more parallels in contemporary accounts of elite Roman women's match-making. Vergil opens the scene with Juno's recognition of Dido's infatuation with the Trojan prince, which inspires her direct approach to Venus (Verg. *Aen.* 4.90-104):

Quam simul ac tali persensit peste teneri  
cara Iouis coniunx nec famam obstare furori,  
talibus adgreditur Venerem Saturnia dictis'...  
quin potius pacem aeternam pactosque hymenaeos  
exercemus? habes tota quod mente petisti:  
ardet amans Dido traxitque per ossa furorem.  
communem hunc ergo populum paribusque regamus  
auspiciis; liceat Phrygio servire marito  
dotalisque tuae Tyrios permittere dextrae.'

[As soon as Jove's dear wife perceived (Dido) to be in the grip of such affliction, her reputation no check on passion, the daughter of Saturn approached Venus with this suggestion: "... Why don't we rather set in motion eternal peace, arrange a marriage? You have what you sought wholeheartedly: Dido burns with love, has drawn passion into her very bones. And so let us rule this people in common, with equal augury; let Dido serve a Phrygian husband and entrust her dower of Tyrians to your right hand."]

- 8 Juno's proposal that she and Venus arrange a marriage between her protégée Dido and Venus' son Aeneas coheres interestingly with our considerable body of evidence for elite women's behind-the-scenes participation in marriage negotiations in late Republican and early Augustan Rome. We are comparatively well informed, for example, about the arrangements for the third marriage of Cicero's daughter Tullia in 51 BCE. In addition to the participation of those immediately concerned in the marriage

(Tullia herself and her parents), Cicero's correspondence reveals that he repeatedly tapped Atticus for help in the matter (Att. 5.17.4, 6.4.2) and that several others, both male and female, took a close interest in the progress of the negotiations, among them Cato's half-sister Servilia, who supported Ser. Sulpicius Rufus (the son of Cicero's friend the jurist) and was prepared to conduct the negotiations with him (Att. 5.17.4; Fam. 8.6.2; Att. 5.4.1, 6.1.10), and an otherwise unknown Pontidia from Arpinum who seems to have sponsored an Arpinate candidate from Cicero's "old gang" (Att. 5.21.14, 6.1.10).

- 9 In the event, however, Terentia and Tullia stole a march on Cicero (who was in Cilicia during the negotiations, governing the province) and all his intermediaries, for his letters informing them of his preferred candidate, Ti. Claudius Nero (who subsequently married Livia), arrived after an engagement party had already been celebrated for Tullia and Dolabella. An embarrassed Cicero had the unenviable task of communicating the news to App. Claudius Pulcher, his immediate predecessor as governor of Cilicia and the target of a prosecution by Dolabella (Cic. Fam. 3.12.2):

ego uero uelim mihi Tulliaeque meae, sicut tu amicissime et suauiissime optas, prospere euenire ea quae me insciente facta sunt a meis. ...in quo unum non uereor, ne tu parum perspicias ea quae gesta sint ab aliis esse gesta; quibus ego ita mandaram ut, cum tam longe afuturus essem, ad me ne referrent, agerent quod probassent. in hoc autem mihi illud occurrit: 'quid tu igitur si adfuisses?' rem probassem, de tempore nihil te inuito, nihil sine consilio egissem tuo.

[But I should wish the arrangements undertaken by my womenfolk (*a meis*) without my knowledge to turn out happily for me and my Tullia, as you wish in the friendliest and sweetest fashion... One thing in this regard I do not fear: namely that you wouldn't understand that what was arranged was undertaken by others; to whom, indeed, I entrusted matters so that, since I was going to be so far away, they need not refer matters to me but could act as they saw fit. But in this connection that caught me by surprise: "What then if you'd been present?" I would have approved the issue, as I had done nothing at the time against your will or without your advice.]

- 10 Treggiari comments that "my people," as she translates *a meis*, "must mean principally Tullia and her mother,"<sup>9</sup> and it is clear from Cicero's embarrassment after the fact that his wife and daughter both consulted and acted upon, in the first instance, their own preferences.
- 11 Treggiari observes that "matchmaking was at least as much a pursuit of a network of matrons as of thoughtful *patresfamilias*,"<sup>10</sup> and we can occasionally discern the outlines of some of these networks in our sources for the late Republic and early imperial period. In the so-called "Laudatio Turiae," for example, which relates events prior to and contemporary with Vergil's composition of the *Aeneid*, the bereaved husband praises his wife for providing dowries for her female relatives in order that they could be suitably married (ILS 8393 I.42-46):

