

**“Where am I now?”: The Articulation of Space in Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and
Marlowe’s *Dido, Queen of Carthage***

Along with *The Massacre at Paris*, *Dido, Queen of Carthage* has traditionally been one of the more neglected plays of Marlowe’s oeuvre. Apparently written during the playwright’s university years (quite possibly with the help of Thomas Nashe),¹ and retelling as it does the events of Books One and Four of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, *Dido* has often been treated as closer to an academic exercise in dramatic translation than a play that can stand alongside the more universally acknowledged achievements of Marlowe’s career. Despite this, readings of the play conducted since the mid-1990s have shown it to be considerably more complex than previously acknowledged. Astute new historicist and postcolonial readings have shown that the play simultaneously engages in and interrogates the legitimisation of colonial power through association with mytho-historical antecedents. At a time when Elizabethan England was attempting to establish an intellectual framework for its initial forays into colonial expansion in Ireland and the New World, Marlowe’s play re-imagines a formative moment in the Roman empire’s mythical foundation by adapting a section of an epic Roman poem that was itself a legitimising tool for the first emperor, Augustus.² In the play, Troy is a site which generates legitimacy; it is made unambiguously clear that the city in Italy which Aeneas will

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¹ For an account of the scholarly debate surrounding the extent of Nashe’s involvement in the writing of the play, and a rejection of the tendency to conceive of *Dido* as a university play, see Martin Wiggins, “When did Marlowe Write *Dido, Queen of Carthage*?”, *The Review of English Studies* 59.241 (2008), 521–41, 524–6. Throughout the essay I will, as a matter of convenience, refer to the author as “Marlowe”, but in doing so do not deny the likelihood of the hand of Nashe or other authors being present in the playtext.

² On the play’s engagement with narratives of empire, see Emily Bartels, *Spectacles of Strangeness: Imperialism, Alienation and Marlowe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 29–52 and Margo Hendricks, “Managing the Barbarian: The *Tragedy of Dido, Queen of Carthage*”, *Renaissance Drama* 23 (1992), 165–88. For recent considerations of the play’s relationship with Virgil’s *Aeneid* see Timothy Crowley, “Arms and the Boy: Marlowe’s Aeneas and the Parody of Imitation in Marlowe’s *Dido, Queen of Carthage*,” *English Literary Renaissance* 38.3 (2008), 408–38 and Emma Buckley, ““Live, false Aeneas!”: Marlowe’s *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and the Limits of Translation,” *Classical Receptions Journal*, 3.2 (2011), 129–47.

go on to establish will not just be Rome, but also a new Troy, already benefiting from the mythological heritage of that great lost city.

In this essay, I build on such readings of the play by considering it in spatial terms.

Considering first Shakespeare's *King Lear* as an illustrative example of the mimetic flexibility of the bare stage space, I will go on to show how this flexibility is put to complex uses in Marlowe's *Dido* which deepen further the examination of how later powers absorb mythical Troy as a legitimising ancestor.³ In a play in which space is markedly indefinite, Aeneas, charged with the divinely sponsored task of relocating Troy to Italy, repeatedly evokes his homeland and speaks vividly of its presence. At certain stages, dramatic action gives way to richly detailed and precisely located narratives, such as Aeneas's account of the fall of Troy. On a predominantly bare stage that relies on dialogue in order to be invested with spatial significance, Troy becomes a malleable, mobile entity which can be brought onto the stage space, in the same way that it was assimilated into historico-political discourses as a legitimising ancestor for aspirant colonial powers like Elizabethan England. This essay argues that the instability of the Elizabethan stage – its capacity to absorb multiple spatial identities – provides a uniquely apt set of conditions for a play that is so fascinated with the transplantation of physical space.

Articulating Space

³ At several points in this essay I refer to the early modern stage as 'bare'. In doing so I denote the absence of fixed stage scenery that might be used to visually establish a fixed sense of location. I do not mean to suggest, however, that the stage was *literally* clear; occasional props were used, and along with costume would have had the capacity to carry spatial significance. Importantly, though, these features were mobile and their capacity for signification was flexible.

