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# Drama, Pedagogy, and the Female Complaint: Or, What's Troy Got To Do With It?

Lynn Enterline

This essay reads the connection between female complaints in Tudor minor epics and Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* in light of rhetorical practices shared by two educational institutions: grammar schools and the Inns of Court. By the time a former schoolboy came to London for legal training or to write for the stage, the ability to entertain a hypothetical proposition and invent a speech in response to it – a necessary forensic skill – was intimately tied to early school training in *prosopopoeia*, the habit of inventing speeches for ancient characters. These paired practices granted Rome's female characters (Ariadne, Scylla, Salmacis, Oenone, Dido) a remarkable English after-life – giving dramatists and lawyers a cast of characters with which to critique the social claims made by the educators who promised to give them cultural capital. I read cross-voiced complaints in epyllia by Thomas Lodge, Thomas Heywood, and William Shakespeare in light of *ethopoiea* (“character-making”) and the proto-dramatic practices implicit in legal training. Placing the institutional satire in these complaint poems alongside the meta-rhetorical preoccupations of *Dido*, the paper traces a recognizably Tudor form of discontent: skeptical imitations of epic that undercut normative, end-driven representations of nationhood and masculinity from within the genre thought to consolidate these identities and from within the institutions that most benefitted from upholding them.

Commenting on Shakespeare's corrosive depiction of Troy in *Troilus and Cressida*, Rosalie Colie once remarked that it is worth considering further why Shakespeare launches an attack on the source of European literature. Which prompts the immediate question, “why?” Such a question

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becomes even more pressing when one remembers that Shakespeare was hardly the only Elizabethan author to satirize “the matter of Troy” and the venerable ancient tradition of epic poetry. The following pages will not address *Troilus and Cressida* specifically. But as I give an account of the many important connections among Tudor drama, the institutions of humanist pedagogy, and passionate speeches delivered by ancient female characters with grievances to air, I will discuss several other pugnacious reactions to Troy. And, by way of the extended cultural fictions of *translatio imperii*, my argument also bears on emergent conceptions of English nationhood in relation to imperial Rome (see James). This article takes its cue from Colie’s observation and the many questions arising from it and has three, interrelated sections.

The first concerns prominent rhetorical practices bridging two educational institutions: the humanist grammar school and England’s “third university,” the Inns of Court. All the writers I engage – Thomas Lodge (Lincoln’s Inn), Francis Beaumont (Inner Temple), John Marston (Middle Temple), Thomas Heywood, Christopher Marlowe, and William Shakespeare – were former grammar schoolboys who put their classically honed rhetorical skills to use in London. Some went to university and some did not. But each drew on the cultural capital of early training in ancient rhetoric to pursue a career as a poet, dramatist, and/or law student at the Inns. Indeed, some worked as all three. With a shared horizon of expectations and habits established early in all-male grammar schools, these writers show considerable familiarity with one another’s work as well as an avid interest in taking up epic material in new and often contentious ways.

But the intertwined stories of the female complaint, dramatic soliloquy, Troy, and contemporary pedagogy cannot be told exclusively in relation to the stage. And in telling it, one of the things I hope to suggest is that the pervasive critical tendency to separate “popular” drama so decisively from academic, and dramatic writing from rhetorical invention (Latin and vernacular) – as well as from other genres of poetry – produces anachronistic and misleading accounts of literary production as well as of the shifting terrain of social distinction in sixteenth-century Britain. The second section therefore focuses on rhetorical tropes and transactions that derive from humanist educational practice, cross generic boundaries, and blur received distinctions between “elite” and “popular” culture. This section examines a learned, classicizing, yet provocative genre that was made possible only by contemporary pedagogy and was, for a few years at least, arguably almost as interesting to both law students and commercial playwrights as was the drama: I am,

of course, referring to the so-called Elizabethan “minor” epic, or epyllion. A short-lived but intense vogue for minor epics began when Thomas Lodge, a law student at Lincoln’s Inn, published *Scillaes Metamorphosis* (1589). It sparked a rapid series of sexually explicit narrative poems written by lawyers and playwrights alike; all the authors discussed here tried their hand at writing minor epics. Leaning heavily on Ovidian *imitatio*, epyllia are filled with speeches about love and grief that sometimes sound like dramatic soliloquies, sometimes like legal arguments, and sometimes like both. If we adopt a trans-institutional perspective on moments in minor epics and stage plays in which a female speaker struggles to represent a terrible grievance suffered – that is, if we read female complaints in light of rhetorical practices that carried over from grammar school training to the Inns of Court – we see that the so-called Elizabethan “minor epic” was a far from minor literary event. Rather, this brief but lively poetic mode has much to reveal about the institutional parameters of dramatic *ethopoeia* (“character-making”) in the Tudor period as well as the classicizing terms that shaped its volatile representations of sexuality and gender. The third and final section moves from the epyllion’s critique of Troy to the first play of another minor epic poet, Christopher Marlowe. In reading the Tudor vogue for ventriloquizing female complaint across genres, I hope to show that by disrupting the teleological drive of the imperial epic in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, Marlowe’s play engages in a similar critique of the claims made for the civilizing efficacy of an education in ancient rhetoric. Taken together, the female complaints surveyed in the pages that follow tell us a good deal about contemporary pedagogy’s unintended consequences as well as the uneasy rhetorical foundations of Tudor masculinity.

### 1. *From schoolroom to courtroom*

Tudor poets, playwrights, and audiences often crossed between legal and theatrical circles: dramatists made trial scenes central to their plots; Inns of Court law students staged plays and wrote poems to one another as gestures of friendship (see Shannon, Winston). The numerous socio-rhetorical intersections between grammar school pedagogy and legal education largely derive from the fact that a career in the law was one of the most important humanist school masters had in mind when “training up” young Latin orators for what they claimed would be the good of the commonwealth. As Joel Altman and Emrys Jones pointed out in the 1970s, early training in the forensic skill of being able to argue