[Liberali]tatem tuam c[u]m plurimis necessariis tum praecipue pietati praesti[tisti] domesticae. | [Feminas egregias licet facile qu]is alias nominaverit, unam dumtaxat simillimam [tui] | ..... [of]ficiis domibus vestris apud nos educavistis. Eaedem u[t] condicio | -nem dignam famili]ae vestrae consequi possent, dotes parastis:

[Your generosity you have manifested to many friends and particularly to your beloved relatives. On this point someone might mention with praise other women, but the only equal you have had has been your sister. For you brought up your female relations who deserved such kindness in your own houses with us. You also prepared marriage-portions for them so that they could obtain marriages worthy of your family.]<sup>11</sup>

- 12 Of interest here too is the implication that his wife acted in conjunction with her sister to secure appropriate marriages for their female relatives. The widower's ascription of exemplary domestic piety to his wife on this score illustrates the widespread social approval of women's informal networking in marriage negotiations. But he does not praise his wife's extension of this socially-sanctioned role when he reports that, upon proving infertile, she even offered to divorce him and find him a new wife to provide him with children (ILS 8393 II.41-49, 58-60):

Diffidens fecunditati tuae [et d]olens orbitate mea, ne tenen[do in matrimonio] | te  
spem habendi liberos [dep]onerem atque eius caussa ess[em infelix, de divertio] |  
elocuta es, vocuamque [do]mum alterius fecunditati t[e tradituram, non alia] |  
mente nisi ut nota con[co]rdia nostra tu ipsa mihi di[g]nam con[ ] | -dicionem  
quaereres p[ara]resque, ac futuros liberos t[e communes pro] | -que tuis habituram  
ad[firm]ares, neque patrimonii nos[tri, quod adhuc] | fuerat commune,  
separa[ti]onem facturam, sed in eodem [arbitrio meo id] | et si vellem tuo  
ministerio [fu]turum: nihil seiunctum, ni[his separatum te] | habituram, sororis  
soc[rusve] officia pietatemque mihi d[einceps praestitutam].

...

Tibi vero quid memorabi[lius] quam inserviando mihi o[peram dedisse te], | ut  
quom ex te liberos ha[b]ere non possem, per te tamen [habere et diffi] | -dientia  
partus tui alteriu[s c]oniugio parares fecunditat[em].

[When you despaired of your ability to bear children and grieved over my childlessness, you became anxious lest by retaining you in marriage I might lose all hope of having children and be distressed for that reason. So you proposed a divorce outright and offered to yield our house free to another woman's fertility. Your intention was in fact that you yourself, relying on our well-known conformity of sentiment, would search out and provide for me a wife who was worthy and suitable for me, and you declared that you would regard future children as joint and as though your own, and that you would not effect a separation of our property which had hitherto been held in common, but that it would still be under my control and, if I wished so, under your administration: nothing would be kept apart by you, nothing separate, and you would thereafter take upon yourself the duties and the loyalty of a sister and a mother-in-law.... But on your part, what could have been more worthy of commemoration and praise than your efforts in devotion to my interests: when I could not have children from yourself, you wanted me to have them through your good offices, and since you despaired of bearing children, to provide me with offspring by my marriage to another woman.]<sup>12</sup>

- 13 The activities the bereaved widower commends on the part of his dead wife have prompted not only discomfort but occasionally even disbelief among scholars. Historical parallels, however, can be found in the actions of another Roman matron at a rather more exalted social level as they are reported by Plutarch in his *Life of Antony*. Plutarch relates that at Octavia's instigation Agrippa put away her daughter Marcella to marry her niece Julia, Augustus' daughter, when the death of Octavia's son Marcellus in 23 BCE left Julia a (childless) widow and Augustus without male heirs (Plut. *Ant.* 87.2-3):

ἐκ δὲ Μαρκέλλου δυεῖν αὐτῇ θυγατέρων οὐσῶν, ἐνὸς δ' υἱοῦ Μαρκέλλου, τοῦτον μὲν ἅμα παῖδα καὶ γαμβρὸν ἐποίησατο Καῖσαρ, τῶν δὲ θυγατέρων Ἀγρίππα τὴν ἑτέραν ἔδωκεν. ἐπεὶ δὲ Μάρκελλος ἐτελεύτησε κομιδῇ νεόγαμος, καὶ Καῖσαρι γαμβρὸν ἔχοντα πίστιν οὐκ εὐπορον ἦν ἐκ τῶν ἄλλων φίλων ἐλέσθαι, λόγον ἢ Ὀκταουία προσήνεγκεν ὥς χρὴ τὴν Καίσαρος θυγατέρα λαβεῖν Ἀγρίππαν, ἀφέντα τὴν ἑαυτῆς. πεισθέντος δὲ Καίσαρος πρῶτον, εἴτ' Ἀγρίππου, τὴν μὲν αὐτῆς ἀπολαβοῦσα συγώκισεν Ἀντωνίῳ, τὴν δὲ Καίσαρος Ἀγρίππας ἔγημεν.

