

HENRY FUSELI'S *THE DEATH OF DIDO*

AT SOMERSET HOUSE

by

Stephanie M. Hohlios

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
The University of Utah  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Art History

Department of Art and Art History

The University of Utah

August 2011

Copyright © Stephanie M. Hohlios 2011

All Rights Reserved

# The University of Utah Graduate School

## STATEMENT OF THESIS APPROVAL

The thesis of Stephanie M. Hohlios

has been approved by the following supervisory committee members:

Lela Graybill, Chair 5/19/2011  
Date Approved

Sheila D. Muller, Member 5/19/2011  
Date Approved

Margaret M. Toscano, Member 5/19/2011  
Date Approved

and by Brian Snapp, Chair of  
the Department of Art and Art History

and by Charles A. Wight, Dean of The Graduate School.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the disquieting paradoxes of neo-classical form in Henry Fuseli's *The Death of Dido* (1781). Drawing his subject matter from Virgil's *Aeneid*, Fuseli depicts a voluptuous and seemingly ideal feminine figure that recalls the *Nike of Samothrace* (c. 220-190 BCE) in all her drama and dynamic legibility. Yet classical coherence is simultaneously undermined by a series of dramatic and jarring juxtapositions: light abuts shade, color distorts line, gesture contradicts pose. The formal and rhetorical tensions of the painting likewise drew polarized commentary when it first appeared at the Royal Academy exhibition at Somerset House in 1781. Some critics likened it to the sublime rhetoric of Longinus, while others lamented what they described as the ungraceful, even vulgar composition of the painting's main figure.

Fuseli's Dido is—both literally and figuratively—a body divided. Sitting midway between classical tradition and modern form, Dido's figure is disrupted not only by the suicidal act that forms the dramatic center of the story, but moreover by the formal juxtapositions and figural shifts in the painting. Looking to a series of private and public negotiations in which Fuseli was engaged at the time of the painting's execution, I argue that the paradoxes of a “new classicism” find particularly salient expression in Fuseli's art, where fetish appeal vies with classical grace and decay becomes the inevitable complement to ideal beauty. I also look to Virgil's text and secondary scholarship to show that the Dido character has historically been problematic for modern artists, often dealt with only in part; she is either a civil martyr or an unstable temptress. Lastly, I discuss

Fuseli's Dido figure as one sacrificed on the pyre of social change, as she embodies a very real difficulty for eighteenth-century English society, as an intrusive female form on the traditionally male academic scene.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER	
I A BODY IN TWO: FORMAL DISJUNCTIONS OF PAST AND PRESENT.....	6
II “WHAT DID YOU FEEL THEN, DIDO?:” PROFANITY AND SENSUAL INDULGENCE.....	20
III FEMININE AUDACITY IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE.....	32
CONCLUSION: INFELIX DIDO.....	51
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	55

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is not only the culmination of a year-and-a-half-long research project, but evidence of the immense support and encouragement I received from everyone at the University of Utah. The Department of Art and Art History has provided an environment of academic camaraderie to which I attribute my enjoyment and success these past years, beginning in my undergraduate career.

First and foremost I would like to thank my Supervisory Committee Chair Dr. Lela Graybill who encouraged me to pursue the research track I did, seemingly knowing better than I that it was the right choice. Lela, thank you too for the countless hours you spent helping to build my research and combing through piles of drafts. You have been a truly invaluable mentor over the years.

Thank you to Dr. Sheila Muller and Dr. Margaret Toscano (Department of Languages and Literature), my other two supervisory committee members without whom this project would not have been possible. Sheila, your knowledge of the early modern period helped me to navigate the numerous models that this case study calls into question. I also thank you for your guidance as an advisor during my graduate career and as a supervisor with whom I had the fortune of working on the *Collecting Knowledge: The Renaissance Cabinet of Curiosity* exhibition for the Utah Museum of Fine Arts. I wish you all the best in your retirement, knowing that the University of Utah suffers a great loss as you go on to other endeavors. To Dr. Margaret Toscano, your knowledge of literature and very nuanced fusion in your own research of text and art object have

afforded me a fresh perspective on my project. Your availability and input were so helpful and truly appreciated.

I would like to express my thanks to the Department of Art and Art History for providing me with such great opportunities as a two-year Graduate Teaching Assistantship, the Etta Keith Eskridge Foundation Endowment Award for graduate research travel and subsequent travel assistance for presenting my research at the University of Arizona Art History Graduate Student Association (AHGSA) annual conference. This aid has contributed significantly to the quality of my graduate experience.

Lastly, to my wonderful husband Michael Hohlios, thank you for your emotional, intellectual and financial support, which propelled me to this point. I love you. And to my fellow Art History MA students, thank you for your friendship, encouragement and friendly competition that helped me to persevere through the program. I wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

## INTRODUCTION

In Henry Fuseli's *The Death of Dido, or Dido on the Funeral Pyre* (1781, Yale Center for British Art), a helpless and heartbroken figure expires before the viewer's eyes. Dido lies on her pyre support in a serpentine configuration, spine curving upward to the left, head fallen in weak resign. The sword with which she has impaled herself is propped at her side. Arms stretch out horizontally, combining with the torque of the body core to produce an arrangement evocative of a crucifixion or deposition.<sup>1</sup> While the Dido figure is indeed classically-inspired—with her wet drapery-like robing, the seemingly “licked” texture of the skin's surface, and her voluptuous bodily proportions—her body is nevertheless not quite ideal. The figure is fragmented by shadows and anatomic arrangement, even giving the appearance of decay at her extremities. Those elegantly outstretched limbs taper into awkwardly protruding wrists and mangled hands in shadow. Dido is like a crumbling column, and the artist almost condemns her to an identity of misfit pastness from the second she manifests on the canvas. The figure sets frozen in eternal stoniness, a marble victim of stasis.

Despite this core of sculptural fixity there is also a stubborn and dynamic suggestion of movement in the painting. Dido's configuration is the crux of an upward-building

---

<sup>1</sup> Take for example Michelangelo's two drawings for Vittoria Colonna, the *Crucifix* (c. 1539, London British Museum) and the *Pietà* (by 1546, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston). Both resemble the limp arrangement of the Dido figure, with arms outstretched in sacrificial resign. The latter image in particular recalls the Dido figure in the way the forearms hang downward, tapering into contracted fingers on heavily shadowed and seemingly mangled hands; death begins at the extremities but has not yet invaded the core of the figure.

composition. The scene rises in flat monumentality like a classical *bas* relief, and a few points of foreshortened protrusion provide dynamic contrast. Formally, Dido is the transitional figure between two others (her sister Anna below and the goddess Iris above) and indeed between two states of being, the mortal and the divine.

Drawn from Virgil's *Aeneid* (29-19 BCE), the narrative at work in Fuseli's painting holds that Dido, stricken with grief at the loss of her lover Aeneas, builds a ritual fire then stabs herself with his sword and climbs onto the pyre.<sup>2</sup> Iris descends to release her soul while Anna sobs helplessly. While the figure of Anna in Fuseli's painting seems bound to the earth, her weight pinning Dido's legs to the pyre, Iris floats in a weightless ether, a torrent of power and mobility. She cuts a lock of Dido's hair, as though this release will allow Dido to shed the earthly shackles of her decaying and violated body.

Fuseli's was not the only painting to tell the story of Dido on the funeral pyre in 1781. It appeared as an overt challenge to the president of the Royal Academy Sir Joshua Reynolds, who that year also exhibited a painting of the same title and subject matter. Reynolds's *The Death of Dido* not only shared the exhibition space with Fuseli's painting, but the two large compositions (Fuseli's is approximately eight feet high by six feet wide, and Reynolds's is roughly five feet high and eight feet wide) faced one another on opposing walls when the exhibition opened in May of that year.<sup>3</sup> Their imposing (and approximately equal) size made them the immediate focus of critics who pitted them against each other in their writing. Further, David A. Brenneman suggests that their placement was no accident; both artists

---

<sup>2</sup> See Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Book IV: 594-876. Robert Fagles, trans. (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 2006).

<sup>3</sup> David A. Brenneman, "Self-Promotion and the Sublime: Fuseli's Dido on the Funeral Pyre," *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 62, No. 1/2 (1999): 81-82.

knew the influence that the large format of their paintings would have over their placement, and Fuseli at least was well aware that Reynolds would submit a Dido composition prior to even beginning work on his own.<sup>4</sup> Fuseli's vertical composition and classically-inspired figure handling contrasted sharply with Reynolds's horizontal composition of highly manipulated color and texture.<sup>5</sup> As Martin Myrone has argued, Fuseli's innovative composition and style brought into question Reynolds's reliance on seventeenth-century Baroque painterly technique.<sup>6</sup> In contrast to Fuseli's striking vertical composition and spare color palette, the baroque styling of Reynolds's painting seemed to bury the human form in masses of torrential and vividly-colored drapery. Rather than using legible bodies of dynamic contour to tell the narrative, Reynolds concentrated expression in the theatrical gestures of faces and hands.

The story of Dido from Book IV of Virgil's *Aeneid* is one of personal mortal sacrifice. But the name Dido, "wanderer" in Latin, also suggests a power of transience unbound by the finality of death. In *The Death of Dido*, Fuseli captures the figures of Iris, Dido and Anna in a cyclone of action, Anna collapsing in grief, unable to cut the lock of hair, and Iris descending with a sickle as she assertively grasps the lock and prepares to cut. Reynolds, by contrast, allows the hysterical sister to dominate the scene with a dramatic gesture of terror and surprise, while Iris waits in an arrangement of perplexed contemplation. Even as Reynolds's Dido attracts the viewer's gaze, the figure's exaggeratedly arched back creating a focal point of both sensual desire and tangible pain, this Dido seems to be pinned to the bottom corner of

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Myrone. "The Sublime as Spectacle: The Transformation of Ideal Art at Somerset House," in *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House 1780-1836*, ed. David H. Solkin, 84.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 86.

the composition. The figure is denied visual mobility or agency, as the other two figures dominate the upper section of the image. This subtle shift in the power structure of figures is the difference between a transcendent Dido and a merely dead Dido; Reynolds's choice confines her corpse to the realm of earthly decay, whereas the gesture of Iris in the Fuseli painting begins her ascension to the afterlife. Fuseli thus speaks not only to Dido's suicide but, perhaps more importantly, to her later appearance to Aeneas as a ghostly specter in the Underworld—that is, to her immortal power.