Early modern theatre-going was a practice which required an active imagination. This much is explicitly stated in the famous chorus to Shakespeare's *Henry V*, which offers a metadramatic account of both the limitations and opportunities presented by the task of representing expansive space on a small stage. Having posed the question of whether the theatre can contain "The vasty fields of France" (Prologue. 12),⁴ the chorus offers a useful solution; the stage cannot hold these vast spaces, but must instead be transformed into them by the imaginative faculties of the audience:

Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts
[...] Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them
Printing their proud hoofs in the receiving earth;
(Prologue. 23, 26-7)

For the chorus, watching a play works on the imagination in a similar manner to reading a book; the mind's eye is invited to respond to verbal prompts by seeing what is not physically there.⁵ It is the words of the actors that turn the wooden stage into obliging soil, in the same way that they indicate the artificially swift passage of time.

In dwelling on this issue, Shakespeare, knowingly or otherwise, engages with Philip Sidney, who in his *Defence of Poesy* had been dismissive of theatre as a medium for the reasons raised by the choruses of *Henry V* and *Pericles*:

you shall have Asia of the one side, and Afric of the other, and so many other under-kingdoms, that the player, when he cometh in, must ever begin with telling where he is, or else the tale will not be conceived? Now you shall have three ladies walk to gather flowers: and then we must believe the stage to be a garden. By and by we hear news of shipwreck in the same place: and then we are to blame if we accept it not for a rock. Upon the back of that comes out a hideous monster with fire and smoke: and then the miserable beholders are bound to take it for a cave. While in the meantime two armies fly in,

⁴ William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, ed. A. R. Humphries (London: Penguin, 1996). All subsequent quotations from the play will be taken from this edition.

⁵ Richard Meek, in his book examining narrative in Shakespeare, suggests that "Dramatic works are always to some extent reliant upon the imagination of their audiences; and this is something that the narrative passages in Shakespeare's plays - which explicitly ask their audiences and readers to visualise absent places, events and works of art - invite us to consider." See *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 25.

represented with four swords and bucklers: and then what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field? (1270-80)⁶

Sidney's credulity is stretched by the conventions of theatre, which require that one small actual space be made to signify, through the use of various verbal and visual signals, a number of different fictional spaces, either simultaneously or one after the other. But this account does as much to reveal the mimetic possibilities of the stage as it does to flag up its limitations. A number of critics over the last century have discussed the possibilities presented by the bare stage; M. C. Bradbrook, for example, offers an account of Elizabethan stage conditions that has them operating according to a felicitous kind of chaos:

The chief characteristic of the public stage seems to be its neutrality, and its corresponding virtue, flexibility ... The flexibility which we have noted was at once an invitation to licence. Time and place could be neglected or telescoped to serve a dramatic purpose.⁷

According to Bradbrook's model, the undesignated space of the stage offers the potential for a virtually endless range of spatial signification. Stanley Vincent Longman uses the term 'fluid stage' to encapsulate the possibilities of this kind of theatrical practice:

If the fixed stage maintains its confines inviolate throughout the play, the fluid stage deliberately shatters them, so that the time and place of action are in constant flux. We are now here, now there. The fluid stage is essentially a *platea*, a generalized acting area. The principle behind the *platea* is the collaboration of the audience in ascribing an imaginary place to the acting area.⁸

Mariko Ichikawa characterises the early modern stage in a similar manner, also emphasising the cooperation and imaginative work required of the audience.⁹ The most obvious advantage of the fluid stage is that it allows for significant adjustments in space and time in between scenes. Despite Sidney's objections, the combination of location-specific dialogue and an

⁶ Sir Philip Sidney, "The Defence of Poesy", in *The Major Works*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 212-51.

⁷ M. C. Bradbrook, *Elizabethan Stage Conditions: A Study of their Place in the Interpretations of Shakespeare's Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 30-1.

⁸ Stanley Vincent Longman, "Fixed, Floating and Fluid Stages", in James Redmond, ed., *Themes in Drama: The Theatrical Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 151-60, 157.

⁹ Mariko Ichikawa, *The Shakespearean Stage Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 154.

audience willing to invest in the dramatic illusion means that an early modern play can quite freely end one scene in Afric and begin the next in Asia, without needing to alter the appearance of the stage.