[By Marcellus Octavia had two daughters and one son, Marcellus, whom Caesar made both son and son-in-law, and he gave one of the daughters to Agrippa in marriage. But when Marcellus died shortly after the marriage and it was not easy

for Caesar to choose a trustworthy son-in-law from his other friends, Octavia suggested that Agrippa should take Caesar's daughter and divorce her own. First she persuaded Caesar and then Agrippa, and taking back her own daughter she married her to Antony's son while Agrippa married Caesar's daughter.]

- 14 Suetonius, by contrast, writes that the marriage of Julia to Agrippa was Augustus' idea, but he notes that the Princeps' conciliation of his sister was crucial to the arrangement (Suet. *Aug.* 63.1):

Iuliam primum Marcello Octaviae sororis suae filio tantum quod pueritiam egresso, deinde, ut is obiit, M. Agrippae nuptum dedit exorata sorore, ut sibi genero cederet; nam tunc Agrippa alteram Marcellarum habebat et ex ea liberos.

[He married Julia first to his sister Octavia's son Marcellus, who was scarcely more than a boy, and then after he died, to Marcus Agrippa, entreating his sister to yield him her son-in-law; for at the time Agrippa was married to one of her daughters by Marcellus and had children with her.]

- 15 Octavia's participation in the plans for her daughter Marcella's marriage to Antony's son Iullus Antonius, as well as the successful conclusion of Tullia's third marriage and the proposed father-son marriages of the Pompeys with the two Juniae, attests to the close interest and effective participation Roman women regularly showed in the matter of their female relatives' marriages, and provides a background of social practice against which to read not only Juno's plan to marry her favourite, Dido, to the Trojan exile Aeneas, but also the efforts of Amata to prevent her daughter Lavinia from marrying him in Book Seven.

- 16 Throughout *Aeneid* 7-12 Vergil portrays Amata as a mother intimately concerned with the arrangements for her daughter's marriage. He introduces Amata in connection with her daughter's proposed marriage to Turnus, whom she favours as a son-in-law (Verg. *Aen.* 7.54-57):

multi illam [sc. Laviniam] magno e Latio totaque petebant Ausonia; petit ante alios pulcherrimus omnis Turnus, avis atavisque potens, quem regia coniunx adiungi generum miro properabat amore;

[Many from great Latium and the whole of Ausonia sought her; handsomest of all her suitors was Turnus, eminent in ancestry, whose suit Latinus' wife urged with amazing passion.]

- 17 Later in the book, maternal feeling prompts her to take issue with Latinus' decision to marry Lavinia to Aeneas rather than to Turnus (Verg. *Aen.* 7.357-65):

mollius et solito matrum de more locuta est,  
multa super natae lacrimans Phrygiisque hymenaeis:  
"exsulibusne datur ducenda Lavinia Teucris,  
o genitor, nec te miseret nataeque tuique?  
nec matris miseret, quam primo Aquilone relinquet  
perfidus alta petens abducta virgine praedo?  
an non sic Phrygius penetrat Lacedaemona pastor,  
Ledaemque Helenam Troianas vexit ad urbes?

[She spoke more softly, in the way of mothers, as she wept over her daughter's marriage to a Phrygian: "Father, must Lavinia be wed to Trojan exiles? Have you no pity for yourself or your daughter? Have you none for her mother, whom the faithless brigand will abandon when the North wind blows and he seeks the deep, carrying off the maiden? Surely the Phrygian shepherd came to Sparta in just this way, and bore off Leda's Helen to Trojan cities?"]

- 18 When Latinus proves firm against her entreaties and shows no willingness to assuage her maternal anxieties, Amata acts to prevent her daughter's marriage to a man she regards as unsuitable (her assessment of Aeneas' character stands in striking contrast



to that of Dido at 4.10-23, quote above). Spiriting Lavinia into the woods in order to break up the contracted marriage, she dedicates her daughter to the god Bacchus (7.385-91). These actions draw the rest of the matrons from Latinus' city out into the woods (Verg. *Aen.* 7.392-403):

fama volat, furiisque accensas pectore matres  
idem omnis simul ardor agit nova quaerere tecta.  
deseruere domos, ventis dant colla comasque;  
ast aliae tremulis ululatibus aethera complent  
pampineasque gerunt incinctae pellibus hastas.  
ipsa inter medias flagrantem fervida pinum  
sustinet ac natae Turnique canit hymenaeos  
sanguineam torquens aciem, torvumque repente  
clamat: "io matres, audite, ubi quaeque, Latinae:  
si qua piis animis manet infelicis Amatae  
gratia, si iuris materni cura remordet,  
solvite crinalis vittas, capite orgia mecum."