“on either side of a question” did more than help young Latin students develop an aptitude necessary to a career in the law; it also had a profound effect on sixteenth-century drama (see Altman, Jones). Constituting what Altman called a Tudor “habit of mind,” *in utramque partem* exercises did not ask students to arrive at an answer, but rather to practice the kind of mental flexibility and verbal ingenuity necessary for arguing pro- or con- a difficult position effectively. As they both argued, and Neil Rhodes’s work on the “controversial plot” recently reminds us, such proto-legal training goes a long way toward explaining why plays in the period so often revolve around divisive moral, social, and political dilemmas without offering any clear solution (see Rhodes). And as T. W. Baldwin documented, Erasmus formulated one of the earliest, and most pervasive exercises for learning this skill: Latin schoolboys were to invent *in utramque partem* arguments about the question, “whether to take a wife or not take a wife?” Which question, of course, is the one that inaugurates both Shakespeare’s sonnet sequence and Venus’s attempt to persuade Adonis to love her in his first epyllion. A more advanced, detailed version of the same exercise appears in the most popular rhetorical manual used in grammar schools across England for at least 150 years. In Reinhard Lorich’s translation of Aphthonius’s *Progymnasmata*, the final chapter is *De legislatio*; and the first example offered for a student’s imitation required him to argue about the merits of a law that allows someone to kill an adulterer caught in the act. The entire matter is structured as a pro- and con- debate between two imaginary speakers who argue for the benefits and limitations of such a law (Aphthonius 320-3). With respect to my interest in the rhetorical conditions of Tudor masculinity, it is hardly insignificant that both these standard, proto-legal educational exercises were framed in terms of questions about marital and sexual relations. Erasmus’s topic presumes that a young man might well be inclined *not* to marry unless properly persuaded; Aphthonius’s, that he might have very good reasons for such reluctance.

In *Shakespeare’s Schoolroom*, I extended the point about the literary effects of *in utramque partem* training by drawing attention to other discursive practices that permeated early and late school exercises – practices which were, I believe, still more important and widespread in their literary and cultural effects (Enterline, *Shakespeare’s Schoolroom*, *passim*). These exercises inaugurated what I called “habits of alterity” in schoolboy subjects, by which I mean to designate the numerous grammatical and rhetorical lessons that gave humanist imitation a performative dimension (which I mean in a theatrical sense as well as in J. L. Austin’s, that the goal was learn how to “do things with words”). That is, school archives

indicate that a series of exercises across the curriculum required Latin schoolboys to become adept impersonators. Among the most influential – yet to my mind, unpredictable – of the school’s characteristic language games was to require a young boy to learn Latin, and eventually to learn the rhetorical techniques necessary to humanist definitions of eloquence, by adopting the voice of someone else. In any number of lessons designed to “train up” young gentlemen in Latin rhetorical skill so that they might contribute directly to “the good of the commonwealth,” humanist masters made *prosopopoeia* – the Roman practice of giving a voice to historical and legendary characters – central to school training. A survey of increasingly standardized school texts suggests that over the course of their education, schoolboys were required to adopt a series of *personae*: from Tudor *vulgaria*, which offered a (proto-lyric) series of first-person sentences for translation in the early forms, to more advanced lessons in letter-writing and inventing dialogues in later forms, a student was required to imitate the voices of others – a requirement that unleashed the potential for future invention across a range of literary genres (see Enterline, *Shakespeare’s Schoolroom* 33-61). And with specific pertinence to the epyllia and plays discussed below, Aphthonius’s widely used rhetorical manual, the *Progymnasmata*, instilled a lesson in *ethopoeia* by asking would-be orators to memorize and then invent speeches according to the following formula: “what X would say on Y occasion.” These exemplary speeches were uttered by a familiar set of Ovidian women in highly distressing circumstances: Niobe, Hecuba, Andromache, Medea. Though Roman theorists like Quintilian were careful to warn against *prosopopoeia*’s tendency to blur the distinction between oratory and acting – here we might remember the intriguing aside in *Hamlet* about Cicero’s rival, Roscius, who “was an actor in Rome” (2.2) – Tudor masters were far less cautious. Indeed, they quickly brought impersonation from written page to embodied performance: so-called “first boys” were asked to deliver speeches “without book”; first boys were also asked to make public declamations on set themes at the beginning of the year and on examination days; and all the boys were required to take to the stage, impersonating both male and female parts.

Mandated in ordinances in many of the schools newly founded or re-founded across England – and clearly highly valued by London masters like Richard Mulcaster at Merchant Taylors’ – theatricals were part of the humanist curriculum not for the love of drama, but because schoolmasters thought play acting offered excellent instruction in the rhetorical techniques of *pronuntiatio* and *actio*. As one master put it, theater is a “frivolous art,” but it helps discipline the “babbling mouths” of

children; and nothing is “more conducive to fluency of expression and graceful deportment” (Enterline, *Shakespeare’s Schoolroom* 41). As one schoolboy notes in his commonplace book, *actio* is “eloquence of the bodye” (Folger MS V.a.381: 98). A classroom notebook kept by a sixteenth-century boy at the Westminster School records a schoolmaster’s advice to the class about a school play they had just seen. Clearly impressed with the performance, he instructs students to copy the players’ example; the master imagines that the combined effect of theatrical performance and imitation will be to create a radiating social and educational force:

I think you have derived this benefit besides others, that what must be pronounced with what expression, with what gestures not only you yourselves learned, but are able also to teach others (if need be). For there should be in the voice a certain amount of elevation, depression, and modulation, in the body decorous movement without prancing around, sometimes more quiet, at others more vehement, with the supposition of the feel accommodated to the subject. (Baldwin 328)

In *Shakespeare’s Schoolroom* I argued that because imitation was the backbone of humanist pedagogy, and because it was so closely allied to impersonation in the school’s every day life, one unintended consequence of humanist training was to reveal that familiar roles – such as “a boy,” “a man,” “a woman,” “the master,” “the lord,” “the father,” and “the mother” (all of which commonly appear in school textbooks) – might in fact be socially scripted parts. The performative dimension of imitation meant that for some boys, at least, these scripts became de-familiarized enough that they might seem available even to those not born into them (see Sullivan).