It is clear, then, that the verbal designation of space and the cooperation of an imaginative audience are practical necessities in a theatre that lacks realistic and quickly changeable scenery. They allow the events of a play to take place in various fictional locations. But what if the “fluid stage”, to borrow Longman’s term again, allows for more complicated, more creative, manipulation of space? Since the establishment of location is dependent upon the interpretative work of the audience, might the fluid stage, as well as facilitating the change of location from one scene to the next, be used to produce deliberately vague sense of space, to facilitate the transformation of space mid-scene, or even to signify multiple locations simultaneously? If theatrical space is designated verbally, might it not share some of the slipperiness and multiplicity of language? Tim Fitzpatrick gestures towards possibilities such as these by suggesting that the nomination of stage doors in Act II of *Macbeth* (as either the door to Duncan’s chamber or the south entry) instantaneously alters the space signified by the stage, to the point that it “can establish two places (almost) at once.”¹⁰ While Fitzpatrick’s interest is primarily in the practical challenge of denoting the movement of characters to and from multiple locations when only two stage doors are available, his reading of the scene nonetheless implies that audiences would have been comfortable with a designation of stage space that was capable of shifting and redefining itself in mid-scene.

King Lear and the Fluid Stage

¹⁰ Tim Fitzpatrick, *Playwright, Space and Place in Early Modern Performance: Shakespeare and Company* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 97.

A famous scene which takes advantage of the potential ambiguity of verbally designated stage space occurs in *King Lear*, when Edgar plays a benevolent trick on the blind Gloucester. Having been asked by his father to lead him to the edge of “a cliff whose high and bending head / Looks fearfully in the confined deep” (IV. 1. 68-9),¹¹ Edgar acts as a guide, talking Gloucester through the journey. At first Gloucester is sceptical of the information fed to him:

GLOUCESTER: When shall I come to th’ top of that same hill?

EDGAR: You do climb up it now; look how we labour.

GLOUCESTER: Methinks the ground is even. (IV. 5. 1-3)

Gloucester’s doubts are soon swept aside, however, by Edgar’s virtuosic description of the cliff-edge that they have apparently reached:

Come on, sir, here’s the place. Stand still. How fearful
And dizzy ’tis to cast one’s eyes so low!
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
Show scarce so gross as beetles. Halfway down
Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade!
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.
The fishermen that walk upon the beach
Appear like mice, and yond tall anchoring bark
Diminished to her cock, her cock a buoy
Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge
That on th’unnumbered idle pebble chafes
Cannot be heard so high. I’ll look no more,
Lest my brain turn and the deficient sight
Topple down headlong. (IV. 5. 11-24)

Of course, Gloucester’s initial suspicions turn out to be correct; the cliff from which he proceeds to throw himself is not really there. Crucially though, he thinks that it is, even after having fallen from it only as far as the ground at his feet. The deception is carried off by Edgar’s markedly illustrative description. Throughout the scene, Edgar uses language which

¹¹ William Shakespeare, *King Lear: A Parallel Text Edition*. Second Edition, ed. René Weis (Harlow: Pearson, 2010). This and all subsequent quotations from the play are taken from the folio text in this edition.

is alive with visual imagery and references to the act of seeing. When Gloucester doubts the assertion that they are climbing the hill, he is encouraged to “Look how we labour”, and once they are at the supposed edge Edgar repeatedly refers to the impact of the scene upon his visual faculties; after exclaiming how “dizzy ’tis to cast one’s eyes so low”, Edgar remarks on the diminishing size of the objects at the bottom, “Almost too small for sight”, before asserting his unwillingness to look any longer “Lest my brain turn and the deficient sight / Topple down headlong”. In a reading of the passage as an instance of verbal imitation of perspective painting, Henry S. Turner suggests that “it is as though Edgar finds himself carried away by his own verbal skill and is unable to resist luxuriating in the ecstasy of his vision, even as he stands next to a man who will never see again”.¹² Yet it seems to me that it is precisely because he addresses a man who is bereft of sight that Edgar dwells so extensively on the experience of vision; Edgar’s verbal account of not just the imagined spectacle of the cliff edge but of the physical act of seeing it provides for Gloucester the sensation of vision.