[Rumours fly and the same desire prompts all the matrons, inflamed by passion in their breasts, to seek new homes. They desert their houses, bare necks and hair to the winds; some fill the sky with quavering cries and, wearing skins, take up vine-bound spears. She herself, in their midst, impetuously carries a flaming pine torch and hymns the wedding of Turnus and her daughter, rolling her blood-shot eyes, and suddenly calls out wildly: "Quick, Latin mothers, listen, wherever you are: if unhappy Amata has any remaining influence on your pious souls, if the care of a mother's right chafes you, loosen your headbands and take up the revels with me."]

- 19 The primary implications of this scene are the illicit contagion of Bacchic inspiration and the inevitable disruption of (Roman male) order provoked by the Latin women's unregulated activity. But the words Amata actually speaks in her feigned frenzy also seem to imply that another factor motivating the Latin matrons to join her cause is the assault on a Roman mother's traditional right to participate in the arrangement of her daughter's marriage. Antoinette Brazouski has therefore suggested that when Latinus "refuses to acknowledge the right of prenuptial consultation which [Amata here attempts] to exercise," the aggrieved queen mobilises the support of her fellow-matrons to uphold their maternal rights.<sup>13</sup> She further notes that "the idea that the women should band together in protest has historical counterparts,"<sup>14</sup> citing the intervention of the Sabine women, the first Roman wives, to end the war between their husbands and fathers (Livy 1.9-13).<sup>15</sup>
- 20 This historical example of matronal intervention into Roman public affairs certainly bears witness to the pattern we have been tracing in the *Aeneid* of the culturally sanctioned participation of elite women in match-making, even in taking a leading role in the marriage negotiations. But the proposed marriage between Aeneas and Lavinia, like the putative marriage between Aeneas and Dido earlier in *Aeneid* 4, entails an alliance not merely personal but primarily political, in that it will unite two peoples (Trojans and Latins).<sup>16</sup> Brazouski therefore invokes as comparanda to the Latin women's intervention in Lavinia's marriage arrangements both the political demonstration of the Roman matrons to repeal the Oppian Law in the aftermath of the Second Punic War in 195 BCE (Livy 34.1-8) and the political speech of Hortensia opposing the Triumvir's tax on wealthy Roman matrons in 43/42 BCE (App. *BC* 4.32-34), neither of which has any obvious relation to the codes and conventions of Roman marriage negotiations.<sup>17</sup> These examples of Roman women's political networking invite us to extend Brazouski's findings from the Amata episode to two other scenes in the



*Aeneid* in which women's networks intervene in the larger political and social affairs of the proto-Roman group.

- 21 In *Aeneid* 5, Vergil separates the Trojan men and women into two distinct, sex-segregated groups, locating the former at the funeral games for Anchises and the latter on the strand by the ships, where they lament Anchises' death and their own endless wanderings at sea (Verg. *Aen.* 5.613-15): *at procul in sola secretae Troades acta | amissum Anchisen flebant cunctaeque profundum | pontum aspectabant flentes* ("But separately, far away on the lonely shore the Trojan women bewailed the death of Anchises, and all in tears looked out over the deep sea"). The separation of the Trojan women from their menfolk sets the scene for Juno's mobilisation of a female network to prevent Aeneas' fleet from reaching Italy. Taking advantage of the women's isolation and resentment, the goddess commissions Iris to work mischief among them (Verg. *Aen.* 5.606-8): *Irim de caelo misit Saturnia Iuno | Iliacam ad classem ventosque adspirat eunti, | multa movens necdum antiquum saturata dolorem* ("Juno, daughter of Saturn, sent Iris down from heaven to the Trojan fleet and breathed fair winds to assist her progress, planning many a plot with her ancient grudge not yet sated"). Mingling with the Trojan women on the shore (*inter medias*, 5.618; *Dardanidum mediam se matribus infert*, 5.622), Iris disguises herself as Beroë (*fit Beroe, Tmarii coniunx longaeua Dorycli*, 5.620) and urges them in an impassioned speech to act on their resentment by firing the ships (5.623-40).

- 22 Despite what Vergil represents as the intrinsic appeal of the disguised Iris' speech (cf. 5.615-17), one of the Trojan matrons tries to offer resistance to the goddess' proposal in words that evoke the domestic norms that likely characterized the majority of women's networking relations in ancient Rome (Verg. *Aen.* 5.644-52):

... hic una e multis, quae maxima natu,  
Pyrgo, tot Priami natorum regia nutrix:  
'non Beroe uobis, non haec Rhoeteia, matres,  
est Dorycli coniunx; diuini signa decoris  
ardentisque notate oculos, qui spiritus illi,  
qui uultus uocisque sonus uel gressus eunti.  
ipsa egomet dudum Beroen digressa reliqui  
aegram, indignantem tali quod sola careret  
munere nec meritos Anchisae inferret honores.'