Despite the evident power of their interaction, we have not yet assessed *in utramque partem* training and *prosopopoeia* together in sufficient depth. But Tudor epyllia require us to think them together: extended exercises in classical impersonation, most Elizabethan epyllia also turn on a controversial topic of debate: for example, between “love” and “lust” in *Venus and Adonis*; or the distinction between “wanton” and “obscene” poetry in Marston’s *Metamorphosis of Pigmaliions Image* (see Enterline, *Rhetoric of the Body*, esp. Ch. 4). It is hardly surprising that legal historians have not paid much attention to habits of personification. But this habit did reach beyond grammar school education: at least one Tudor legal manuscript, written in response to the succession crisis, outlines a theory of property by staging it as a dialogue between fictional speakers (see Brooks). Latin schoolboys were often asked to perform in

public by inventing speeches based on hypothetical scenes or to speak as if in the voice of a hypothetical character: Corderius's *Dialogues* instilled a series of familiar, daily interactions by asking boys to imitate imaginary conversations; Erasmus's recommended practice in letter-writing required similar kinds of hypothetical impersonations and circumstances. In the case of Aphthonius, schoolboys were required to memorize and invent speeches according to the proposition, "the words Hecuba would say at the fall of Troy." Later, young law students were obliged to argue hypothetical cases in "moot" court; and these public performances were subject to community judgment. To put my point another way: grammar school training required students to practice writing and public speaking *as if* in someone else's voice, a habit with obvious benefits for a dramatist. But this social and rhetorical performance relied on a young man's ability to entertain an hypothesis about situation and character. To become eloquent, Latin students were required to spend a good deal of time speculating about virtual scenarios and a given character's likely reactions to them. It seems to me that such habits would benefit not only future playwrights but also law students because at the Inns they would be called upon to invent and weigh propositions, hypotheses, and probable evidence in the public performances that constitute a moot court.<sup>1</sup> In short, by the time a Tudor gentleman came to London for further legal training or to write for the stage, the ability to entertain a hypothetical proposition and invent a speech in response to it was intimately tied to *prosopopoeia*, the habit of inventing speeches for ancient characters. Such rhetorical practices granted many of Rome's literary characters (male and female) a remarkable English after-life, ensuring that at least some of them would leave the page to acquire a palpable, if phantasmatic, force in the lives of Tudor gentlemen.

One final aspect of the grammar school's discursive and disciplinary regime anticipated the educational milieu of the Inns – and once again, it took place as a public performance. A description of daily life written by a student at the Westminster school (ca. 1610) delineates how far proto-legal rhetorical skills permeated proximate grammar school social relations. And it also suggests that a young orator's public performance also had a juridical dimension, inflecting his experience of the school's horizontal and hierarchical relations as well as its forms of discipline.

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<sup>1</sup> Here I am trying to extend Lorna Hutson's important argument about intellectual history – the influence of Cicero's description of probability and character – into the realm of educational and institutional practice (see Hutson).



The text was written by one of the “first boys,” which meant he was poised between ranks, between being student and monitor, supervised and supervisor:

These Monitors kept them [the younger boys] strictly to speaking of Latine in theyr several commands; and withal they presented their *complaints or accusations* (as we called them) everie Friday morn: when the punishments were often redeemed by exercises or favours shewed to Boyes of extraordinarie merite, who had the honor (by the *Monitor monitorum*) manie times to *begge and prevaile* for such remissions. (Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom* 36)

Elsewhere I analyzed the affective dimensions of this communal scene – being judged by “feare or confidence in their looks” – as one that reveals the internally fractured conditions of schoolboy subjectivity (Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom* 34-7). I argued that such a scene might unleash a theatrical form of “internal audition” in which an interpersonal scene of judgment is internalized, taken inside as an intrapersonal dialogue with one’s own inner *monitor*. But with respect to the next step of a legal education, this scene of a weekly “trial” involving all parties is equally remarkable. It suggests that at school, a combination of public performance, judgment, and legal role-playing informed interactions between future lawyers and poets. The “favor” of making a plea is a reward granted only to boys “of extraordinary merit”: social success at school required one to argue on behalf of others, to register public “complaints” and “accusations” so that punishment or “remission” can be meted out accordingly. Such a disciplinary regime for rhetorical training ensured that the performance and judging of imitative acts established an early, close alliance between proto-dramatic and proto-legal training. Beyond training in such specific techniques of forensic rhetoric as *in utramque partem* argumentation, the school’s juridico-theatrical staging of judgment – the memory of pleas advanced and of punishment thereby meted out or avoided – insured a strong alliance between drama and the law in the later work of former schoolboys. Small wonder that London’s playwrights were fond of writing plays that revolve around staged trial scenes and that law students made drama central to their collective social lives at the Inns. Most important for my purposes: small wonder that both were drawn to write minor epic poems that revolve around such language games as the plea, the accusation, and the complaint. Each of these forms carries in it echoes of educational experiences that extend from grammar schools through the Inns.

## 2. *Female Complaint*

The epyllion is a largely neglected genre that when studied, is usually noted for speeches that sound proto-dramatic. But it is historically and culturally more accurate (and revealing) to remember that minor epic speeches and dramatic soliloquies both stem from early training in *pro-sopopoeia*. If I had to choose one word to epitomize what epyllia reveal about the effects of Tudor education on the connections between law and literature in the period, it would be “complaint.” Signifying an “expression of grief, a lamentation,” “a statement of injury or grievance laid before a court or judicial authority for purposes of prosecution or of redress; a formal accusation,” and a word frequently used in the title of medieval and early modern “plaintive poems,”<sup>2</sup> the complaint is a significant discursive, rhetorical, and legal site for exploring the penchant among classically educated Tudor writers – lawyers and dramatists alike – to write as if they were speaking in the voices of very unhappy women. For example, Thomas Heywood responded to Thomas Lodge’s inaugural epyllion by significantly revising the letter from Oenone to Paris in Ovid’s *Heroides*: in his 1594 *Oenone and Paris*, Heywood impersonates the speeches of both ancient lovers, and does so as if they were conducting an *in utramque partem* argument over “the matter of Troy.” His Paris responds to Oenone’s accusation that he has abandoned her for Helen as if she were bringing a legal case against him: in order to “plead his excuse” in answer to what he calls her “just complaint,” Paris prefaces his response by saying, “Let me see if I can clear me.” It is an odd posture for a former lover, but Paris’s impulse to mount a case in his own defense reminds us that these Ovidian “female complaint” poems were born from male forensic habits of mind. Indeed, one might justly give new titles to epyllia to mark their proximity to legal cases: *Scilla v. Glaucus*, *Oenone v. Paris*, *Lucrece v. Tarquin*, and *Venus v. Adonis* are titles that would do justice to their evident institutional appeal.