This thesis examines the formal and historic contours of power at work in Fuseli's *The Death of Dido*. Chapter I looks at the disquieting paradoxes of Neoclassicism, demonstrating how Fuseli's painting sits midway between classical tradition and modern form. In Chapter II, I consider the moral tensions evoked by Fuseli's emphasis on Dido's status as a liminal figure, at once sacred and profane. Chapter III situates these formal and narrative concerns in the gendered context of late eighteenth-century society, arguing that the painting acted as a disruptive force of transgressive femininity in its historical moment.

Fuseli's painting embodies the disruptive movement of women in the eighteenth-century public sphere, both at Somerset House and in other public spaces. This case study provides a new perspective on the gendered viewership allowed for the first time in 1780, when Somerset House begins its annual exhibitions. This is because the painting has been largely ignored by scholars but for a brief mention in Gert Schiff's definitive catalogue raisonnée and an article by David A. Brenneman.<sup>7</sup> It does not appear in Andor Pigler's

---

<sup>7</sup> Gert Schiff, *Johann Heinrich Füssli (1741-1825)*. (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1973). David A. Brenneman, "Self-Promotion and the Sublime: Fuseli's 'Dido on the Funeral Pyre,'" *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 62, No. ½ (1999): 69-87.

*Barockthemen: Eine Auswahl von Verzeichnissen zur Ikonographie des 17. und 18* (1956)

and was overshadowed even at its initial exhibition by Reynolds's rendition of the same subject.<sup>8</sup>

This case study also gets at the larger significance of the Dido narrative, which has historically proven itself to be problematic for artists (much like the presence of real women at Somerset House), as Dido reads simultaneously as a martyr of civic service and a conniving harlot, as both pitiable victim and vindictive *femme fatale*.<sup>9</sup> Fuseli's painting signals a cultural re-reading of the Dido narrative to contradictory and volatile ends.

---

<sup>8</sup> A. Pigler, *Barockthemen : eine Auswahl von Verzeichnissen zur Ikonographie des 17. und 18*, (Budapest : Verlag der Ungarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1956).

<sup>9</sup> Roger Savage, in his "Dido Dies Again," asserts that Dido functions as other in the context of Aeneas's journey from the moment her character appears, as she is a conglomeration of classical literary women. Roger Savage, "Dido Dies Again," in *A Woman Scorn'd: Responses to the Dido Myth*, ed. Michael Burden (London: Faber Limited, 1998), 9.

There are enough of them:

The chaste, constant heroine of hearth and family Penelope; the serious, companionable, alluring nymph Calypso; Circe, the enchantress who bestializes the men she traps; Nausicaa, the amiable princess of King Alcinous's admirably civilized and hospitable kingdom; the Sirens, who will seduce a hero from his proper path if he cannot somehow steel himself against them... And the other Odyssean women? They can all be seen (along with Medea, Ariadne and Phaedra) as contributing to Queen Dido, making her the poem's "other" in several senses, and making her a richly complex character too: an emblem of fine, high civilization (like Nausicaa), an offerer of happy love and a good place to be (like Calypso), a sensualist and something of a sorceress (like Circe) and, Siren-like, a tempter to self-betrayal.

Savage identifies an overwhelming multivalence in the Dido character, as she brings a sense of uncanny familiarity, yet does not cease to incite desire, anger, fear, loathing and pity in the reader. We have seen her before, yet she continues to surprise. She is simultaneously a refuge and a trap, a love and an enemy, a caregiver and a threat.

I am also referring here to the tension between secular morality and religious messages, as Fuseli's painting seems to be one based on the biblical crucifixion of Christ (I later compare Fuseli's painting to a crucifixion drawing by Michelangelo). This history painting seems to combine Christian religiosity, and secular morality in a confused or contradictory way. And it is important to keep in mind that Christianity has always looked to classical texts in a very tentative way. The "Vatican Virgil," an illuminated manuscript (c. 400 CE) was the Christian church's definitive tool for reconciling Pagan narrative with Christian morality. Yet even here Dido presents a problem, and so is essentialized as a "*femme forte*," and a civic martyr. See Savage, "Dido Dies Again," 132.

## CHAPTER I

### A BODY IN TWO: FORMAL DISJUNCTIONS

#### OF PAST AND PRESENT

But the queen—too long she has suffered the pain of love, hour by hour nursing the wound with her lifeblood, consumed by the fire buried in her heart. —Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book IV: 1-3.

Signs of the old flame, I know them well... —Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book IV: 30.

The flame keeps gnawing into her tender marrow hour by hour and deep in her heart the silent wound lives on. Dido burns with love—the tragic queen. —Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book IV: 84-86.

Book IV of Virgil's *Aeneid* begins and ends with fire; from the start fire consumes the weary soul of Dido, and in the end Dido climbs onto the burning pyre after stabbing herself over the loss of her lover Aeneas. Indeed, the author's description of the time which the hero spends in Carthage seems to run at a steady smolder—Dido burns with the loss of her husband, that is until she is set "ablaze with love" at the sight of Aeneas.<sup>1</sup> The sky crackles with the scorch of lightning as the hateful confrontation approaches in which Dido curses Aeneas for wanting to leave, and the storm does not subside until the life of Dido herself goes up in flames, until it is snuffed out by her suicide and her soul is released to the afterlife.

---

<sup>1</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book IV: 125, Robert Fagles, trans. (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 2006).

For all Virgil's talk of fiery anger and burning pain in the Dido character, Fuseli, the literati artist, does not overtly evidence the burning of the pyre in his painting (or any fire for that matter). Yet, deep red drapery cascades down the pyre which supports Dido's figure like flares in a fire. Iris emerges from a haze of golden light flanked by cloudy smoke-like pillars. Even Dido herself glistens warmly like an ember. Her chest, face and shoulders exude a fiery glow. But this fire is leaving the figure; gray mangled extremities read like spent charcoal, shriveled and burned. The fire exists within Dido, within the burning heart at the center of her figure, the part of her which threatens to burst into the viewer's space like a solar flare. The disjunction in coloring and shadow between this burning core and extremities evidences the mellowing of a bodily flame and the passing of the torch (to continue the metaphor) to the ascendant soul as it leaves the body. The glowing ether above the Dido figure (accompanying Iris who will make the final cut separating corpse from soul) suggests that this fire continues with the soul of Dido to the afterlife. The upward flow of the composition mimics the rising of heat; that burning fire of Dido's rage has consumed her and continues on with the soul as it flies from the body.

Perhaps in this respect Fuseli clings more honestly to Virgil's original narrative than any literal depiction of the pyre's fire ever could. The theme of burning unrequited love, of frustration and anger, is central to Dido's place in the *Aeneid*. It is the key to understanding the hardships suffered by Dido, and it sends the heroic Aeneas running from Carthage in fear of her rage. It is also a transformative force; in generic terms, fire consumes the old, marking the end of a dispensation, and leaves a substance wholly

unrecognizable to the first. In the same way, fire serves as the phenomenon which separates Dido from her corporeal life and allows for her later immortality as a shade.

Nancy L. Pressley has argued that Fuseli's strict attention to literary sources, as opposed to drawing exclusively from antique and Old Master compositions like many of his other contemporaries, made for "highly individual interpretations [which] made him among the most progressive and important artists in Rome in the 1770s."<sup>2</sup> Fuseli spent the good part of a decade prior to his exhibition of *The Death of Dido* among fellow academic artists in Rome.<sup>3</sup> From May 1770 to the early autumn of 1778 Fuseli focused on literary sources (both classical and otherwise) to produce provocative and emotional translations of epic tales and poetic themes, focusing largely on the human figure as his primary narrative device.<sup>4</sup> Fuseli's adherence to literary narrative first and foremost made him something of a black sheep in the English Royal Academy, and this allegiance to the text marks his most drastic departure from the mode employed by Reynolds in his rendition of *The Death of Dido* the same year at Somerset House. Yet, there exists a fascination with classical (and classicized) bodies that is evident in Fuseli's work even prior to his stay in Rome, which balances his attention to narrative with an adherence to the formal adherence to classical forms.

In the vertical composition and crucifix-like arrangement of the body, Fuseli's *The Death of Dido* emphasizes not Dido's death but rather her Christ-like transcendence of

---

<sup>2</sup> Nancy L. Pressley et al. *The Fuseli Circle in Rome Early Romantic Art of the 1770s* (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 1979), 28.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>4</sup> His *Satan Starts from the Touch of Ithuriel's Spear* (1776, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm) and *Perseus Frees Andromeda* (1778, Kunsthau Zürich) in particular use bodies in opposition and intertwining respectively, providing the crux of the narrative scene.

the mortal world. True to the Dido figure's Christ-like appearance, we expect her to ascend into the heavens, to defy death and transcend the earthly realm. Indeed, the torque of Fuseli's serpentine Dido recalls several figures from the art of Michelangelo, such as his *Doni Madonna* (1503-04, Uffizi Gallery, Florence) and its use of the *figura serpentinata*, or figures depicting the crucifixion and deposition of Christ.<sup>5</sup> For the Neoclassical painter, the Italian Renaissance offered an important (and contemporary) means for understanding the essence of antique forms.<sup>6</sup> The way these forms exude interior emotions and messages (their allegoric or literary meaning) through the external surfaces of sculpted anatomy makes for a very direct link to Fuseli's Dido figure. Just as Michelangelo's *Awakening Slave* (1520-23, Galleria dell'Accademia) struggles and explodes from the unchiseled stone that encases its bodily form with Laocöonian strength, Dido leaps out at the viewer, back similarly arched and chest out, threatening to jump off the canvas and out of her static bas-relief-like place.

For the eighteenth-century academic artist, Rome was a premier site for ambitious painting. It was the main artery for the reception and inheritance of classical practice. Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825) went to Rome in 1775 after winning the 1774 Prix de Rome, staying for five years.<sup>7</sup> And Fuseli's renditions of contemporary provocative

---

<sup>5</sup> See those two drawings mentioned in the introduction by Michelangelo for Vittoria Colonna, the *Crucifix* (c. 1539, London British Museum) and the *Pietà* (by 1546, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston).