[Hereupon one of the women, who was eldest by birth, Pyrgo, royal nurse of Priam's many children, said: 'This is not your Beroe, mothers, this is not the Trojan wife of Doryclus; look at the signs of divine beauty, her burning eyes, what divine afflatus she has, what visage, sound of voice, her gait as she walks. I myself just parted from Beroe, left her sick and complaining because she alone would miss such a tribute and not pay Anchises the funerary honours he deserved.']

- 23 Despite her appeal to female solidarity (*matres*, 5.646) in the domestic detail of Beroë's sickness (5.650-61), Pyrgo fails to mobilize the rest of the female group, her resistance easily overborne by the matrons' passions as Iris' appeal to baser female instincts carries the day (Verg. *Aen.* 5.643-4, 654-63):

... arrectae mentes stupefactaque corda  
Iliadum ...  
at matres primo ancipites oculisque malignis  
ambiguae spectare rates miserum inter amorem  
praesentis terrae fatisque vocantia regna,  
cum dea se paribus per caelum sustulit alis  
ingentemque fuga secuit sub nubibus arcum.  
tum vero attonitae monstribus actaeque furore

conclamant rapiuntque focis penetralibus ignem;  
 pars spoliant aras, frondem ac virgulta facesque  
 coniciunt. furit immissis Volcanus habenis  
 transtra per et remos et pictas abiete puppis.

[The Trojan women's attention was roused, their hearts bewildered... But at first the mothers were of two minds as they looked at the ships with baleful eyes, caught between their pitiable love for the present land and for the kingdom summoning them by destiny, when the goddess, supporting herself on balanced wings in the sky, cut a huge rainbow under the clouds in her flight. But then, astonished by prodigies and driven on by passion they cried out and snatched up fire from the inner hearths; others despoiled the altars and threw foliage, twigs and firebrands (into the ships). Fire raged out of control through the thwarts, oars and painted pinehulls.]

- 24 Female interference in the proto-Roman mission here extends from Juno's commission of Iris, through the disguised Iris' exhortation to the Trojan women to fire the ships (including her invocation of the Trojan prophetess Cassandra as vatic guarantor of their action, 5.636-8), to the women's collective action in response to divine intervention.

- 25 The Trojan women are only brought to their senses and disavow their Junonian passion when they find themselves facing battle-lines of Trojan warriors, as the youths trained by Ascanius in the manoeuvres of the "Trojan game" (5.545-603) abandon their rehearsal for battle to engage in a real confrontation with the ranks of women who have challenged their authority (Verg. *Aen.* 5.675-9):

accelerat simul Aeneas, simul agmina Teucrum.  
 ast illae diversa metu per litora passim  
 diffugiunt silvasque et sicubi concava furtim  
 saxa petunt; piget incepti lucisque, suosque  
 mutatae agnoscunt, excussa pectore Iuno est.

[Aeneas ran up too, and the Trojan ranks at the same time. But the women fled in fear, this way and that over the shores, furtively seeking woods and hollow rocks anywhere; they hate their undertaking and the light and, changed, they recognise their relatives as Juno was knocked from their breasts.]

- 26 Elsewhere I have argued that this confrontation "thematically pairs civil conflict with conflict between the sexes,"<sup>18</sup> but the threat to the nascent Roman order is short-lived as the women's insurrection is contained by male military action. Male military (and later political) networks overcome the women's destructive plotting here – not least, Vergil implies, because male networks embody order, women's chaos.

- 27 Here we may adduce as a parallel Aulus Gellius' explanation for the exclusion of women from the Republican senate, a legend that similarly evokes political conflict between the sexes in the early Roman state (Aul. Gell. *Noct. Att.* 1.23):

Historia de Papirio Praetextato dicta scriptaque est a M. Catone in oratione, qua usus est *ad milites contra Galbam*, cum multa quidem uenustate atque luce atque munditia uerborum. Ea Catonis uerba huic prorsus commentario indidissem, si libri copia fuisset id temporis, cum haec dictaui. Quod si non uirtutes dignitatesque uerborum, sed rem ipsam scire quaeris, res ferme ad hunc modum est: Mos antea senatoribus Romae fuit in curiam cum praetextatis filiis introire. Tum, cum in senatu res maior quaequam consultata eaque in diem posterum prolata est, placuitque, ut eam rem, super qua tractauissent, ne quis enuntiaret, priusquam decreta esset, mater Papirii pueri, qui cum parente suo in curia fuerat, percontata est filium, quidnam in senatu patres egissent. Puer respondit tacendum esse neque id dici licere. Mulier fit audiendi cupidior; secretum rei et silentium pueri animum eius ad inquirendum euerberat quaerit igitur compressius uiolentiusque. Tum puer