I have been calling epyllia pugnacious, by which I mean that they put their authors’ classically honed skills on display in provocative erotic stories that hardly comport with the high-minded civic aims of humanist schoolmasters or the legal profession. I can begin to illustrate what I mean with brief reference to *The Rape of Lucrece*. As William Weaver documented, Shakespeare’s *Lucrece* shows all the signs of trying to

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<sup>2</sup> OED *Online*, 1, 2 a and b, 5, and 6. A search of “complaint” as a title word in *Early English Books Online* turns up 85 such poems published between 1450 and 1600.



mount a forensic argument in defense of her complaint of rape against Tarquin (see Weaver). Mindful of two contemporary educational institutions, Lucrece refers directly both to grammar school instruction and legal practice when she despairs of finding the rhetorical power she seeks:

Out, idle words, servants to shallow fools,  
 Unprofitable sounds, weak arbitrators!  
 Busy yourselves in skill-contending schools,  
 Debate where leisure serves with dull debaters;  
 To trembling clients be you mediators:  
 For me, I force not argument a straw,  
 Since that my case is past the help of law. (1016-1022)

Though the poem could not have been written had its author not attended one of those “skill-contending schools” and imbibed the habits of *prosopopoeia* and *in utramque partem* debate, Lucrece dismisses the verbal facility necessary to both the schools and a legal education. For his part, Shakespeare’s narrator repeatedly labels her discourse a “complaint” – until Brutus’s final call to action, at which point the word’s meaning shifts still further away from the sense of a personal lament toward that of a speech made to spur action in the legal-political sphere:

By all our country rights in Rome maintain’d,  
 And by chaste Lucrece’s soul *that late complain’d*  
 Her wrongs to us, and by this bloody knife,  
 We will revenge the death of this true wife. (1838-1841)

Like Heywood, Shakespeare impersonates the voices of both male and female parties to the dispute. But in the characters of both Oenone and Lucrece, both authors are also practicing what Elizabeth Harvey aptly calls the Tudor habit of “cross-voicing,” a term that deliberately echoes and reconfigures theatrical “cross-dressing” (see Harvey). I still use her term because it suggests how important it is to think across languages, genres, and genders to understand the after-effects of Tudor pedagogy. In addition, Lucrece’s rhetorically self-conscious attack on schools, debaters, clients and lawyers suggests that we must also *think across the institutions* of rhetorical training. In Shakespeare’s hands, Lucrece turns orator and her own defense lawyer – a rhetorically self-conscious speaker meditating on the difficulty of representing her “case.” She invokes historically specific grammar school exercises – holding “disputation with each thing she views” and worrying, in turn, that she will become a

“theme for disputation” in the future – only to remind us that even a lawyer’s rhetorical skill cannot save this particular client. More pugnacious still is the unhappy pun in the stanza’s concluding couplet, “I force not argument a straw / Since that *my case is past the help of law*.” Reflecting in Lucrece’s voice on rhetoric’s limitations, as well as the institutions in which it was taught, Shakespeare confronts us with a disturbing pun on legal “case” and (as *Merry Wives of Windsor*’s Mistress Quickly would no doubt loudly object) the “case” as female genitalia. And lurking behind both meanings is yet another: the grammatical sense of a noun’s “case” in Latin, the language required for learning any of the rhetorical skills on display in this poem.

As Shakespeare’s tri-partite pun suggests, writers of epyllia show a decided preference for sexually provocative material as well as a tendency to draw explicit comparisons between rhetorical and sexual matters. These choices call into question the specific form of cultural capital bequeathed on them by a grammar school Latin education. Georgia Brown argued that this group of minor epic poets in the 1590s promoted themselves as a “generation of shame” by way of a deliberate triviality and excessive verbal ornamentation that stands against the culturally privileged tradition of masculine epic (see Brown). If viewed from the perspective of educational training, such choices suggest that these minor epic authors were also styling themselves against their moralizing, civic-minded schoolmasters and assumptions about devotion to public good that informed both their pedagogical agenda and a future legal career. This overt poetic posture could, in short, double as poetic self-advertising and as institutional critique.

Their decided preference for imitating stories from Ovid poses complex questions. But for the purposes of this argument it is important to remember that humanist theorists and schoolmasters showed a decided preference not just for epic, but for epic in its Virgilian form, as the best exemplar for molding a boy’s conduct.<sup>3</sup> Latin training began with Aesop in the first form, but the fifth and sixth largely revolved around epic – both Virgil’s and Ovid’s. The ubiquitous *Lily’s Grammar* aptly captures humanist partiality: in the lesson on the impersonal verb, boys learned “*Oportet me legere Virgilium*,” “it is good for me to read Virgil.” Suspicion always clung to Ovid – some of his poetry was

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<sup>3</sup> The following two pages are a condensed version of my argument about the critical potential of minor epics in *Shakespeare’s Schoolroom* (74-80).

banned altogether – but Virgil required no defense.<sup>4</sup> Subject to Lily's maxim, "it is good for me to read Virgil," schoolboys were drilled in the performative as much as scholarly art of *imitatio* and imbibed a system of training built around an ideal of devotion to the commonwealth like that of Virgil's Aeneas. Given the resonance between the *Aeneid's* teleology of public duty and the school's announced goal of fashioning gentlemen for the good of the commonwealth, there is something unexpected about the results of its training: poems and plays written by former schoolboys at the turn of the sixteenth century rarely followed anything like the model of the *Aeneid*. Rather, Latin training encouraged an outpouring not of epic poetry, but of epyllia with a distinctly Ovidian, erotic cast.

Here it is worth noting that Elizabethan jurists and common lawyers often attributed the foundation of British common law to Troy and the translation of empire to Rome and then London. Nearly a century later, in 1682, another influential legal theorist would dismiss that attribution as "a story patched up out of Bard's songs and Poetick fictions" in the hope of raising "the British name out of Trojan ashes" (Raffield 107-8). But despite Troy's cultural prestige in the institutions of sixteenth-century education, writers of epyllia pointedly avoid Virgil's theme of *translation imperii* and his plot of epic masculinity; they preferred, instead, to investigate questions of sexuality, emotion, and desire. Indeed, many minor epics do more than turn away from Aeneas's precedent. They ask us to listen to the voices of wronged and abandoned women like Dido – female characters from the ancient past whose complaint about ill treatment reflects rather poorly on the educational program that dubbed Virgil "the prince of poets" and Aeneas the exemplar for masculine civic virtue.