<sup>6</sup> For more on the role of the Italian Renaissance in mediating antiquity to neoclassical artists, see Francis Haskell and Nicolas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500-1900* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981).

<sup>7</sup> Fuseli remained in Rome until 1778, only a few years prior to his exhibition of *The Death of Dido* in London. After some very brief stints in Zurich and Switzerland he settled in London and presented often at the Royal Academy exhibition from 1780 to 1790 when he was granted the status of full Academician. See Pressly, *The Fuseli Circle in Rome*, 47, and Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-century Paris* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 212-41.

feminine figures as in his *Half-Length Figure of a Courtesan* (c. 1800-1810, on loan at Kunsthau, Zürich) seem to owe much to another student of Rome, the Scottish artist John Brown, whose studies of promenading women were completed during Fuseli's Roman residence.<sup>8</sup> This latter connection shows that Fuseli's conception of modern feminine figures was not entirely separate from that of his literary figures such as Dido, and indeed his portraits (many of which might be classified as caricatures) of modern women share much of the same voluptuousness and sensual appeal embodied by his more classical figures.

In Virgil's *Aeneid*, the fire of the funeral pyre where Dido later dies finds interesting personification in the minor character of the pagan priestess whom Dido employs to aid her in ritual self-sacrifice. Dido employs a connoisseur of the in-between, a manipulator of transformative elements. The particular specialty of this priestess, according to Dido, allows her to "release the hearts of those she likes, to inflict raw pain on others..."<sup>9</sup> Wild hair flying in the wind, she spouts the names of gods and sprays water, "...simulating the springs of hell."<sup>10</sup> She is a fearsome sight, an authority on the mysterious occult, and aids Dido in the burning of Aeneas's effigy. The brief appearance of the priestess foreshadows Dido's later appearance as a figure likewise associated with

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 47. Pressley likens the proud, demanding presence of the female figure in the background to Brown's promenading women. A good example is Brown's untitled subject of two women who stride forward in threatening directness with aggressive gesture, particularly the left figure (n.d., Cleveland Museum of Art) or *Woman Standing Among the Friars* (1770s, Cleveland Museum of Art), in which a decadently dressed woman comes under visual scrutiny of members of the clergy.

<sup>9</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book IV: 605-06.

<sup>10</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book IV: 630-40.

the occult, that ghostly specter of the river Styx. The priestess embodies the extremes to which Dido goes in her burning hysteria.

If this pagan priestess embodies the otherworldly influences of the antique gods and antique fate or justice on Dido, connoted in that burning quality of Fuseli's figure, then the figure's Christ-like composure and Michelangeloesque torque subject her to a very different code of spiritual order, that of a Christian framework. Fuseli's composition recalls traditional Renaissance images of the Christ, via a connection to the *figura serpentinata* of Michelangelo but also in more specific ways. Her sheer clinging drapery emphasizes, rather than conceals anatomy (what Leo Steinberg calls the "gossamer at the hips").<sup>11</sup> It is important to keep in mind that Michelangelo draws on the already-established tradition of a semierotic and iconographically-loaded Christ figures from the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance. By calling on Michelangelo's Christ, Fuseli engages this longstanding tradition of a very raw and compelling image of the Savior, one which does not allow for the confinement of Christness to mere artistic tradition. Fuseli's invocation raises a forgotten religiosity inherent (but sublimated) to the depiction of Christ, showing an historical propensity for crossover between sacred and secular themes. Conflicting ideologies here inflame the paradoxical impression of *The Death of Dido*, fueling the combatting of past with present.

Until now I have written of the Dido figure as an emulation of Michelangelo, recalling an earlier model of the Christ figure. But the story of Dido from Virgil's *Aeneid*

---

<sup>11</sup> See Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). Steinberg's example of this is Pinturicchio's (Bernardino di Betto, attr.) *Madonna and Child with St. Jerome* (1475-80, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), however the earlier-cited drawings by Michelangelo for Vittoria Colonna illustrate the same point.

of course predates Christianity. Fuseli's intimate ties to the original narrative make his Dido less an emulation and more a brazen reminder that Dido (the literary one anyway) is the original, not the copy. Fuseli reminds the viewer that sacrificial figures (like Dido) have an even longer history than that suggested by the painterly academic (Christian) tradition.

Fuseli connotes an antique authenticity in his painting in even more ways. The artist's treatment of the main figure's lower body—the smooth, tactile quality of the drapery, clinging to Dido's form nearly undetected in parts, and complementing her voluptuous curves in others—evokes classical sculpture like the *Nike of Samothrace* (c. 220-190 BCE, Musée du Louvre, Paris). Indeed, there exists a sort of sculptural quality in the seemingly “licked” texture of Dido's skin, her whiteness and bodily arrangement, classical qualities that were so admired by Johann Joachim Winckelmann and discussed in his *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture* (1755), a text which Fuseli himself translated in 1765.<sup>12</sup> The not-quite-concealing quality of Dido's wet drapery-like covering creates desire for the ideal form underneath, and even the arching of her back and outstretched positioning of her shoulders seems to evoke this famed statue.

This channeling of antique forms pervades Fuseli's work. Probably most indicative of this aspect is the way in which his well-known feminine figure in *The Nightmare* (1781, The Detroit Institute of Arts) recalls the Vatican *Sleeping Ariadne* (Roman Copy of the 2nd century BCE Hellenistic original, Vatican Museums, Rome) in

---

<sup>12</sup>Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Reflections on the imitation of Greek works in painting and sculpture* (La Salle, Ill. : Open Court, 1987).

her flowing drapery which graces the sleeping (albeit very pale and corpse-like) figure, and the arm which bends behind the head. While Miles Chappell asserts that the feminine figure in the original version of Fuseli's *Nightmare* closely resembles one from a Bacchanalian scene on a Roman sarcophagus (second half of the second century, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, Naples), his observation has wider implications than Chappell directly asserts.<sup>13</sup> The female figure in this Bacchanalian scene is indeed a sleeping Ariadne too (appearing in a stylized arrangement very close to that of the *Vatican Ariadne*), but it is the deeper significance of this figure (specifically the *Vatican Ariadne*) which bears relevance to the case study presented here. The *Vatican Ariadne* was long called the *Dying Cleopatra*, viewers having mistaken her sleep for death, and the snake bracelet on the sculpted figure's arm as a symbol of Cleopatra's death by snake bite.<sup>14</sup> This confusion between sleep and death, and Fuseli's (likely conscious) invocation of such a contended sculpture gets at the oppressive power which *Nightmare* holds over its female victim in *The Nightmare*. Blood runs cold and skin turns to stone in fear; the Incubus bears down on the chest of his victim as though to emphasize her marble-like stasis.

The artist's conception of the feminine form is never divorced from the antique ideal. But neither are contemporary sources absent. Consider for a moment the portrait of a woman who is thought to be Anna Landolt, Fuseli's long-time mistress, which appears on the verso of the original *Nightmare* (1781, The Detroit Institute of Arts). While the

---

<sup>13</sup> Chappell, Miles L., "Fuseli and the 'Judicious Adoption' of the Antique in the 'Nightmare,'" *The Burlington Magazine* 128, No. 999 (Burlington Magazine Publications, Ltd., 1986), 421-422.

<sup>14</sup>Haskell, Francis and Nicolas Penny. *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500-1900* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), 184.

figure appears in statuesque repose and milky (almost stone-like) complexion, she also possesses clues that speak to her modernity. Landolt stands in a reserved and composed way, emphasizing her awareness of being painted. She twists her head to the left, and a slight hipshot stance makes for a curvaceous bodily effect. She wears a flowing dress quite evocative of classical drapery, but for the blue sash below her breast and the double-wrapped bodice. She is a picture of modern elegance, but a few elements stand out in an unsettling manner. In a gesture somewhat evocative of modesty, the woman curves her left hand above her shoulder, perhaps en route to framing the face. However, the dark modeling of the hand makes it appear dirty and mangled. The wrist bends awkwardly, in a similar way to Fuseli's Dido figure. Upon closer investigation, the woman's right hand is even more disconcerting. The wrist bulges awkwardly toward the viewer, making the wrist appear more like an ankle, as it leads into a grotesque form much larger than naturalistic proportion would dictate.<sup>15</sup> There are only two fingers clearly represented on this hand, and they take on the same grotesque, claw-like quality seen in the Dido figure. The smaller digits are only just suggested by stumps. Again, the viewer is taken aback by these gruesome deformities, after being initially presented with a classical beauty type, and a modern portrait is undermined by very sculptural devices.

The Landolt figure possesses several clues suggesting modernity. In addition to the modern bodice and sash of her dress, the portrait shows an exaggerated attention to the woman's modern hairstyle, which culminates in a bulbous bouffant and cascades

---

<sup>15</sup> This is perhaps, in part, a joust at the tradition of academic English portraiture, one genre for which Sir Joshua Reynolds himself was quite famous. See his *Portrait of a Woman*, Possibly Elizabeth Warren (1759, Fort Worth Kimbell Art Museum), which recalls the even more well known portraitist of English nobles, Anthony Van Dyck, who seems to use the hands of sitters (particularly women) in exaggerated gesture. See Van Dyck's portrait of *Isabella Brandt* (c. 1621, National Gallery of Art, Washington).

down the model's left shoulder in a mass of curls. In many portraits by Fuseli similar to the one noted here, a female figure sits in a lavish setting in opulent costume and often an elaborately exaggerated headdress.<sup>16</sup> These portraits' almost comical emphasis on bodily decoration render the female figure as a vain peacock. Exaggerated embellishment almost suggests fetish.

Nicholas Powell identifies Landolt as a subject of love—even obsession—for Fuseli whom the artist met in Zurich between 1770 and 1780. However, these feelings were not mutual, leading to a “wound which did not heal for many years.”<sup>17</sup> The artist's personal life aside, this portrait reads like a gruesome and open wound in a larger sense; she is an unresolved conflict between classical and modern, her tattered limbs the casualties. She crumbles like a worn-out statue that has lost its original luster but refuses to fully disintegrate into oblivion.