matre urgente lepidi atque festiui mendacii consilium capit. Actum in senatu dixit, utrum uideretur utilius exque republica esse, unusne ut duas uxores haberet, an ut una apud duos nupta esset. Hoc illa ubi audiuit, animus compauescit, domo trepidans egreditur ad ceteras matronas. Peruenit ad senatum postridie matrumfamiliascaterua; lacrimantes atque obsecrantes orant, una potius ut duobus nupta fieret, quam ut uni duae. Senatores ingredienti in curiam, quae illa mulierum intemperies et quid sibi postulatio istaec uellet, mirabantur. Puer Papirius in medium curiae progressus, quid mater audire institisset, quid ipse matri dixisset, rem, sicut fuerat, denarrat. Senatus fidem atque ingenium pueri exosculatur, consultum facit, uti posthac pueri cum patribus in curiam ne introeant, praeter ille unus Papirius, atque puero postea cognomentum honoris gratia inditum 'Praetextatus' ob tacendi loquendique in aetate praetextae prudentiam.

[The story of Papirius Praetextatus was told and committed to writing in the speech which Marcus Cato made *To the soldiers against Galba*, with great charm, brilliance and elegance of diction. I should have included Cato's own words in this very commentary, if I had had access to the book at the time when I dictated this extract. But if you would like to hear the bare tale, without the noble and dignified language, the incident was about as follows: It was formerly the custom at Rome for senators to enter the House with their sons under age. In those days, when a matter of considerable importance had been discussed and was postponed to the following day, it was voted that no one should mention the subject of the debate until the matter was decided. The mother of the young Papirius, who had been in the House with his father, asked her son what the Fathers had taken up in the senate. The boy replied that it was a secret and that he could not tell. The woman became all the more eager to hear about it; the secrecy of the matter and the boy's silence piqued her curiosity; she therefore questioned him more pressingly and urgently. Then the boy, because of his mother's insistence, resorted to a witty and amusing falsehood. He said that the senate had discussed the question whether it seemed more expedient, and to the advantage of the State, for one man to have two wives or one woman to have two husbands. On hearing this, she is panic-stricken, rushes excitedly from the house, and carries the news to the other matrons. Next day a crowd of matrons came to the senate, imploring with tears and entreaties that one woman might have two husbands rather than one man two wives. The senators, as they entered the House, were wondering at this strange madness of the women and the meaning of such a demand, when young Papirius, stepping forward to the middle of the House, told in detail what his mother had insisted on hearing, what he himself had said to her, in fact, the whole story exactly as it had happened. The senate paid homage to the boy's cleverness and loyalty, but voted that thereafter boys should not enter the House with their fathers, save only this Paprius; and the boy was henceforth honoured with the surname Praetextatus, because of his discretion in keeping silent and in speaking, while he was still young enough to wear the purple-bordered gown].<sup>19</sup>

- 28 This anecdote represents the women of mid-Republican Rome, like Vergil's Trojan women in *Aeneid* Five, isolated from their menfolk and addressing a political issue that alienates them from their husbands and sons; moreover, it similarly illustrates the folly of extending to women any opportunity to play an active role in political decision-making. Judy Hallett notes that "[s]cholars generally question the plausibility and historicity of this tale [in Gellius]; also suspect are the similarities between its scenario – with its greedy women, eager for 'husbands other than their own' – and that of Livy 34.1ff., describing Cato's reaction to and interpretation of the protest demonstration over the Lex Oppia."<sup>20</sup> Yet whatever the historical value of Livy's report of the repeal of the Oppian Law or Aulus Gellius' anecdote, both narratives testify to Roman cultural expectations concerning elite Roman matronal intervention into affairs of state in the

Republican period. These authors' representation of the contexts of elite women's participation in questions of public moment are, naturally, informed by the social and political conditions of the late Republic and triumviral periods, in Livy's case, and those of the Principate in Gellius'; both of which are relevant to an investigation of the social and political values associated with women's activities in Vergil's epic.