With respect to the enthusiasm for minor epics, it is worth remembering that the story that launched this vogue – Lodge's version of Scylla and Glaucus – is the one that opens Ovid's obvious interruption of Virgil's plot of empire. Competing with Virgil's end-driven narrative of masculine duty – and ignoring his dark hints that the end (Rome) may repeat the violence and betrayals of the beginning (Troy) – Ovid constantly derails Virgil's plot in Books 13-15. He converts martial ac-

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<sup>4</sup> See Watson's general discussion of humanist preferences. Thomas Wolsey wrote that a good curriculum requires students to imitate Virgil, "the first among all poets." In *The Governour*, Thomas Elyot recommends imitating him especially because, like Homer, he is "like to a good nurse." Ovid is a necessary evil: he helps "for understanding other authors" but by contrast to Virgil has "little learning . . . concerning other virtuous manners of policy."

tion to rhetorical debate; and when Troy falls, it falls in half a line. In place of Aeneas's tears, Ovid represents female despair: first Hecuba's, then Aurora's for her dead son – a nymph who “has no time to be moved” by the city's fall. Also, Lodge plucks Scylla out of Virgilian context. In the *Aeneid*, a prophecy names Scylla as a dangerous place the Trojans must pass to find the Sibyl and get directions to Rome. But in Ovid's hands, a barrier figure – a place – is personified as a nymph with an intriguing romantic past. Her story begets yet another love story, and Scylla's metamorphosis results from a third unrequited passion (Circe's). Only after a rhizomatic chain of erotic disappointment does Ovid return to Virgil's plot. And of course, we return to it with Dido.

The resonance between Virgilian teleology and the school's civic-minded agenda means that in selecting Ovid's version of Scylla as his model, Lodge's poem carried a certain bite with respect to the claims made for the social efficacy of a Latin education. Lodge and the writers who quickly lined up to imitate him happily displaced the *Aeneid*'s plot of epic masculinity; and in so doing, they called into question the institutional and pedagogical *telos* of civic duty that gave Virgil's imperial epic pride of place. For example, in both their minor epics, Heywood and Marlowe replicate Lodge's gesture of invoking only to interrupt the end-game of masculine civic duty. In *Oenone and Paris*, the nymph foretells the “fatall ende to Troy” if Paris does not forsake Helen; she then invites Paris to turn his back on that fate – “that burning fire-brand” of Troy and its “thousand mourning widows” – by embracing her “in these verdant meadows” (16-17). Oenone's verdant pastoral pleasure is an aesthetic and erotic antidote for the terrible pressure Virgil's gods bring to bear on Aeneas to fulfill Troy's destiny. *Hero and Leander* similarly tells an erotic story that, while set near the site of the Trojan war, has nothing to do with the privileged epic narrative that excises female desire from the business of nation building. The poem opens “On Hellespont,” with two cities standing “opposite”; but rather than evoke Troy and the “fateful” ends associated with the Hellespont, Marlowe tells us instead that the waters were “guilty of True-love's blood.” And even that amatory plot remains incomplete. From the poem's first line, we know the love affair ended badly. But Marlowe never narrates that tragic end – an evasion I would argue is deliberate – and gives us, instead, a fragment that offers as much of a formal and erotic challenge to epic teleology as does Ovid's penchant for derailing the story of a second Troy with meta-rhetorical digressions about female desire (see Enterline, “Elizabethan Minor Epics”).



But there is a further inter-textual engagement with Ovid's poetry in Lodge's epyllion that attracted other writers to follow suit. And it is one that reinforces the ideological counter-narrative implicit in impersonated female complaints. As I've argued elsewhere, Lodge's poem directly satirizes grammar school pedagogy (Enterline, "Elizabethan Minor Epics"). Later, in 1602 Francis Beaumont (member of the Inner Temple), shows his appreciation for such institutional satire in his epyllion – but shifts focus from schools to law courts, those halls full of / "Crooked Maenanders, infinite delays."<sup>5</sup> Lodge opens *Scillae's Metamorphosis* by undermining a male-male teacher-student relationship as a failed lesson in emotional control based on what the narrator *should* have learned about eternal change from reading Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and "schoolmen's cunning notes." And yet the all-male milieu of sixteenth-century education is soon left behind: in the final stanzas, it is Scilla's pain that preoccupies the narrator; her "piteous" lament constitutes the poem's final "lesson." Clearly alluding to Ovid's Ariadne from the *Heroides* – another text commonly read and imitated at school – Lodge concludes his poem with a veritable chorus of female complaint. When Scilla runs along the shoreline crying out for Glaucus, "all the Nymphs afflict the air with noise." And the narrator's grief, too, seems to "melt" into Scylla's: "Rue me that writes, for why her ruth deserves it." Scilla's woe acquires the kind of embodied, affective, and animating force that might make any rhetorician envious: "For every sigh, the Rocks return a sigh / . . . Woods, and waves, and rocks, and hills *admire* / *The wonderous force* of her untam'd desire." Nature itself is tamed by her "untam'd" desire. From such transfers of affect between speaker and audience, yet further passions emerge: Lodge produces an allegorical parade worthy of Spenser – "Furie and Rage, Wan-hope, Dispaire, and Woe" – and these

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<sup>5</sup> *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* expands the rhetorical dimension of epyllia Beaumont is imitating by inventing a lengthy judicial plot to preface the Ovidian story. By turns a self-declared devotee of "sweet-lipt Ovid" who hopes to turn his audience "halfe-mayd" with "reading" his erotic poem and a poet interested in finding a wise "statute" that will allow him to find a good patron, Beaumont varies the poems preceding him by moving the forensic-erotic complaint from humans to the gods. Two elaborate digressions precede Salmacis's encounter, both of which imagine scenes in which the gods bring erotic grievances against one another. The first takes satiric aim at the idea of earthly justice: Astrea having fled the earth, hears the erotic complaints of both Venus and Jove. But even divine plaintiffs cannot access her court except by passing through "a spacious hall / full of darke angles and hidden ways, / Crooked Maenanders, infinite delays" and a guard who insures that "none must see Justice but with an emptie purse." The second digression underlines the forensic dimension of the first, as Bacchus pleads "his cause of grieffe" against Phoebus, who intervened in his attempt to seduce/rape Salmacis.

personifications “assail” their subject, leading Scilla “captive” to the island where she turns into “that famous Isle,” “a hapless haunt” for weeping. Even after Scilla is gone, the narrator remains afflicted with her emotion: he sits “A-lonely” like the captive Scilla “with many a sigh and heart full sad and sorry.” At times uniting subjects and at others exceeding them, the passionate complaints in Lodge’s epyllion enable the poetic speaker to represent himself as an effective poet only by blurring the distinctions necessary to received categories of gendered identity.