As Turner notes, what makes the cliff scene in *Lear* particularly interesting in relation to stage space is the fact that Gloucester’s experience in it is to a large degree analogous to that of the audience. Just like the blind old man, an audience attending a theatrical event with a “fluid stage” is entirely dependent upon verbal cues from onstage figures which tell it what it should “see”, whether those cues come in the form of explicit addresses from choruses, or, as is more common, as spatial hints embedded in dialogue. Because the strategy employed by Edgar to deceive Gloucester is the same as that conventionally used to denote stage space, his deception has a working effect on the audience as well as on Gloucester; whether Gloucester

¹² Henry S. Turner, *The English Renaissance Stage: Geometry, Poetics, and the Practical Spatial Arts 1580-1630* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 167.

were really being led to the cliffs of Dover or not, the audience would equally be dependent upon Edgar's account of what can be seen in order to visualise the scene. For the early part of the scene, then, what the audience "sees" is what Edgar describes. It is only when Edgar eventually volunteers an aside to the audience – "Why I do trifle thus with his despair / Is done to cure it" (IV. 5. 33-4) – that the illusion begins to break down for the spectators, if not for Gloucester. The upshot of this is that the scene manages to project multiple spatial settings concurrently. The episode takes place in a non-distinct location in Dover, but for a time simultaneously occupies the imaginary space that Edgar describes to Gloucester. Once the audience is aware of Edgar's deception it can retroactively "relocate" the scene, but it cannot "unsee" the space that had imaginatively occupied the stage up to this point; the scene has ultimately taken place both at the cliff and not at the cliff.

The cliff scene in *King Lear* demonstrates, I think, that Shakespeare was aware of the capacity for ambiguous spatial signification inherent in a system which relied on the interaction between verbal cues and the "mind's eye" of the audience. I would also suggest that further consideration of the early modern fluid stage's capacity for spatial ambiguity might add to our understanding of the capacity of early modern plays to produce meaning, particularly where those plays already have a noted interest in spatial concerns. In what follows I will consider the manipulation of early modern stage conventions in order to produce ambiguous, disjointed or multiple space with particular reference to Christopher Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, a play which exhibits a preoccupation with dislocation and the transplantation of physical space from one location to another.

Space in Dido, Queen of Carthage

The staging of *Dido, Queen of Carthage* has been a source of difficulty for a number of critics, particularly in the early to mid-twentieth century. As the title page of the 1594 quarto indicates that the play was “Played by the Children of her Maiesties Chappell”,¹³ it seems likely that it would have been performed at an indoor theatre, which has led to suggestions that the staging may have been more prescriptive than that of the public theatre. H. J. Oliver suggests that the play “seems to have been intended for the stage with fixed multiple set as distinct from the probably bare stage of public theatres, such as the Theatre and Curtain.”¹⁴ Oliver proposes a medieval-style system of three “mansions”, one representing the cave and wood, one representing Olympus and another standing for the gates and walls of Carthage. Any aspects of the play which refuse to adhere to this tripartite system can be mopped up by the presence of “an area, downstage, which was unlocalized and was used in the manner of the bare stage of the public theatre”.¹⁵ Mary E. Smith postulates a simpler, but still not unproblematic, set involving a stage “divided by a wall, probably built of painted laths”.¹⁶ This division, Smith suggests, represented the walls of Carthage, demarcating the city on the one side and the country on the other. According to this model, the wall would only extend to about halfway down the stage, thus allowing for the free and sometimes apparently arbitrary transition between the two settings that the play often demands. Smith acknowledges these difficulties and the resultant need for a less prescriptive element to the setting:

Both indoor and outdoor scenes have to transpire in Carthage, and there is seldom a firm line which separates the two. A scene which begins inside the palace may be suddenly and with no warning outside it (III.iii), or the action may move in the reverse direction (II.i, or IV.iv). A fluid acting area is required, and this is provided by the open unencumbered stage and emblematic setting of a type fairly common especially among interludes and entertainments intended for court.

¹³Christopher Marlowe, *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and *The Massacre at Paris*, ed. H. J. Oliver (London: Methuen, 1968), n.p. All subsequent quotations from the play will be taken from this edition.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, xxx.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xxxi.