What I wish to emphasize here is that this portrait centers on an actual contemporary woman, and that Fuseli seems to obsessively rework this figure over and over again in a vast succession of sketches and paintings, seemingly in an effort to master her. And, indeed, his Dido figure possesses enough of the same voluptuousness, and the same paradoxical combination of decay and stony immortality, to be included in this group. Landolt embodies a figural type which pervades the oeuvre of the artist. Further, we can link this style of modern portrait with the Dido figure, as they share so many formal similarities, and even the female figure in *The Nightmare*. The prevalence of such similar figures seems to affirm Powell's claim regarding desire, obsession and fetish

---

<sup>16</sup> See *Lady Seated at her Dressing Table*, c. 1780. Location Unknown.

<sup>17</sup> Nicolas Powell, *Fuseli: the Nightmare* (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 32.

centered particularly around the overwhelming presence of coiffed and curled hair in Fuseli's work.

Via the example of the Landolt portrait, I wish to link it and Fuseli's Dido figure, in its disjunctiveness, fragmentation and gruesomeness (alongside a classical sculptural identity), to a larger phenomenon of fragmentation in late-eighteenth-century art, specifically in the oeuvre of Fuseli himself. The fragment (often of a sculptural body) serves as a point of fascination. In *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity* (1994), Linda Nochlin discusses another work of Fuseli's that expresses the longing, loss, and anxiety inherent in the modern approach to classical form, *The Artist Overwhelmed by the Grandeur of Antique Ruins* (1778-79, Kunsthhaus, Zurich). In the image, the artist emotes "irrevocable loss," says Nochlin, as he reaches out to palp the bulging anatomy of sculptural body fragments.<sup>18</sup> Here, we see a familiar love of the antique subject in Fuseli's work, and an effort at recalling its awe-inspiring forms. A colossal foot sets before the artist, and his extended hand draws attention to its muscularity which resembles that of a "body-builder's pectoral."<sup>19</sup> Deeply incised sinew and bone, calloused joints and this fleshy amplexness lend a strong if deformed and terrifying presence to the sculptural fragment. Toe segments separate, tendons bulging, the foot seems about to explode in every direction, each section and digit threatening to detach from the rest. To be sure, the fragmentary assemblage of this foot, and its existence as a fragment at one time belonging to a sculptural figure, make it a subject of

---

<sup>18</sup> Linda Nochlin, *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2001), 7.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

violent separateness. Yet what it represents, the “grandeur” of the antique age, evokes ideal beauty. Nochlin’s description instills the fragment with that same volatility we see in the Dido figure, as though the single entity might disperse or disintegrate at any moment. Like his *Death of Dido*, Fuseli’s drawing displays an unsettling disjunction between the complete antique ideal and the incongruous modern fragment.

Fuseli depicts the quintessential fetishized antique fragment in *The Artist Overwhelmed*, but in doing so provides a distinctly modern ideal of perfection. The concept of the fetish itself evokes fear or anxiety for the whole, just as much as attraction and desire. In other words, attention on a single object indicates a discomfort with the greater part to which it belongs, and is a means of exercising control and agency in an unnerving situation. The theory of the fetish can be traced to the writing of Sigmund Freud and the male fear of castration.<sup>20</sup> However while Freud far post-dates Fuseli’s work, Nochlin and others have identified a disjunction in Neoclassicist rhetoric where the fetishized antique fragment becomes a means of exercising modern control over ancient history. It seems Fuseli’s paradoxical classification as a “new classicist” is intimately related to the disjunction at work in *The Death of Dido*.

The fragment is not just a concept alluded to in drawings and paintings, however. It had a very real and tangible presence in the context of those sculptural and architectural fragments recovered during eighteenth-century excavations. In Anthony Vidler’s *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (1992) the author asserts that excavation at Pompeii in the eighteenth century produced “[f]auns, ... satyrs, ... and

---

<sup>20</sup> For more on the concept of the fetish, see Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, ed., *Critical Terms for Art History* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1996).

prostitutes of every sex” which undermined and replaced the “Laocöonian strength of Winckelmann’s aesthetics.”<sup>21</sup> Cultic mysteries and a “blatant display of classical eroticism” surprised and astounded the eyes of Neoclassicists who, up until then, expected only the monumentality and repose of the “noble simplicity and quiet grandeur” labeled in Winckelmann’s famed maxim. This undermining of modern conception exemplifies the role of the antique fragment in the eighteenth century and on; the fetishized part of that which is unexpected or unsurprising to the modern viewer (i.e. the foot of Constantine in Fuseli’s sepia drawing) wards off the fearsome presence of a writhing and gritty whole that lurks beneath the earth threatening to expose itself. Fuseli’s paradoxical use of fragmentary bodies in art, those messy and incomplete conglomerations of antique ideals and modern sensibilities, point to a larger paradox of a “new classicism” that drives the classical aesthetic of the eighteenth century.

In the context of the very active amputation of sculptures (forcing them into this fragmentary state so as to exorcise their visual impact), the fragment serves as a sign of modern consideration of classical aesthetic and virtue. Vidler claims that these discoveries “dangerously unsettled the apparatus of classical aesthetics,” even as it provided more knowledge and interest to the subject. We can indeed see how this gripping anxiety seeps into Fuseli’s *The Death of Dido*, where the ideal, pristine and “noble” repose of the lower body gives way to the exaggerated, almost fetishized breasts, the pieced-together segments of the incongruous arms, and the jarring impression of such a dynamic contrast. There is nothing “quiet” about this transition in the Dido figure. It

---

<sup>21</sup> Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (New York: MIT Press, 1994), 48.

would follow, then, that there would be some anxiety toward this antique past which rises from the dead without modern consent, rather than being limited to poetic effigy like that in Winckelmann's writing. Antiquity's living presence, as opposed to the static and fragmentary one to which eighteenth-century esthetes accustomed themselves, incites panic even as it inspires interest and spurs an auditing of the modern age.

The unsettling effect that antiquity has on the modern individual finds a voice in the gritty and sensual tone of the new authenticity identified here. This surprising discovery, a new way of understanding the old, must also stand the test of modern sensibilities, however. *The Death of Dido* embodies a formal disjunction (antique and modern, serene and invasive, beautiful and decaying) and is exhibited at a time in which these new findings are still very raw in the public consciousness. Fuseli's Dido is—both literally and figuratively—a body divided. Sitting midway between classical tradition and modern form, Dido's figure is disrupted not only by the suicidal act that forms the dramatic center of the story, but moreover by the formal juxtapositions and figural shifts in the painting. Fetish appeal vies with classical grace and decay to become the inevitable complement to ideal beauty.

## CHAPTER II

### “WHAT DID YOU FEEL THEN, DIDO?:” PROFANITY

#### AND SENSUAL INDULGENCE

[Anna’s] were the words that fanned her sister’s fire, turned her doubts and hopes and dissolved her sense of shame. —Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book IV: 68-69.

This was the first day of her death, the first of grief, the cause of it all. From now on, Dido cares no more for appearances, nor for her reputation, either. She no longer thinks to keep the affair a secret, no, she calls it marriage, using the word to cloak her sense of guilt. —Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book IV: 213-18.

And Dido herself, standing before the altar, holding the sacred grain in reverent hands—with one foot free of its sandal, robes unbound—sworn now to die, she calls on the gods to witness, calls on the stars of her approaching fate. —Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book IV: 646-650.

In these passages Virgil describes the moral loosening of the Queen of Carthage, the model woman for her city, and he does so in metaphors of (un)dress. Dido’s robes come undone, her sandal falls askew, and she no longer cares. Shame dissolves along with the pretense of morality. Virgil’s character transgresses a social boundary by taking a new lover (“she calls it marriage” but the author is very clear that this is a subjective title, particularly from the vantage point of Aeneas and the male gods involved in his journey) after the death of her first husband. Her ethics and logic unravel along with her vestments, producing a shameful sight.

In Fuseli's painting the viewer is confronted with a bare-breasted Dido whose anatomy juts out in assault on the viewer. Her bare arms, hardly offensive by Greek or even modern English dressing standards, likewise bulge and curve in a raw and sensual way. Drapery is skin-tight at the knees, leading upward to Dido's sex. Even the foot which lost its sandal in Virgil's text peeks out from beneath folds of drapery in this painting, as though embarrassed to be seen. Dido's undress signals a loss of integrity in the original narrative, and one that seems to be picked up by critics at the exhibition of Fuseli's painting.

Fuseli's *The Death of Dido* provoked highly polarized critique in 1781. While one critic suggested that the painting evoked the sublime rhetoric of Longinus (a first or third-century Greek rhetorician who wrote *Peri Hypsous*, or *On the Sublime*), affecting the passions and presenting to the viewer "a few great... accomplishments" that inspired awe, another called the Dido figure "vulgar," in light of the composition of the arms.<sup>1</sup> Unease at the configuration of the limbs of Dido surfaced again with a third critic, who suggested that the ungraceful placement of the arms sullied the "great genius" of the piece.<sup>2</sup> And even the first critic, who was so quick to lavish praise on the overwhelming grandeur of the composition, admitted that certain "faults of drawing"—in the shoulder

---

<sup>1</sup> Ensis, "For the London Courant," in the *London Courant and Westminster Chronicle*, 28 May 1781, 1. "A Continuation of the Remarks on the Most Capital Paintings in the Royal Exhibition," in *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 12 May 1781, 1. Longinus's *Peri Hypsous*. G.M.A. Grube, trans. (Hackett Pub Company, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> "An Account of the Principal Paintings in the Expedition of the Royal Academy for the Year 1781," in *The London Courant and Westminster Chronicle*, 1 May 1781, 1.

of the Dido, the arms of her sister Anna, and even those of Iris (which the critic claimed to be too large)—unsettled the viewer.<sup>3</sup>

Time and again, critics in 1781 pointed to a certain “vulgarity” in Fuseli’s otherwise “sublime” composition, a deficiency which they located in the handling of Dido’s upper body and arms. One critic commented, “[t]here is great merit in this picture; yet the position of the arms of Dido are badly composed, which gives a vulgar look to the principal figure.”<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the unidentified author of “An Account of the Principal Paintings in the Expedition of the Royal Academy for the Year 1781” suggested that “The arms are placed ungracefully; otherwise there is great genius displayed in this piece.”<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps it was precisely this repulsion mixed with attraction which generated such impassioned responses on the part of critics in 1781. In further discussion of the painting, the critic Ensis invoked the unknown author “Longinus,” whose *Peri Hypsous* is considered the origin of aesthetic philosophies of the sublime. Upon consideration of Fuseli’s *Death of Dido* and those works by which it was surrounded at exhibition (including that of Reynolds), Ensis wrote:

I could not help remembering a passage of Longinus, containing a comparison between Demosthenes and Hyperides. “If numerous accomplishments,” says that critic, “are preferable to a few great ones, no man can deny the superiority of Hyperides over Demosthenes. With most the power of D[emosthenes], H[yperides] unites all the graces of Lysias; easy without being flat; copious, and yet not cloying; full of urbanity, endless in wit; acute, liberal, facetious, comic, pathetic. Demosthenes, on the contrary, is uncouth, harsh, and destitute of all

---

<sup>3</sup> Ensis, “For the London Courant,” in the *London Courant and Westminster Chronicle*, 28 May 1781, 1.