In *Oenone and Paris*, Heywood picked up on Lodge’s echo of Ariadne’s lament. Heywood concludes the debate between his protagonists with Oenone’s “lament,” a “well of woe” that fills fifteen stanzas. Like Scilla and Ariadne before her, Oenone goes to the water’s edge to call out, “Yee ragged cliffs . . . rocks, and cloudy mountains,” “streams, wells, brooks, & lovely fountains” (128-9). Her dilemma (abandoned by the water’s edge) and rhetorical and emotional predicament (no human audience) clearly draws upon and amplifies Lodge’s earlier scene. Where Scilla beats “the weeping waves that for her mourned” and “Echo herself” answers, “returning” only “words of sorrow, (*no love*) / . . . Then fie on hope: *then fie on hope*” (115-117), Heywood’s Oenone amplifies the choral fantasy by projecting voices onto the inanimate world, asking rocks to “Howl, & Lament” alongside her cries (131).

A year before Heywood published his epyllion in dialogue with *Scyllae’s Metamorphosis*, Shakespeare had also picked up on Lodge’s allusion to Ariadne’s echoing woe. When Adonis leaves Venus alone in the woods, the narrator introduces a simile that removes her to the water’s edge: “after him she darts, as one on shore / Gazing upon a late embarked friend” (817-19). And what Venus hears, like Ariadne and Scilla before her, is only the sound of her own echo.

And now she beats her heart, whereat it groans,  
That all the neighbor caves, as seeming troubled,  
*Make verbal repetition* of her moans;  
Passion on passion deeply is redoubled:  
“Ay me!” she cries, and twenty times, “Woe, woe!”  
And twenty echoes twenty times cry so. (829-834; emphasis mine)

It is worth considering the possible institutional reasons that Ovid’s Ariadne should prove so memorable to all three poets. First, to “make verbal repetition” was exactly what Tudor schoolmasters, following Erasmus’s theory of *imitatio*, required of young boys. Perhaps the outpouring of echoing female complaint, and of implied universal sympathy



thy, is as much a reenactment as a critique of the foundational principle of humanist pedagogy. Second, Ariadne's lament is a programmatic one on Ovid's part. Like Orpheus, whose song moves rocks and trees, and Philomela, whose last words claim a power to "move the rocks and trees to pity," Ariadne's responsive shoreline revisits one of his favorite dreams about language – the dream of a voice that can "move" even the most obdurate audience and is capable of animating the inanimate. When Ariadne runs down the shoreline after Theseus's ship, her voice brings the landscape to life: "And all the while I cried out 'Theseus!' along the entire shore, and the hollow rocks sent back your name to me (*reddebant nomen*); whenever I called to you, the place spoke the same word. The place itself wanted to feel my misery" (10. 21-3). Such a scene replays a rhetorician's dream of an audience deeply moved and in sympathy with the speaker. As such, I would argue that Ariadne's predicament was all the more memorable for the sixteenth-century students set to write in his style in order to become effective rhetoricians themselves. It is a scene that condenses both a wish and a fear – a wish for moving vocal power and the fear that one's words might, in fact, fail to move any fellow feeling at all.

There are several reasons that this imitative competition over who can best capture Ariadne's lament undermines the promise of epic teleology and rhetoric's instrumental function. For those who acquired rhetorical skill by imitating classical precursors, the humanist platform of instruction clearly proved profitable. But drilling in *imitatio* might have prompted some Latin students to empathize with Echo's quandary. As Narcissus asks on hearing her verbal repetitions, "is anyone here?" (*ecquis adest?* 3.303). Such a question can haunt any fiction of authorship, but is particularly vexing for such highly allusive forms of invention as are on display in the work of former schoolboys. Such a question also advances a critique of rhetoric's instrumental function, suggesting that an educational program based on imitation might produce convincing fictions of rhetorical mastery and masculine identity, but such fictions would always be troubled by the possibility of an indeterminate vacillation between Echo and echo. With respect to humanist claims for rhetorical instrumentality, moreover, Ariadne's letter raises a generically specific difficulty. By competing with one another through recollections of the *Heroides*, these authors revisit a shared school text in which however moving the complaint, readers know that it will change nothing. In the apt words of Alessandro Barchiesi, a reader of the *Heroides*

must make incisions into a given framework that cannot be modified, such that the existence of the epistle will not have any effect upon it. Indeed, this narrative context is decided elsewhere, in those literary texts ... upon which Ovid has chosen to operate. The narrative autonomy of the letter is curiously interwoven with its pragmatic impotence. (Barchiesi 30)

Writers of epyllia were trained in classical *imitatio* on the promise of acquiring eloquence that would be directly, politically useful. And those who became students at the Inns were relying not merely on the cultural capital of their education, but on the presumption that their rhetorical skill would have very real effects in the world. And so when these minor epics evade the *Aeneid*'s affinity with humanist educational goals and turn, instead, to Ariadne's lament, they are calling upon a scene of "pragmatic impotence" that, to the precise extent that their imitations are affectively charged and thus *poetically* successful, simultaneously question their culture's privileged narrative of epic masculinity. In the hands of these authors, female complaints raise serious questions about the humanist claim that classical eloquence is socially useful – and thus interrogate both the civic end-game, and corollary definition of masculinity, on which contemporary pedagogy was based.