- 29 Other anecdotes from the civil wars of the triumviral period, perhaps of more plausible historical veracity (though perhaps not), likewise demonstrate how effectively elite women acted, often in political affairs, when they worked through female channels and remained behind the scenes. For example Dio reports that through the aid of Octavia, who interceded with her brother, a certain Tanusia, whose husband had been proscribed by the Triumvirs, was able to save him from Octavian's fellow Triumvirs (Dio 47.7.4-5):

τεκμήριον δέ, Τανουσία γυνὴ ἐπιφανὴς τὸν ἄνδρα Τίτον Οὐίνιον ἐπικηρυχθέντα τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ἐς κιβωτὸν παρὰ ἀπελευθέρῳ τινὶ Φιλοποίμενι κατέκρυπεν, ὥστε καὶ πίστιν τοῦ τεθνηκέναι αὐτὸν παρασχεῖν· μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο δημοτελῇ ἐορτῇ, ἣν συγγενὴς τις αὐτῆς ποιήσῃν ἔμελλε, τηρήσασα, τὸν τε Καίσαρα διὰ τῆς Ὀκταουΐας τῆς ἀδελφῆς ἐς τὸ θέατρον μόνον τῶν τριῶν ἐσελθεῖν διεπράξατο, κἀνταῦθα ἐσπηδήσασα τό τε πραχθὲν ἀγνοοῦντί οἱ ἐμήνυσε, καὶ τὴν κιβωτὸν αὐτὴν ἐσκομίσασα ἐκείθεν τὸν ἄνδρα ἐξήγαγεν, ὥστε τὸν Καίσαρα θαυμάσαντα πάντας μὲν αὐτοὺς ἀφεῖναι (καὶ γὰρ τοῖς συγκρύψασί τινα θάνατος προεῖρητο), τὸν δὲ Φιλοποίμενα καὶ ἐς τὴν ἱππᾶδα κατατάξαι.

[For example Tanusia, a woman of rank, at first hid her husband Titus Vinius, who had been proscribed, in a chest at the house of a freedman named Philopoemen so as to give the impression that he had been killed. After this she waited for a popular festival, which one of her relatives was to present, and through the influence of Caesar's sister Octavia brought it about that Caesar alone of the triumvirs entered the theatre. Then she rushed in and informed him of her deed, of which he was still ignorant, brought in the chest itself and produced from it her husband. Caesar, astonished, released all of them – for death was also prescribed for those who concealed anyone – and enrolled Philopoemen in the equestrian order.]

- 30 Here Tanusia draws not only on women's channels – in her plot with Octavia – but also on networks of patronage and kin, in her recourse to the freedman Philopoemen and her wealthy kinsman. Another, better known, incident from the period, the Triumvirs' tax on the 1400 richest Roman *matronae* which occasioned Hortensia's celebrated and effective speech, came about because of a failure of the women's network to function in its properly discreet fashion (App. BC 4.32):

Καὶ τοῦτο ἐς τὸν δῆμον εἰπόντες προύγραφον χιλίας καὶ τετρακοσίας γυναῖκας, αἱ μάλιστα ἀπλούτῳ διέφερον· καὶ αὐτὰς ἔδει, τὰ ὄντα τιμωμένας, ἐσφέρειν ἐς τὰς τοῦ πολέμου χρεῖας, ὅσον ἐκάστη νοῖ τρεῖς δοκιμάσειαν. ἐπέκειτό τεταῖς ἀποκρυψαμέναις τιτῶν ὄντων, ἢ τιμησαμέναις κακῶς ἐπιτίμια καὶ τοῖς ταῦτα μηνύουσιν ἐλευθέροις τε καὶ δούλοις μήνυτρα. αἱ δὲ γυναῖκες ἔκριναν τῶν προσηκουσῶν τοῖς ἄρχουσι γυναικῶν δεσθῆναι. τῆς μὲν δὲ Καίσαρος ἀδελφῆς οὐκ ἀπετύγχανον, οὐδὲ τῆς μητρὸς Ἀντωνίου· Φουλβίας δὲ, τῆς γυναικὸς Ἀντωνίου, τῶν θυρῶν ἀπωθούμεναι χαλεπῶς τὴν ὕβριν ἤνεγκαν, καὶ ἐς τὴν ἀγορὰν ἐπὶ τὸ βῆμα τῶν ἀρχόντων ὥσάμεναι, δισσαμένων τοῦ τεδήμου καὶ τῶν δορυφόρων, ἔλεγον, Ὅρτησίᾳς ἐς τοῦτο προκεχειρισμένης...