<sup>4</sup> “A Continuation of the Remarks on the Most Capital Paintings in the Royal Exhibition,” in *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 12 May 1781, 1.

<sup>5</sup> *The London Courant and Westminster Chronicle*, 1 May 1781, 1.

shewn; let him attempt to be facetious, he seldom escapes your ridicule, and seldom your anger should he attempt to be merry: yet, as (in my opinion) the powers of Hyperides are devoid of sublimity, and only the produce of a head, he is destitute of all effect on the passions of his hearers; whilst the other, by fierce conception, close argument, and thundering diction, presses onward to the heart, and like a torrent sweeps orators and audiences before him.

Let the reader make the application of the passage as he pleases.<sup>6</sup>

The critic Ensis values an effect on the passions, produced in a bewildering torrent of a singular composition, rather than the expected (albeit somewhat entertaining) offerings of the usual artists. Further, he makes his own stance clear: that which most would find “endless in wit” is not what attracts this critic. While even Ensis finds some fault in the technical rendering of Fuseli’s figures, he still privileges Fuseli’s *The Death of Dido* as a subject of a few great accomplishments. It is this mix of uncomfortable faults and heart-felt impact—all in a single moment—which lends the painting value and appeal, even as it also led to the painting’s criticism. Sublimity is not without its discomfiting aspects.

By contrast, the very goal of the new annual exhibitions was to tighten public morality via education of the senses in art. The exhibitions were meant not to discomfit, but to reassure. Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his ninth *Discourse*, which he addressed to attendees of the official opening of Somerset House in 1781, relayed a call to arms to the already established members of the Academy:

Gentlemen,

The Honour which the Arts acquire by being permitted to take possession of this noble habitation, is one of the most considerable of many instances we

---

<sup>6</sup> “For the London Courant,” *London Courant and Westminster Chronicle*, 28 May 1781, 1.

have received of his MAJESTY's protection; and the strongest proof of his desire to make the Academy respectable.<sup>7</sup>

He goes on to announce that the Academy's primary goal was to refine the taste of its public, based in a "purity of manners," and "disentangling the mind from appetite, and conducting the thoughts through successive stages of excellence... [that] conclude in Virtue."<sup>8</sup>

Reynolds's (and later Fuseli's) choice of the subject of Dido's suicide is especially significant in this regard, because it was the required theme for students wishing to compete for the history painting prize that year. While a full academician like Reynolds (or even Fuseli) would not have been a competitor in this context, his painting certainly would have served as a pedagogical example for less experienced artists. By choosing to submit a painting of the same subject Fuseli directly challenged the painterly philosophy of the President of the Royal Academy, and suggested that his is the more apt model for

---

<sup>7</sup> Reynolds, *Ninth Discourse*, 1780, in Helen Zimmern, ed., *Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses* (London: Walter Scott, 1887).

"His Majesty," to whom Reynolds refers, is King George III. The love which King George III displayed for the arts as both collector and patron fostered the largest change of Somerset House, that is from a decaying catch-all space for deviant social gatherings and occasional political administrative activities, to the site of scholarly and artistic production and exhibition which began shortly before the exhibition of 1781. Previously, Somerset House had been a place of lodging for royals and nobles, from foreign visitors in London as guests of the monarch, to more permanent residents with ties to the royal line to whom the House had been gifted. In 1775 the palace was given up for public use, and a plan presented the year previous by government architect William Robinson put into action. The gifting of Somerset House over to academic use is a significant turn in the use of the site. Now less a place for royal and noble whims, it becomes one of equal access to the public. For more on the history of Somerset House, see L.M. Bates, *Somerset House: Four Hundred Years of History* (London: Frederick Muller, Ltd., 1967).

<sup>8</sup> Reynolds, *Ninth Discourse*.

the history painting genre: that of a direct engagement with the epic before looking to formal models.<sup>9</sup>

Virgil's Dido is far from decorous in her physical and emotional expression. In the *Aeneid*, when Dido confronts Aeneas for wanting to leave Carthage and abandon her, she bursts forth all at once, unleashing the flames of her frustration in full force on Aeneas. Virgil narrates: "What did you feel then, Dido...? How deep were the groans you uttered..."<sup>10</sup> Anger brings her body into convulsions, "Her torments multiply, over and over her passion surges back into heaving waves of rage... obsessions roil her heart" (IV, 664-66). Dido experiences the event in very bodily terms, moaning and writhing in the pain of failed love (a very sexual description by Virgil here). In the moments before her suicide the character seems unable to control her bodily response to pain and anger:

But Dido, trembling, desperate now with the monstrous thing afoot— her bloodshot eyes rolling, quivering cheeks blotched and pale with imminent death—goes bursting through the doors to the inner courtyard, clambers in frenzy up the soaring pyre and unsheathes the sword...<sup>11</sup>

Dido fights for physical control; her heavy eyes disobey her commands to open, the wound in her heart (not the literal wound at her side) rasps and hisses in protest of her action as she writhes on the pyre, Virgil says, trying to hold herself up and falling down again and again. Eyes roll and her lips exude weak moans. Virgil's description of Dido's

---

<sup>9</sup> This is particularly significant, as Reynolds not only set the tone of the Royal Academy in function and mission, but had a very influential place in the development and renovation of Somerset House for use by the Royal Academy. By challenging Reynolds in this way, Fuseli not only acts against the institution of the Academy, but against the more literal manifestation of Reynolds's vision: Somerset House itself. For more on Reynolds's influence on the organizational and decorative program of Somerset House, see L.M. Bates, *Somerset House*, 98 and on.

<sup>10</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book IV: 514-15, emphasis mine.

<sup>11</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book IV, 797-802.

behavior reads as erotic, if only in a sadistic way, her gyrating body flailing about and unsettling Greek heroes and narrators alike. The death of Dido is not a silent one in this narrative, rather it is highly sexualized but also a fearsome storm of strength. She goes out in something like an epileptic fit, a tantrum of the body as it vies with the soul for the right to own her loss and shame. Again we see Dido severed in two, between the physical and spiritual parts of her being.

Fuseli seems to echo the physicality of Virgil's Dido by making the figure one of dynamic variance and corporeality. Her knees and chest jut out at the viewer, the core twisting between the two points. Arms extend in dramatic conviction, and the figure's mouth even recalls those guttural moans described by Virgil. Dido's body is undeniably the center of this composition, put on display. Even the erotic tone of Virgil's description finds painterly translation in the exposure of a vulnerable neck, the protrusion of full breasts, and the hand of Dido's sister, which rests in intimate proximity to the Dido figure's sex. This is a scene based in touch and sound, in physical sensation beyond the visual.

Bodily exposure excites the senses, making Fuseli's *The Death of Dido* the forbidden fruit of the 1781 Somerset exhibition, particularly in the context of Reynolds's vision for the Academy. It represents the very dangerous base emotions of an uneducated public, even as it exists within the well-reputed academic tradition of history painting, making it a potentially confusing stumbling stone for fledgling viewers of art.

The compatibility of the classical nude with contemporary sensibilities was the subject of considerable concern in the 1781 exhibition at Somerset house, causing the

Academy to meet the question of corporeal indecency head-on. A critic by the name of “Candid” (quoted in Chapter One) that same year made note of “an erroneous attention to vulgar opinions,” by “some ignorant fanatics who see vice in everything...”<sup>12</sup> These individuals, Candid said, suffered over a group of nude male sculptural figures which the critic claimed “never gave any offense to people of the most refined and polished manners.”<sup>13</sup> The Royal Academy acknowledged complaints by appending coverings which, the critic thought, only increased the “evil” of which the public complained. Eventually, “an amputation of the most singular nature” was performed on these statues. Candid remarked in dramatic rhetoric that fig leaves were applied as tokens of remorse over this loss, forming a far more embarrassing and provocative condition for these sculptures in their mutilated state than ever before. The critic expressed a fear of public prejudice toward such Classical forms and the willingness to destroy these symbols of Greek “truth,” which he loved so much.

Candid’s commentary reveals an eighteenth-century cultural unease with the corporeal indecency and threatening nature of the classical forms which may surprise. The body (that is, its figure in art) serves here as a site for hashing out social convention and even morality, as the ideal expression of holistic norms. It represents a (not often contested) lineage of the classical mode alongside contemporary anxieties over erotic display. I wish to point here to the literal extension, either in perspectival foreshortening or literal three-dimensionality in these male sculptural figures (that is, the genitals).

---

<sup>12</sup> Candid, “To the Printer of the Morning Chronicle,” in *The Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 5 May 1781, 2.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

Corporeal extremities seem to invade the space of the eighteenth-century viewer, bridging figure with viewer, to an unsettling or offensive end. And indeed *The Death of Dido* provides a similar feeling of jutting into the viewer's space with all its exaggerated foreshortening, making it likewise invasive to public decency. And of course a stark contrast may be seen in comparison to Joshua Reynolds's *Death of Dido* from that same year. Rather than using legible bodies of dynamic contour to tell the narrative, expression is localized in faces and hands, and the bodies obscured by drapery. Extremities, drowned in a sea of fabric, hold no link to the provocative core of the feminine body beneath. Reynolds obscures the physical body to save the rational mind.