### 3. *Against Teleology; or, Burning Down the House*

Ariadne's lament brings me to another female figure with a grievance to air: Christopher Marlowe's Dido. Her complaint, like those of Scylla, Oenone, Lucrece, and Venus has much to reveal about the institutional parameters of sixteenth-century Latin training. *Dido, Queen of Carthage* is a drama that, like the epyllia surveyed above, deploys Ovidian rhetorical and sexual excess against Virgilian teleology. Written for the Children of the Chapel Royal, the play required schoolboys, themselves in the middle of learning to imitate the *Aeneid*, to reenact the African Queen's passionate self-annihilation. The play presumes a shared school *habitus*, expecting the audience to attend to Marlowe's highly self-conscious rhetorical performance as well as to the way he intermingles Ovidian and Virgilian imitation. Ending with Dido's death rather than Rome's future, Marlowe puts the efficacy of grammar school training directly to the test. In other words, his play participates in the resistance to epic and humanist teleology I've traced in contemporary epyllia. To some, *Dido* seems both "to affirm and interrogate heroic duty," to "valorize and deflate romantic passion," reminiscent of *in utramque partem* argument (Deats 110-113). But if we read the play in light of the way

Tudor epyllia are embedded in, but also provide critical commentary upon, contemporary educational practice, the play appears far less disinterested than that<sup>6</sup> – though indeed it does indicate a playwright well trained in the humanist skill of conducting *controversiae*.

David Riggs, Marlowe's most recent biographer, observes that the plot of the *Aeneid* "lent itself to an allegory of education: Aeneas inspires the scholar to persevere in his own quest for manly discipline" (Riggs 48). But he notes that Marlowe's play "turns this ideology on its head" and instead offers us "a precious glimpse of the desires grammar school tried to repress." More important for my purposes, Riggs cannily remarks that "despite the misogyny that surrounds her, the radical will in this early work belongs to Dido. She alone speaks with the voice of desire that would become the trademark of Marlowe's tragic heroes." A former grammar schoolboy who also participated in the vogue for minor epic critique, Marlowe invents in Dido a dramatic character in which the cross-voicing necessary to epyllia intersects with theatrical cross-dressing.

The play's most obvious intersection with minor epics comes with the figure of Anna. Rather than follow the *Aeneid*'s epic simile about an unspecified wind of words buffeting Aeneas on his imminent departure from Carthage, Marlowe invents a speech in which Anna is the one to plead with Aeneas from the shoreline:

Then gan they drive into the Ocean,  
Which when I viewd, I cride, Aeneas stay,  
Dido, faire Dido wils Aeneas stay:  
Yet he whose hearts of adamant or flint  
My teares nor plaints could mollifie a whit (5.1.232-6)

As either Ovid's Ariadne or the other abandoned nymphs in Tudor epyllia could have told her, Anna's complaint will have no effect. Marlowe marks her speech as affectively successful insofar as the rest of the audience on shore behaves like Lodge's nymphs, sympathizing with her grief and taking up a lamenting chorus with her: "Then carelessly I rent my haire for grieffe / Which seen to all . . . They gan to move him to redresse my ruth" (5.1.235-40). But true to the pragmatic impotence of

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<sup>6</sup> It will become clear that I agree with Timothy Crowley's assessment that Marlowe's ironic "compound imitation" in the play strategically deploys Ovid against the *Aeneid* to parody the heroic and ideological legacy of Troy. My project here is to suggest how much Marlowe's parody shares with epyllia, especially when understood in light of contemporary education.

the *Heroides*' intertextual engagements, Aeneas stays "clapt under hatches and saild away" (241).

Beyond this (shared) allusion to the rhetorical dream and practical failure embedded in the story of Ariadne, Marlowe takes several opportunities to disrupt imperial teleology. As readers of the *Aeneid* know well, one of Virgil's techniques for capturing the lock-step march of "destiny" is the poet's remarkable ability to intertwine *analepsis* and *prolepsis*. Mingling flashbacks to an origin it never fully represents (the fall of Troy – see Bellamy) with prophecies of founding of a city we never see (Rome), Virgil's narrative frames the first six books of romance wandering with glimpses of an ineluctable, collective futurity that annihilates any individual desire in its way (human or divine). But in his play's provocative opening scene with Jupiter "dandling" the young boy Ganymede "upon his knee," Marlowe reasserts the Ovidian world of desire – in all its particularized variety. He also truncates Jupiter's extended opening prophecy of Rome's future in *Aeneid* 1 to a mere 20 lines. And in them, Marlowe's Jupiter manages to subsume Troy's future to his proclivity for admiring young male beauty. With Ganymede still dandling, Jupiter's *prolepsis* does not proceed, as does the *Aeneid*, with a careful genealogy. Virgil's Jupiter surveys the lives of Aeneas, Ascanius, Romulus, and Caesar, but Marlowe's god speaks only of the beautiful young Ascanius:

. . . poor Troye so long supprest,  
 From forth her ashes shall advance her head,  
 And flourish once againe that erst was dead;  
 But bright Ascanius, beauties better worke,  
 Who with the sun divides one radiant shape,  
 Shall build his throne amidst those starrie towers,  
 That earth-borne Atlas groaning underprops:  
 No bounds but heaven shall bound his Emperie . . . (1.1.93-100)

Turning away from Virgil's imperial vision of the *pax romana* in which Rome rules by means of "righteous laws," Marlowe turns the promised "empire without end" into a personal, celestial existence for Ascanius that suggests he resembles not his father so much as Jupiter's beloved Ganymede. And reminiscent of the effects of Hero's beauty in *Hero and Leander*, Marlowe ends the description by drawing attention to the moving power of Ascanius's "frame," a beauty that forces the "morning" to "haste her grey uprising" in order to "feede her eyes" on a young boy, not on Rome (102-3).



Perhaps one of the most memorable, and most imitated, moments of *analepsis* in the *Aeneid* is the ekphrasis of Troy in Carthage (Book 2), where Aeneas is rendered mute by “the tears of things.” But in another major change, when Aeneas and Achates arrive in Carthage in 2.1, Marlowe declines to describe any painting whatsoever. As every schoolboy knew on Aphthonius’s authority, ekphrasis was supposed to bequeath rhetorical “liveliness,” so Marlowe’s decision to avoid trying his hand at this famous set passage is noteworthy. Aphthonius’s text and school habits of impersonation are very much at issue in this scene: on washing ashore, Aeneas and Achates invoke Niobe and then Hecuba, memorable as the first two figures recommended for a boy’s imitation in the chapter on speeches that represent the art of *ethopoeia*. In Marlowe’s hands, Aeneas depicts his own feelings by modeling himself on “Theban Niobe.” While she “for her sonnes death wept out life and breath / And drie with griefe was turnd to stone,” Aeneas claims she “had not such passions in her head as I” (3-6). Achates follows that metamorphic story with another, asking “O where is Hecuba? Here she was wont to sit, but waving ayre / Is nothing here, and what is this but stone?” (12-14).