[The triumvirs addressed the people on this subject and published an edict requiring 1400 of the richest women to make a valuation of their property, and to furnish for the service of the war such portion as the triumvirs should require from each. It was provided further that if any should conceal their property or make a false valuation they should be fined, and that rewards should be given to informers,

whether free persons or slaves. The women resolved to beseech the women-folk of the triumvirs. With the sister of Octavian and the mother of Antony they did not fail, but they were repulsed from the doors of Fulvia, the wife of Antony whose rudeness they could scarce endure. They then forced their way to the tribunal of the triumvirs in the forum, the people and the guards dividing to let them pass. There, through the mouth of Hortensia, whom they had selected to speak, they spoke as follows...]<sup>21</sup>

- 31 When Hortensia and her fellow-matrons discreetly approached the Triumvirs' female relations, they made appropriate use of the women's network that was unofficially and informally empowered to effect political pressure in ancient Rome. By contrast, Fulvia's purported rudeness to their overtures (no doubt recorded and amplified in Octavian's anti-Antonian propaganda) constitutes a breakdown in social propriety that legitimates the women's otherwise inappropriate invasion of the public (male) space of the Forum to make their case before the Triumvirs' tribunal.
- 32 The histories of Dio and Appian include several references to the part that elite Roman women played in the political manoeuvring of the period and offer valuable evidence against which to interpret the women's networks and their effective manipulation of events to disrupt and delay the Trojans' destiny in Vergil's *Aeneid*. The thoroughgoing imbrication of gender conflict in the political struggles that led to the foundation of Rome – as it is memorialised in the poem – implies both distaste for and distrust of female participation in political decision-making. At the same time, however, Vergil's thematization of gender conflict at the heart of proto-Roman social and political conflict also reflects the widespread practice of elite women's participation in the social and political life of triumphal Rome and anticipates its public emergence in the Principate.<sup>22</sup> In this regard it is perhaps significant that although Octavian broke off relations with Antony in 32 BCE (not least because of Antony's insults to that paragon of Roman matronal virtue, Octavia), his declared foe when their forces finally engaged one another in 31 BCE at the Battle of Actium was not Antony but Cleopatra, whose open exercise of regal power posed such a serious threat to the culturally-sanctioned codes and conventions through which elite Roman women's networks functioned.

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## NOTES

1. Knauer 1964.386.
2. Nelis 2001.146-8.
3. Nelis 2001.136-46.
4. Heinze 1915.126; D'Anna 1984.180; Cairns 1989.135.
5. Monti 1981.1.
6. Treggiari 1991.36, citing Isid. Et. 9.7.28-9 and de ecclesiasticis officiis 2.20, de coniugatis.
7. Treggiari 1991.86-7.
8. Cf. Plut. Pomp. 44.2-3: θαυμάσας δὲ τὴν παρρησίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν τόνον, ὃς μόνος ἐχρῆτο φανερώς ὑπὲρ τῶν δικαίων, ἐπεθύμησεν ἁμῶς γέ πως οἰκειώσασθαι τὸν ἄνδρα· καὶ δεῖν οὐσῶν ἀδελφιδῶν τῷ Κάτωνι, τὴν μὲν αὐτὸς ἐβούλετο λαβεῖν γυναικᾶ, τὴν δὲ τῷ παιδί συνοικίσαι. Τοῦ δὲ Κάτωνος ὑπιδომένου τὴν πεῖραν, ὃς διαφθορὰν οὔσαν αὐτοῦ τρόπον τινὰ δεκαζομένου διὰ τῆς οἰκειότητος, ἥ τ' ἀδελφὴ καὶ ἡ γυνὴ χαλεπῶς ἔφερον, εἰ Πομπήιον Μάγνον ἀποτρίψεται κηδεστήν (Admiring the outspokenness and intensity which he [Cato] alone employed openly in the service of justice, [Pompey] desired somehow or other to conciliate the man. And seeing that Cato had two nieces, he wanted to take one to wife for himself and marry the other to his son. Cato viewed the attempt with suspicion, as if it meant his corruption, being bribed in some way through the relationship, but his sister and wife took it badly when he rejected the marriage connection with Pompey the Great.)
9. Treggiari 1991.128-9.
10. Treggiari 1991.117-18.
11. Translation from Fant and Lefkowitz 1992.136.
12. Translation from Fant and Lefkowitz 1992.138-139.
13. Brazouski 1991.133.
14. Brazouski 1991.134.
15. Brazouski 1991.136 n. 32.
16. On the political aspects of the "marriage" between Dido and Aeneas, see Monti 1981.30-36.
17. Brazouski 1991.136 n. 32.
18. Keith 2000.70.
19. Translation from Rolfe 1927.105-109.
20. Hallett 1984.205. Hallett 1984.205.
21. Translation from White 1913.195.
22. Cf. Milnor 2005.

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## ABSTRACTS

Several episodes in Vergil's Aeneid portray female characters, both divine and human, soliciting aid and/or information from other female characters. These scenes have usually been discussed in relation to Greek and Latin literary models. This study reconsiders these episodes by situating them in the context of the codes and conventions governing social relations among elite Roman women and argues that Vergil's thematization of gender conflict at the heart of proto-Roman social and political conflict both reflects the widespread practice of elite women's participation in the social and political life of triumviral Rome and anticipates its public emergence in the Principate.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** Vergil's Aeneid, women in literature, women in antiquity

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