*The Death of Dido* might read as "profane" in more ways than one in the context of another work of Reynolds. At first glance Fuseli's Dido figure might seem to function just like any other female figure which graced the Academy buildings, such as Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Theory* (1780, Royal Academy of Arts, London), which occupied the ceiling of the library. This figure, a contemplative image for the academic scholar, indeed an icon of the rational age, differentiates the high-minded (literally "high" here, as she sits on billowing clouds and perspective places the viewer below her) goals of intellectual learning from the mere perfecting of mechanical skills.<sup>14</sup> *Theory* presents the devoted scholar with a contemplative ideal, an allegory veiled by drapery and denied solidity through the floating, whipping quality of gossamer and hair. *Theory* sits, eyes gazing upward, her body secondary to her mind. *Theory* represents the ascension of the rationalist mind beyond the senses, beyond the mechanical and quotidian. Indeed, she is

---

<sup>14</sup> Diane Kriz, "Stare Cases: Engendering the Public's Two Bodies at the Royal Academy of Arts," in *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibition at Somerset House 1780-1836*, ed. David H. Solkin (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 56-57.

the picture of secular morality and cultivated genius. When compared to Fuseli's *The Death of Dido*, a figure of direct confrontation and bodily interaction with the viewer, a figure who seems to connote ideas of transcendence in a way that highlights the sensual body rather than concealing or denying it, it is no wonder Fuseli's picture made such a startling impression in the midst of a morally sterile space.

It is my observation that *The Death of Dido* possesses a profane link to a very real body in the eighteenth century, that of the "Bare-Breasted Iphigenia," a costumed figure that was an infamous favorite of underground nude masquerade culture. The costume is so-named because the Greco-Roman inspired *peplon* drapery that comprises the dress leaves the breasts completely bare, even as other parts of the body are decadently embellished. A well-to-do woman named Elizabeth Chudleigh, the Countess of Bristol (1722-88) made the most notable contribution to the costume's infamy, and several images of Chudleigh as the "Bare-Breasted Iphigenia" surfaced around 1749. In these images, the costume leaves the breasts completely exposed while a long and full *peplon*-type drapery flows down the length of the body, just like on Fuseli's Dido figure. The Bare-Breasted Iphigenia shows the way in which classical motifs not only permeate contemporary culture, but become associated with feminine immorality. Fuseli's Dido figure's "in-betweenness," between antique ideal and modern misbehavior, possibly causes her to hit a little too close to home for the high-minded academic critic.

Reynolds's *The Death of Dido* is, by contrast, firmly situated in baroque tradition. He shares a common attention to surface detail in fabric in particular, which we see in Ruben's rendition of the subject (c. 1640, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles). Drapery

spirals around the body of Dido in Rubens's composition, the suffocating bondage of her emotional torment. She gazes skyward, lips parted, and the hand which holds the sword angles the blade into her side, an elegant pose more than a threat of gruesome suicide. Both the Reynolds and Rubens exude a sense of stage-like presentation, and keep the Dido figure firmly rooted in her earthly human identity. Rubens's Dido figure is surrounded by accessories of the baroque style which take on the feel of stage props, and Reynolds's Anna orients her body and gesture in the direction of the viewer, much like an actor in a play. Both paintings recall Annibale Carracci's version of the *Pietà* or *Lamentation* (known through Giovanni Maria Viani's etching after Carracci, 1636-1700), where the pyre is more reminiscent of a decorative pedestal or capital, in which Dido and Iris exchange an intimate glance as Iris gracefully holds up a spiraling lock of Dido's hair.<sup>15</sup> Reynolds's composition shares much in common with these examples, from gestures to drapery and the stage-like setting. Reynolds's composition brings decorum and convention to his traditional staging of lamentation in death; there is a certain academic propriety infused in the Carracci mode which allows the viewer a removed place of mere aesthetic consideration. Reynolds buries the human figure in fabric and performative gesture, while Fuseli derives narrative from the body, contorted, impaled and raw. If Reynolds's Dido remains rooted in academic precedence, Fuseli's is a vulnerable figure of unique pungency and gripping impression. She is not just a subject to

---

<sup>15</sup> This is the observation of Dr. Sheila Muller, Department of Art and Art History, University of Utah, to whom I am very thankful for her support on this project. Examples for the Carracci Academy model might include Annibale Carracci's *Pietà* (c. 1603, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) or his *Lamentation of Christ* (1606, National Gallery, London), both of which employ a horizontal body of similar arm and facial arrangement of Reynolds's Dido figure, the latter also providing a model for the figure of Dido's sister Anna who raises her hands in shock or grief.

mourn in the past tense, but a very tangible object torn between two realms by a goddess and the sister who loves her.

### CHAPTER III

#### FEMININE AUDACITY IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

In the *Aeneid* Dido becomes a specter after her suicide, haunting the edge of the river Styx along with other figures whose lives were cut too short and who suffered injustices (self-inflicted or otherwise) and so exist in a place of perpetual transition between land and water. Dido's final state in the *Aeneid* connotes figural ambiguity. When Aeneas travels to the Underworld, he recognizes Dido, though she is a "shadow" of her former self. Aeneas finds her among "those souls consumed by the harsh, wasting sickness, cruel love."<sup>1</sup> She is not with the nearby group of suicide victims who likewise inhabit a liminal place on the river's edge. Interestingly, she is more defined by Virgil in terms of the effects of unhappy love; it is her love affair with Aeneas that has brought her to this place, rather than her act of killing herself. While her spot on the River Styx mostly reflects on her own choice (to marry a stranger to her land following the death of her first husband) and subsequent consequence, this placement of the Queen of Carthage by Virgil designates her fate as corresponding to her relationship with Aeneas. Virgil sets up a fundamental point of contrast and contention here between Dido and Aeneas; while she is unhappy, he has moved on; while she is a "shade," he is still very much the full-fledged demi-god incarnate who is just visiting the Underworld. Further, Virgil situates

---

<sup>1</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book VI: 500-530.

Dido within a pattern of other female figures: Phaedra, Procris and Eriphyle who suffered similar wounds of love and so share the same fate. He designates that which ails Dido as inherent to her gender. These women all share the similar propensity to be scorned by love, most often leading to an end of violent and untimely death.

I venture to say that Fuseli, by designating Dido as just one of many similarly constructed bodies in his oeuvre (like his drawings of courtesans, his portraits of women, and others), tries to define or confine the feminine via a combination of predictable behavior and appearance, much like Virgil. It begs the question of what the role of the female gender is in art, in literature and particularly to the eighteenth-century male academician and the English public. And this question of the role of the feminine gender comes at a significant time in the history of public exhibition in England, for Somerset House opened just one year prior (in 1780) to the exhibition of *The Death of Dido*. Somerset House provided a brand new opportunity for women and nonacademics to view and engage art as part of an intellectual forum.

In this chapter I will explore Fuseli's *The Death of Dido* as a cultural tool for characterizing the female gender at the time of its exhibition. Returning to previously discussed cultural phenomena of the same period, I will show that the feminine (in art, but also culture) frustrates male academicians and members of the public sphere alike. I will draw parallels between Virgil's conception of the Dido character and eighteenth-century criticism of feminine behavior in public, in order to show that rumor (as both a rhetorical device in Virgil but also as gossip in the modern press) and discourse become tools of the patriarchal order to confine (or perhaps just understand) the role of women in

society. When real women dress as literary characters, and the feminine bodies of sculptures and strolling maidens start running together in the exhibition space, the patriarchal order meets crisis with slander.

Along with the introduction of women to the space of academic exhibition comes a new mission to educate the fledgling public in what some might call a censored environment. A writer for the *Morning Post* writes on the “indecenty” of nude statuary:

How comes it to pass that these same statues with their nudities exposed, are without reserve laid open to the indiscriminate view of the female part of your visitors? Has decency totally left the direction of the institution; or has the unblushing countenance of a P[rostitute?] laughed you out of the sense of delicacy, that those figures which heretofore deterred ladies from ever entering the apartments of the Old Academy, are now drawn out in the full face of day, and obtruded on their view without least reserve?<sup>2</sup>

The very first sentence of this extract shows quite clearly that it is not the art object that has changed (we are still dealing with “these same statues”), but rather the viewership. The author says that it is “indiscriminate” to expose the female viewing group to nude figures and further suggests that viewing such nude subjects brings the viewer’s sensibilities closer to that of a prostitute (insinuating a lack of morality). He continues with a compliment to Reynolds and Gainsborough after this, saying that they “are never found raking stews and brothels for subjects.”<sup>3</sup> Again we see that Reynolds spearheads this concern for moral decency at Somerset House, portraying the more appropriately censored subject. The introduction of women to the viewing space makes the viewing of female nudes indecent for both men and women alike. What I wish to emphasize here is that the introduction of women seems to necessitate a culture brace for impact; the

---

<sup>2</sup> *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 15 May 1780.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

academic scene wants to be able to anticipate the needs of a female viewership and act accordingly. But in the following discussion one thing becomes clear: the feminine does not always grant adequate warning or explanation for its behavior. To the contrary, women are viewed as frustrating, confusing and even lying or divisive.

Returning to Virgil, one figure from Dido's group that haunts the edge of the river Styx stands out: that of Caeneus, "a young man once, a woman now... turned back by Fate to the form she bore at first."<sup>4</sup> Ovid explains in his *Metamorphoses* (8 CE) that Caeneus was originally "Caenis," a girl who became male (and received the invulnerability that goes along with a male sex as a reward for yielding to the gods). Femininity here is something to be remedied or righted, but now having died, Caeneus returns to her original sex. But Caeneus transgressed a social boundary in war, and when a centaur found out his "true" gender he belittled Caeneus's skills and shamed the character. Caeneus won the fight but lost the war as it were; the centaurs gathered to take on Caeneus, literally burying him alive because he could not be wounded with traditional weapons. Some accounts hold that Caeneus, buried deep in the earth, just dropped into the underworld as though being reborn in her true form.<sup>5</sup> At the root of Caeneus's defeat is a sense of vengeance by others for having been deceived. Caeneus becomes something of a liar here by "pretending" to be of a different sex and is punished as a result. Also at stake is the threat which this "lie" posed to the Centaurs, and this is where another important link to the eighteenth-century context resides. Caenis/Caeneus uses the

---

<sup>4</sup>Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Book VI: 519-20.

<sup>5</sup> See Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book XII:170, or Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, Book I:56-64.

patriarchal structure to gain power or notoriety as a skilled soldier. She recognizes and uses an already existing power dynamic for her own benefit.