By such elaborate means, Marlowe alerts us to the deeply Ovidian story of turning to stone, which prepares the audience for another kind of rhetorical trope than ekphrasis: *prosopospoeia*. Epyllia are filled with ekphrases, including Marlowe’s own remarkable opening description of Hero’s gown. But here Marlowe supplants Virgilian ekphrasis with Ovid’s favorite trope of animation, trading one rhetorical idea of liveliness for another – one that reminds us that in Ovid’s hands, the animate can always return, like Niobe, to the inanimate. As if provoking a deliberate quarrel with a humanist schoolmaster’s claim that ekphrasis lends life to one’s words, that its fantasy of “seeing” rather than reading a text is the key to rhetorical power, Aeneas and Achates argue over the difference between a mere “stone” and Aeneas’s fantasy that his words can give Priam “life.” Where Virgil’s ekphrasis raises questions of interpretation and epistemology – Aeneas stands stupefied before an “empty” picture of Troy – Marlowe turns to Ovid’s story of Pygmalion to dismantle the rhetorician’s dream lying behind the story of his animated statue: that is, that words can change the world, that stones “want to be moved.”

*Achates: What is this but stone?*

*Aeneas: O yet this stone doth make Aeneas weep,  
And would my prayers (as Pigmaliions did)  
Could give it life, that under his conduct  
We might sail back to Troy . . . (2.1.14-18)*

Achates, of course, tells Aeneas that it is all in his head and bluntly reminds him, “King Priamus is dead.” Aeneas is no Pygmalion; the “stone” remains stone, undergoes no animating change as the object of Aeneas’s address. Debunking the dream of performative verbal efficacy as mere fantasy by reminding us of the inverse story – that breathing beings can become mute statues – Marlowe’s “stone” runs against the grain of the claims for rhetorical power that lay behind school training. Such attention to Priam as an obdurately silent stone suggests that the matter of Troy may be just as “dead” as he is – that there is no “sailing back” to a distant, mute ruin that no longer translates forward across time and culture.

If Priam’s mute stone derails the efficacy of Virgilian *analepsis*, Marlowe’s Dido meddles with *prolepsis*. Dido’s prophecy in Act 5 supplants Jupiter’s homoerotic vision of Rome through Ascanius’s beauty in Act 1; and she follows Virgil’s lead much more closely than does Jupiter. Dido quotes two lines in Latin from *Aeneid* 4 which see only as far as the Punic Wars and Hannibal. She concludes, “Betwixt this land and that be never league” (5.1.309). Instead of peace, Dido foresees non-stop war and, by echoing the last two words of the *Aeneid* (“*sic sic iuvat ire sub umbras*,” l. 313), manages to suggest that like the heroic spirit of Turnus, which goes *indignata sub umbras* (“indignant under the shades”), her passions beget only one future: hers, in the form of eternal “wrath.” Such a vision lends Dido extraordinary stature, transferring the critical potential of passionate female complaint from contemporary epyllia right back into the epic narrative valued by humanists for promoting civic-minded masculinity.

In the play’s final scene, Marlowe preserves the detail from *Aeneid* 4 that Dido burns the *monumenta* of her relationship with Aeneas – but makes several significant alterations. Translating *monumenta* as “reliques,” she piles them on the pyre. But by this time in the play, we are aware that these objects may be something else than mere tokens of lost love. In contrast to Virgil, Marlowe insists on their textuality – “These letters, lines, and perjured papers all, / Shall burne to cinders in this pretious flame” (300-1) – which reminds the audience that this play is a script relying on humanist *imitatio* for its existence. In addition, some stage business in Act 2 about Aeneas’s robes underlines the connection be-



tween costumes and the production of social identity. It is a meta-theatrical moment that anticipates Shakespeare's extended meditation on the performance of identity in *Antony and Cleopatra*: "Since my lord / Is Antony again, I shall be Cleopatra" (5.13). Dido similarly convinces Aeneas to "be Aeneas" – to assume the role of Aeneas – only after he puts on the right costume:

*Enter servant with robe and Aeneas puts it on.*

*Aeneas.* In all humilitie I thank your grace.

*Dido.* Remember who thou art, speake like thyself.

Humilitie belongs to common grooms (2.1.95-8)

Read in light of the repeated exercises in impersonation required by training in Latin rhetoric, the scene indicates that Aeneas "speaks *like*" himself because now he is dressed to play the part that humanist students knew so well.<sup>7</sup> The relics Dido burns, in other words, are all marked as stage props in a play that is highly self-conscious about the physical objects required to translate this story to the stage, to enable schoolboys to impersonate ancient *personae* properly. Before enumerating each prop – "Here lye the sword," "Here lye the garment which I clothed him in," "These lines, these letters . . ." etc. – Dido speaks of herself as the equivalent of these relics. She represents herself as just as much of a cultural and literary artifact as they are: "Now Dido, with these reliques burne thy selfe" (292). When Marlowe's Dido kills herself – with an efficacious, singular efficiency missing from the *Aeneid* – she burns the play's props along with her. Dido closes the play with an iconoclastic attack on the textual, physical, and classical media of theatrical impersonation that her author practiced at school. Ending his version of the *Aeneid* with Dido's passions and not Rome's future, and with a pyre on which all the "relics" of Troy and theatrical *imitatio* burn, Marlowe alters the relentless teleology of Virgil's poem in order to give us a vision of a nation with no future.

Having become adept in the art of classical imitation at school, and having turned those Latin skills to use in new institutions, the writers I've discussed here provocatively interrupt the plot of epic masculinity their teachers privileged. Rather than imitate Aeneas's devotion to Rome and its allegory of the humanist educational agenda, they follow the lead

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<sup>7</sup> Linda Charnes might very well call this a moment of "notorious identity," when an early modern dramatic character realizes that he or she is playing a part that has already been scripted.

of Thomas Lodge, adopting the voices of ancient female characters whose expressions of grief, rage, and desire stress the *cost* of civic duty. Leaning heavily on imitations of Ovid to derail the *Aeneid*, these texts threaten to exceed or entirely undermine the imperial epic's contract for social cohesion. They are marked by a recognizably Tudor form of "discontent" – skeptical imitations of epic that undercut normative, end-driven representations of nationhood and masculinity from within the genre thought to consolidate these identities and from within the institutions that most benefitted from upholding them.

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