¹⁶ Mary E. Smith, “Staging Marlowe’s *Dido Queen of Carthage*”, *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 17.2 (1977), 177-90, 178. Smith here builds on E. K. Chambers’s account of the staging of the play; see *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923; reprinted 1967), Vol. 3, 35-6.

Reconstructions of this kind are necessarily a speculative business; in the case of *Dido*, there is absolutely no indication in the stage directions of the mechanics of staging the play. In order to reconstruct the play's staging, then, the critic is reliant upon its dialogue. But since plays customarily indicated spatial surroundings through dialogue even when the stage was bare, a cue to the audience to imagine a spatial setting can easily be misread as a literal reference to a physical, pictorial scene. The fact that both Oliver's and Smith's accounts of the play's staging require the caveat of a section of fluid stage in order to hold together suggests to me that such a misreading has taken place in each case; my suspicion is that the play's staging was considerably more fluid and less rich in literal-minded scenic detail than Smith and Oliver suggest. Indeed, Andrew Gurr has suggested that the tendency to make a distinction between an outdoor theatre with a bare, fluid stage and an indoor theatre with realistic pictorial scenery is not a particularly helpful one, and I think *Dido* is a case in point, particularly as it is possible that the play was also performed on the public stage.¹⁷

Dido exhibits a fluid conception of space from its very start. The first instance of explicit spatially-locating dialogue occurs one hundred and thirty three lines into the play, when Venus, having berated Jupiter for his neglect of Aeneas, catches sight of her son: "What, do I see my son now come on shore?" (I. 1. 134). This line serves to confuse more than to clarify the spatial makeup of the stage, however, since it comes immediately after an exchange that presumably took place in an Olympian setting. If we take the staging to be clearly compartmentalised by pictorial scenery then there is no satisfactory way of resolving this issue; either the exchange between the gods has been taking place on Carthage's shore all along, which seems highly unlikely, or Aeneas has landed at an Olympian shore, which is

¹⁷ Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1672* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 172-3. On the possibility of *Dido* on the public stage see Oliver, ed., *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and *The Massacre at Paris*, xxxii-xxxiii.

clearly not the case. The most attractive explanation is that, as Oliver suggests, there is a raised section of the stage representing Olympus, from which Venus can see the Carthaginian shore, which is located downstage. Yet even this requires a stage sufficiently fluid to accommodate a change of location in mid-scene, since Venus is, within fifty lines, on the Carthaginian shore with the Trojans.

The haziness of the play's spatial dimension does not clear after this episode. As Venus is making her problematic transition from Olympus to Carthage, the Trojans, having just landed, are themselves beset with spatial uncertainty. Shortly after appearing on stage, Aeneas issues the following order to his son:

Ascanius, go and dry thy drenched limbs,
Whiles I with my Achates rove abroad
To know what coast the wind hath driven us on,
Or whether man or beasts inhabit it. (I. 1. 174-7)

This is natural enough, given that they have just been beached in a storm, but Aeneas's spatial confusion continues after he has been informed of his whereabouts. The second act of the play begins with Aeneas asking "Where am I now? These should be Carthage walls" (II. 1. 1). These lines initiate a sequence in which Aeneas experiences a disorientating perceptual slippage, one moment seeing what is before him – the walls of Carthage and a statue of Priam (or at least the stage space nominated as such) – and the next seeing Troy and a living Priam:

Methinks that town there should be Troy, yon Ida's hill
There Xanthus stream, because here's Priamus –
And when I know it is not, then I die. (II. 1. 7-9)

The audience here knows that Aeneas cannot be at Troy, which has been destroyed, but nevertheless his ambiguous speech has the effect of multiplying the signifying capacity of the stage space to which the actor is gesturing; what in line 1 "should be Carthage walls" only six

lines later “should be Troy”, with the result that the blank stage space takes on a dual association. Aeneas goes on to elaborate the effect further:

Achates, though mine eyes say this is stone,
Yet thinks my mind that this is Priamus;
And when my grieved heart sighs and says no,
Then would it leap out to give Priam life.
O, were I not at all, so thou mightst be!
Achates, see, King Priam wags his hand;
He is alive; Troy is not overcome! (II. 1. 24-30)