I believe that this is also the same reason that the Bare-Breasted Iphigenia, that salacious costume made so popular by Elizabeth Chudleigh in the underground scene of masquerade culture, so unsettled her contemporaries. As an alluring subject of fixation at masquerade parties, she gained social notoriety and controlled male suitors with sexual allure. By playing the vulnerable and sexualized woman she exploited male desire to her own end, that is to gain physical might, and have the ability to decide her own fate (and that of her family and community). The costumed individual possessed an awareness of the woman-as-object/man-as-viewer dynamic and used it as a stepping stone to gain social status (if only infamy). This same self-awareness shows up equally in Virgil's text ("From now on, Dido cares no more for appearances, nor for her reputation, either. She no longer thinks to keep the affair a secret, no, she calls it marriage, using the word to cloak her sense of guilt").<sup>6</sup> By extension, Fuseli's Dido figure takes on a similar apathetic brazen persona, exaggerated by the raw and open presentation of a body violated.

Returning Caenis to her "true" form in the Virgil has an effect of stripping her of the power she possessed as a warrior, limiting her to an area of the underworld in which

---

<sup>6</sup> Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Book IV: 646-50.

she is only defined as “unhappy,” or perhaps better put, “confused.”<sup>7</sup> The division of this character is an interesting point of comparison to Fuseli’s *The Death of Dido*, which presents as “confused” on so many levels. Just as important is the role of quite literal slander in the story of Caeneus, a force of which the painting is also a victim in its exhibition context. Confusion, it seems, calls for remedy or righting in both contexts, and it is the role of the male sphere to do it. And to be sure this slander has the role of returning woman to the role of static object, or helpless victim; just as earth arrests the combativeness of Caeneus, pushing him (back) down into his “rightful” place, so *The Death of Dido* is deconstructed through criticism, limited to a role of incompleteness. Yet, Fuseli’s visual telling of the story seems to allow Dido a small amount of liveliness, if not corporeal agency; she writhes, so as to resist static placement.

The paradoxical impression of Fuseli’s *The Death of Dido* leaves the painting in a conceptual place of homelessness or vagrancy, as it does not fit into the baroque style of Fuseli’s contemporary Reynolds, nor does it possess a singular adherence to the classical ideal. Its removed tone of classical nostalgia, mixed with an offensiveness to contemporary critics, does not allow it to be at home in any mode or tradition. In what

---

<sup>7</sup> I use the word “confused” here, as synonymous with “unhappy,” that title given to the group of women on the bank of the River Styx that includes both Dido and Caenis, to underline the recurring theme of contradictory forces at work in Virgil’s feminine characters. Unhappiness has to do with being pulled from opposing ends. Dido struggles between the loss of her first husband and the unsatisfying love she holds for Aeneas, and correspondingly, she is caught between rage and sorrow, helplessness and vengeance. Just as Dido is emotionally confused, Caenis (in my opinion) is presented by Virgil as gender-confused. She desires to be the hero of her family and community (a traditionally male role, as evident in the epics of Aeneas, Odysseus, Jason, Perseus and others), yet her enemies (the Centaurs) only see her as a woman, and even Virgil seems to take her femininity as intimately connected to her “true” self, and thus her place on the River Styx in Book VI of Virgil.

follows I will relate the theme of vagrancy to feminine identity, beginning with I pattern I see in the Virgil that finds translation in Fuseli's painting.

First, consider the following passage from the Aeneid:

Iarbas... raised the god a hundred splendid temples across the king's wide realm, a hundred altars too, consecrating the sacred fires that never died, eternal sentinels of the gods... This Iarbas, driven wild, set ablaze by the bitter rumor [that Dido had married Aeneas], ...lift[ed] up a suppliant's hands...: "Almighty Jove! ...Do you see this? ...That woman, that vagrant! Here in my own land she founded her paltry city for a pittance."<sup>8</sup>

The rumor of Dido's marriage to Aeneas causes men throughout the world to feel scorn, Virgil says, and this African King Iarbas is one of many. Dido, the "wanderer," frustrates men in her resistance to being pinned down. She is unpredictable and bewildering. By remarrying Dido breaks one social taboo, but she also bypasses traditional royal courtship, causing men of great socio-political status to feel cheated, emasculated even. In this passage King Iarbas is the faithful servant of a divine patriarchal order with Jove (Zeus/Jupiter) at the top. In many ways, King Iarbas is like Reynolds in the way he uses his own high status to carry out the wishes of an even greater male individual (though Reynolds acts on behalf of an earthly King). So, I draw a direct connection between the literary and contemporary contexts to show the propensity of Dido to exasperate men in any scenario. King Iarbas erects temples in the way Reynolds erects civic members of virtuous taste. Both are trying to build something of substance. But something has gone awry; the Queen of Carthage upsets male progress and production. "Here in my own land she founded her paltry city for a pittance," Iarbas cries, begging Jove to look down on the chaos that Dido has caused in claiming autonomy by marrying another rather than the

---

<sup>8</sup> Emphasis mine, Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Book IV: 248-265.

king who provided her with a kingdom. He views her city (and her) as somehow cheap, or illusory (she is a “vagrant,” and her city only worth “a pittance”). She infects the king’s holdings with her audacity, inciting frustration at the powerlessness with which she leaves him. And indeed Fuseli’s Dido figure is an enemy to the rationalist platform of Reynolds.

Even the narrator, Virgil himself, expresses frustration with Dido:

Love, you tyrant! to what extremes won’t you compel our hearts? Again she resorts to tears, driven to move the man, or try, with prayers...<sup>9</sup>

Virgil’s description of Dido as “driven to move the man” refers to the same “vagrancy” King Iarbas ascribes to her. She is dynamic and swift. Her agency in movement is what offends and frustrates. And indeed movement seems to be the key to Fuseli’s Dido figure as well. She “moves” in that her figure projects in foreshortening into the viewer’s space. She ascends to another existence with the cut of her hair. She “moves” the viewer as well, inciting hateful emotions despite her not being an actual woman and merely a painted one. And certainly her costumed counterpart, the “Bare-Breasted Iphigenia,” displays unsettling movement for the patriarchy of eighteenth-century England. She climbs the social ladder by exploiting and undercutting traditional gender roles of the woman-object/male-voyeur dynamic. Fuseli’s painting embodies the disruptive movement of women in the public sphere, both at Somerset House and in other public spaces.

In order to understand the full effect of *The Death of Dido*’s disruption of the Royal Academy, it is important to understand the milieu of the institution of the academy. Abigail Solomon-Godeau identifies an atmosphere of “homosexuality” in the French

<sup>9</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, IV: 518-521.

*Academie Royale* during the eighteenth century. The French *Academie* would have been a natural model for the British as it was far more established. Further, its artists (Jacques-Louis David for one, who was in Rome at the same time as Fuseli) would have converged on Rome, the Mecca of academic art, just like British academicians, thus providing an opportunity for discourse and exchange. In her *Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation* (1997) Solomon-Godeau appropriates the term homosociality, which describes the “psychosexual dynamics between men” in English literature, to describe what Thomas Crow calls the intense “masculinization” of the socio-political sphere in eighteenth and nineteenth-century France.<sup>10</sup> A similar dynamic is evident in England (recall Reynolds’s ninth *Discourse* that addresses the crowd simply as “Gentlemen”). But this homosocial structure quickly finds itself slipping from importance in the context of a mixed-gender public sphere.

The term “homosociality,” as used by Solomon-Godeau, implies that the discursive in-group of men at work in the traditional Academy environment derives power from bonds of desire that exist between its members. While this word has more nuanced implications than blanket terms like “homosexual” or “homoerotic,” as desire may be directed toward social positions or aesthetic ideals, it does imply an underlying basis of erotic fulfillment in an all-male environment, even if this fulfillment is facilitated by the female figure. Male power is linked to male sexuality in this framework, where all voices and actors are male.

---

<sup>10</sup> Abigail Solomon-Godeau. *Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation* (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1997), 10-11. Her synopsis of Crow comes from his *Emulation: Making Artists for Revolutionary France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

Thomas Crow describes the fraternity of the French Revolution as a group based on “a history of missing fathers, of sons left fatherless...”<sup>11</sup> These “sons,” he says, are the painters of the French Academy, together making a “great project in art.”<sup>12</sup> Artists like Girodet and Drouais, left fatherless at an early age, Crow says, “sought an exalted life in art suffused with the emotional richness of familial bonds.”<sup>13</sup> This goal of a utopian patriliney characterizes the single-sex frame of reference of the academy here. And as seen in Reynolds’s ninth *Discourse*, the Academy is seen as a gift from the paternal king to be carried out by the (all male) academic class allowing for more parallel between the French and English scenarios.

Fuseli’s *The Death of Dido* undermines this homosocial order in several ways. First, it denies any empathy with the male characters associated with the event of Dido’s suicide in the *Aeneid*. The great hero Aeneas does not even get a slight nod in Fuseli’s painting; there is no ship sailing away from Carthage in the distance to indicate stoic drive or the tug of a lover’s pain. So it does not allow for male identification, perhaps speaking to a group fear of becoming powerless when the floodgates open to a public of intersecting genders and ideas. Second, the anonymity that Dido’s death provides for the male viewer’s uninhibited gaze (as all three figures are distracted by the event of suicide, none peering out at the viewer, and so allowing for voyeuristic visual pleasure) also makes them independent of him. Just as he is not accountable to her, and so may freely explore her figure, Dido exists in a realm cut off from male intervention. Female bodies

---

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Crow. *Emulation: Making Artists for Revolutionary France*, 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

act and interact supremely unbothered by the male gaze. Lastly, the female figures of Fuseli's composition exist in an unbroken chain of female action, between the earthly Anna and heavenly Iris with Dido in between. Their intertwined bodies and intimate points of connection (Anna's hand rests very close to Dido's sex, Iris firmly grasps sensuous cascading locks of Dido's hair, and all three figures make for a single serpentine flow of limbs and anatomy) form an homoerotic bond. This bond represents an existential (an alternative) path for the ascendance of Dido, but perhaps provides a wider promise of social ascension for women in eighteenth-century England. Cut off from male experience, and therefore male control, their autonomy depends purely on each other. They form a threatening counter-order to the patriarchal system of the Royal Academy, a visual manifestation of the undermining agility of feminine action in eighteenth-century England.