Aeneas begins by setting up a dichotomy according to which the eye perceives the inanimate material object and the mind invests it with significance, but ultimately seems to collapse that dichotomy when he encourages Achates to “see” the living Priam. Like the audience of an early modern play, Aeneas engages his imagination in order to invest neutral space with particular spatial significance. In doing so he employs the triggers that would be conventionally used to signify space to an audience in a play that operates a fluid stage; he describes what he can “see”, and points us in the direction of Mount Ida and the river Xanthus. At this point the audience knows that Aeneas is viewing through confused eyes, but they still unavoidably see what he sees; Troy, for a few moments at least, is superimposed upon Carthage, or rather, since Carthage is itself an imaginative projection on a blank stage, supplants it.

We see a similar theatrical sleight of hand at the play’s climax, when a distraught Dido responds to Aeneas’s departure. Having told Anna how she begged him to stay and then willed the gods to provide her the means to bring him back, Dido apparently sees Aeneas returning. Like Aeneas when he sees Troy, and like Kent when he leads Gloucester to the supposed cliff, Dido implores her companion to see what she sees:

Look, sister, look, lovely Aeneas’ ships!
See, see, the billows heave him up to heaven,
And now down falls the keels into the deep. (V. 1. 251-3)

The vivid description continues, at one point echoing Venus's first sighting of Aeneas by describing his safe arrival on the shore, and ends with another invocation to sympathise with her senses – "See where he comes; welcome, welcome, my love!" (V. 1. 261). In this passage Dido is ostensibly talking to Anna, who deflates the image by encouraging her sister to "leave these idle fantasies" (V. 1. 262). But, just as Aeneas does in the passage discussed above, she also indirectly addresses the audience, describing to its members the offstage space that she can see but they cannot. The vividness of Dido's speech, coupled with the repeated invocations to "see", brings Aeneas's return into the imaginative space of the theatre, even if the audience is aware that Dido is describing an illusion.

Richard Meek has pointed out that playwrights and audience members who had received an education in rhetoric would be familiar with the idea, which had been inherited from classical authorities, that vivid, visually rich description – *enargeia*, to use the rhetorical term – was capable of impressing upon the reader or auditor the sense that they had actually seen the thing described:

[Quintillian] goes on to refer to *enargeia*, 'which makes us seem not so much to narrate as to exhibit the actual scene, while our emotions will be no less actively stirred than if we were present at the actual occurrence' (6.2.32). Quintillian, then, not only suggests that *enargeia* offers pictorial vividness but also points to the affective power of such descriptions, suggesting that the listener's emotions will be moved as if they had seen the actual events themselves.¹⁸

In each of the passages that I have discussed, this affective power of visually descriptive language seems to be self-consciously evoked, particularly given the emphasis both speakers place on willing their auditors to see what they are describing. Perhaps the most striking and at the same time least conventionally dramatic moment in the play is another instance of

¹⁸ Meek, *Narrating the Visual*, 9.

enargeia. Having extended her hospitality to the recently arrived Trojans, Dido presses a reluctant Aeneas for an account of the fall of Troy. Eventually yielding to her persuasion, Aeneas proceeds to deliver a densely descriptive narrative, interrupted only by Dido's occasional single-line exclamations, which continues for nearly two hundred lines. The passage differs from those discussed already in that Aeneas does not believe that he is seeing what he describes. Nevertheless, throughout his narrative Carthage is subordinated as a stage presence, as the audience visualises the scene that is verbally depicted. As the extensive piece of *enargeia* is played out, the space of the stage is dominated by the presence of Troy. Achates, when asked to take over from an exhausted Aeneas and describe the fate of Helen, states that "What happen'd to the Queen we cannot *show*" (II. 1. 294, my emphasis), suggesting that Aeneas's narrative has brought its subject - Troy - before the eyes of its audience (on and off stage).

Relocating Troy

These spatial superimpositions of Troy onto Carthage are consistent with the play's preoccupation with Troy being transplanted, together with its illustrious mythic associations, to new locations. The notion of a new Troy is raised as early as the first scene, when Jupiter calms Venus's anxiety over her son's welfare by assuring her that, once Aeneas has fulfilled his destiny,

poor Troy, so long suppress'd,
From forth her ashes shall advance her head,
And flourish once again that erst was dead. (I. 1. 93-5)

Troy's resurrection is imagined at several points throughout the play, never more clearly than in the scene in which we see Aeneas drawing up his blueprint of the "statelier Troy" that he plans to erect in the place of Carthage, who "shall vaunt her petty walls no more" (V. 1. 2, 4).

The apparent mobility of Troy is mirrored in the imagery Dido uses when faced with the prospect of Aeneas's leaving:

Are these the sails that in despite of me
Pack'd with the winds to bear Aeneas hence?
I'll hang ye in the chamber where I lie.
Drive, if you can, my house to Italy:
I'll set the casement open that the winds
May enter in and once again conspire
Against the life of me, poor Carthage Queen;
But, though he go, he stays in Carthage still,
And let rich Carthage fleet upon the seas,
So I may have Aeneas in mine arms. (IV. 4. 126-35)

In keeping with the play's spatial experimentation, Dido's response to Aeneas's project to relocate Troy to Italy is to imagine taking herself and Carthage with him. This passage also highlights the extent to which the identities of the play's central characters are moored in the cities with which they are associated. Dido is unable to imagine moving to Italy without bringing Carthage with her, in much the same way that Aeneas appears to be unable to recognise himself once separated from Troy: "Sometime I was a Trojan, mighty Queen; / But Troy is not; what shall I say I am?" (II. 1. 75-6).

In focusing on the transplantation of space, and particularly of Troy, *Dido, Queen of Carthage* both engages in and interrogates a long-standing practice of legitimising new or expanding powers through the manipulation of history. As has already been mentioned, the play is derived from Virgil's *The Aeneid*, which itself appropriated the ancient glory of Troy, together with the semi-divine ancestry of Aeneas, for the Augustan Roman empire. In Marlowe's own time, figures such as John Dee were keen to legitimise the fledgling idea of a British empire through the employment of medieval mytho-historical narratives which drew a line of descent from Aeneas to the English throne. According to Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Aeneas's great grandson, Brute, led a small collection of Trojans

(or rather Italian settlers of Trojan descent) to the British Isles after having been exiled for accidentally slaying his father in a hunting accident. In Monmouth's narrative, in a moment that both echoes the *Aeneid* and anticipates *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, Brute is visited in the midst of his journey by Diana, who assures him that glory awaits him when he reaches his destination:

There by thy sons shall Troy be builded;
There of thy blood shall kings be born, hereafter
Sovran in every land the wide world over.¹⁹

Geoffrey of Monmouth's history attempts to establish England's own imperial narrative and to claim authority from the most august of sources, going back to the beginning of written history. In doing so, it evokes once more the idea of Troy as a spatial entity that can be lifted from its original site and transplanted to a new location; in case the point is missed, Monmouth's name for pre-Roman London is Troynovantum.

To state *Dido*'s engagement with legitimising mytho-historical narratives is not to say something new about the play. Hendricks, in particular, smartly argues that the play aligns Dido and Carthage with Spanish imperial endeavour and that Dido's eventual rejection by Aeneas, who through the Galfridian narrative is associated with England, implies England's superiority over its Catholic enemy.²⁰ While I am not entirely convinced by the idea of Marlowe's Aeneas as a vehicle for uncritical Elizabethan propaganda – he seems to me too weak, too vacillating to be an entirely flattering analogue for a nation with inchoate imperial ambitions – it is certain that the play repeatedly draws attention to the practice of citing Troy in order to exercise power. What I hope this essay has shown is that Marlowe's experimentation with the verbal nomination of stage space contributes to this engagement

¹⁹ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, transl. Sebastian Evans, rev. Charles W. Dunn (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1963), 18.

²⁰ See Hendricks, "Managing the Barbarian".

with imperial myth-making in a way that critics have not yet observed. By taking advantage of the capacity of the neutral stage to assume shifting and multiple spatial associations, and by exercising the power of *enargeia* to bring into the audience's view the scene that it describes, Marlowe ensures that *Dido's* audience does not just engage with the intellectual notion of one city being transplanted onto another, but actually sees it happen.

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