*The Death of Dido's* exhibition, less than one year after the opening of Somerset House, marks the start of a crumbling fraternal structure in the British Royal Academy. She draws attention to and deconstructs the homosocial structure on which the academy is based, and threatens to open a floodgate of female presence in the exhibition space. The new publicness of the Royal Academy exhibitions at Somerset House seems to be the start of the castration of the homosocial hierarchy, and *The Death of Dido* is a very public display of the risks of a mixed-gender viewing public.

So how is the power of *The Death of Dido* to be combated in the academic setting? She must be shamed and therefore silenced. The very cutting and personal attacks that converge on *The Death of Dido* in 1781 take on the sound of gossip more

than the formal analysis of an aesthetic object (despite Fuseli's painting being just that and not a real person). They largely focus on the figure of Dido, rather than the composition as a whole. That same author from the *Public Advertiser* in 1781 writes:

[Fuseli's painting suffers] from the prevailing Power of sir Joshua's Dido, which in all senses antagonizes poor Fuseli's Picture, and like the fabled Basilisk, 'look it dead.'<sup>14</sup>

Embedded here is not just the author's opinion that Reynolds's painting vanquishes Fuseli's through their comparison, but also the desire to ensure that this happens. By writing about it the author hopes to make this scenario a reality. He views his rhetoric as an extension of the power of Reynolds's superior object, making his own words anything but removed from the relationship between the two paintings.

In the context of Virgil's epic, gossip (or rumor) is a prevalent theme. And the painting's critics actually (likely unconsciously) reinforce the literary nature of the composition by enacting a discursive attack on *The Death of Dido*. Virgil illustrates the way in which rumor spreads like wildfire throughout Carthage and beyond:

Straightaway Rumor [his capitalization, personifying the force] flies through Libya's great cities, Rumor, swiftest of all evils in the world. She thrives on speed, stronger for every stride...<sup>15</sup>

... Now Rumor is in her glory, filling Africa's ears with tale on tale of intrigue, bruited her song of facts and falsehoods mingled...<sup>16</sup>

Indeed it seems that rumor is the enemy of virtue in Virgil, and perhaps equally as detrimental to the goals of Reynolds and the Academy in cultivating a public sphere of

---

<sup>14</sup> "For the Public Advertiser. Exhibition 1781," *Public Advertiser*, 3 May 1781, 2.

<sup>15</sup> Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Book IV: 219-21.

<sup>16</sup> Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Book IV: 237-30.

virtuous taste. A “vulgar” painting, perhaps, inspires vulgar rumor in a pattern of self-destructive causation. And Virgil, by personifying Rumor, allows it to be directly connected to a human character, the one wholly responsible for it: Dido. She is not just the subject of rumor, but the very biting incarnation of rumor itself. We have already seen that Fuseli’s Dido figure embodies lust and insubordination to the patriarchal order via her connection to the Bare-Breasted Iphigenia of the masquerade. She likewise embodies male anxiety and female incapacity for grasping the sophisticated messages of academic painting in the exhibition space. The female form takes on the connotations of all those destructive forces at work in the public sphere, those necessary evils in the face of immoral imagery.

Finally, returning to the passage on the King Iarbas character, it is the rumor of Dido’s marriage that causes the king to spiral into frustrated rage and desperation, which other characters claim never actually happened. It seems gossip discourse is its own Basilisk, to appropriate a quote from a critic from 1781, in a way continually perpetuating the power of an already feared public enemy. It seems the very mode by which the figure can be contained (in Virgil and the public sphere) becomes yet another arm of her undermining grasp on a patriarchal structure.

Dido’s undress (in both Virgil and Fuseli’s painting) signifies social transgressions of an earthly life, but has no effect on her subsequent transcendence after death. Perhaps this is another point of unease for the eighteenth-century critic, as her body does not bear the consequences of shame in an eternal way. She slips out of her shameful garb (or lack thereof), defying any order of virtue or civic responsibility.

Aeneas comes across Dido one more time, later in Book VI of the *Aeneid*, where he finds her as a ghostly shade bound to the liminal space of the bank of the river Styx. She is cold now, stony, but eternal and still possessing a small amount of anxiety for the hero. Even as a shade, considerably diluted in rage, and correspondingly a source of anxiety for the hero, there still burns a fire in her eyes that chills Aeneas the last time their gazes meet.<sup>17</sup> She lurks in the in-between, still a threatening figure for the hero. Fuseli's *The Death of Dido* speaks to a larger feminine identity than that of the scorned, self-sacrificing lover. The painting weaves goddess, anti-heroine and helpless hysteric into a seamless and continual vein. Indeed, the three female figures in this painting illustrate a kind of three-step process of transcendence which Virgil's Dido character follows, from mundane woman to eternal waif. Fuseli's Dido figure in particular is an overdetermined signifier; she is a pagan allegory, a Christian martyr, a risqué modern woman and the embodiment of feminine influence in the public sphere. She resurfaces through history and across space, making for a different but always unsettling impression, one rooted in her resistance to a culturally-specific role and in her uncanny resistance to the effects of time.

In the *Aeneid* the trope of temple reads as a metaphor for Dido herself, speaking to her morality or conviction.<sup>18</sup> The temple built to honor her deceased husband sets a tone for the Dido character's behavior at the beginning of Book IV, an ever-present

---

<sup>17</sup> Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Book VI: 544.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, Book IV: 573-74: "... there was a marble temple in her palace, a shrine built for her long-lost love, Sychaeus." Virgil speaks of a literal shrine to Dido's deceased husband here, and next of Dido's "marvelous devotion" to her dead king. The temple is Dido's moral body, in the way she suffers loss but remains devoted. It is my observation, however, that Virgil uses similar imagery (that of a temple) to later show a certain hollowness in Dido's actions (Book IV: 266-74).

reminder of her responsibility as Queen, and of the sadness which the reader expects of a recent widow. Yet, King Iarbas later rants about a promise unkept and the betrayal he suffers from Dido. He speaks of Dido's frustrating behavior:

We tossed her some beach to plow... [but] she embraces Aeneas as lord and master in her realm... He revels in all that he has filched, while we keep bearing gifts to your temples—yes, yours—coddling your reputation, all your hollow show!<sup>19</sup>

Even for all the “hollowness” of this act, King Iarbas continues to “coddle” and support without gratification in the here and now; he is at Dido's mercy. To speak of the feminine body as a space of ritual, and further, one slipping from the grip of a male order, recalls the similar sentiment identified at the introduction of women to the space of the annual exhibition at Somerset House. I believe that the trope of the temple, that constant place, and its tie to the body of Dido in the original narrative allows Fuseli's Dido a life equally rooted in Virgil's text and the contemporary setting of the painting's exhibition. The Dido figure seems to bring a sense of profane hollowness to the temple (of pagan ritual in Virgil, and of secular academic values in late eighteenth-century London), specifically for men (the mythic King Iarbas, and his modern English counterparts, those critics of Fuseli's Dido).

For Dido, however, the temple is equally hollow of reciprocity. At the prospect of Aeneas's abandonment of her, she returns to the temple of her deceased husband:

Then, terrified by her fate, tragic Dido prays for death, sickened to see the vaulting sky [Dido's bodily experience is described with an architectural term here] above her... [she lays] gifts on the altars streaming incense... the holy water going black and the wine she pours congeals in bloody filth... There was a marble

---

<sup>19</sup> Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Book IV: 266-74.

temple in her palace, a shrine built for her long-lost love, Sychaeus... [S]he tended it—marvelous devotion—draping the snow-white fleece and festal boughs.<sup>20</sup>

Here the hollowness of Dido's ritual, the source of its putrefaction, literally stems from her own bodily transgression. Her "fate" has sentenced her to abandonment and personal disgrace, and the idea of her dead husband holds no solace because she severed the tie by engaging with Aeneas. Dido is caught between two pains, two marriages, and finds herself alone with regret and rage. The temple here speaks to the sexual body of consummation, one which became irrelevant with the start of a new tryst, and another which was sullied by the inauthenticity of the marriage vow. Dido's body, as a temple, serves no purpose, provides no marital link, and so loses its significance. There is a very pessimistic tone here that suggests feminine power causes a hollowing of ritual, morality and cultural practice. And returning to Reynolds, women were viewed as largely incapable of mastering the senses so as to overcome their trappings. This passage carries a stinging resonance for the modern context at Somerset House.

The trope of the female-body-as-temple in Virgil also suggests a very narrow realm of function for the feminine form; it fulfills the role of lover within the marital contract, but becomes hollow outside of that role. Therefore, when Dido appears again in recognizable bodily form as a specter of the Underworld, it shocks and unsettles because she lives on despite not fitting into the perimeters of lover/wife. Her form lives on (if only partially) with disregard to societal rules and the passing of earthly time.

---

<sup>20</sup> Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Book IV: 565-76.

In her *The Newly Born Woman* Hélène Cixous speaks in personal reaction (though also as a feminist and as a more universal Other, in terms of being both a woman and a colonized individual of North Africa) to the Dido narrative:

But I would have dared to be Dido. This is where I begin to suffer in a woman's place. Reading Virgil again, in the Aeneid (Books 3 and 4); one sees how the venerable Aeneas, who is destined to found a city, is kept from the feminine danger by the gods...<sup>21</sup>

For Cixous the Dido figure is one of suffering, that quintessential place for women in history. But Cixous gets at the significance behind the appeal of Dido in the context of more modern literary consciousness (including feminist discourse): that Dido's popularity is a more recent phenomenon based on the re-reading of Virgil and other texts, beginning in the early modern era. This is largely because of the availability of the text in translation as Marilyn Desmond notes, for while Virgil was taught almost from its creation in Roman schools and continued to be the text of choice for those students learning Latin through the nineteenth century, its re-surfacing in common language opens it up to a larger readership, and correspondingly, new perspectives for engagement and criticism.<sup>22</sup> It is at this juncture that Dido becomes a point of western interest, even at the expense of the hero Aeneas in the scope of the Book IV of the Aeneid. I engage Cixous here for the sake of showing the continued role that the Dido character takes in western discourse; she is a symbol of patriarchal circumvention, and a tortured figure tasked with deconstructing traditional ideals.

---

<sup>21</sup> Hélène Cixous, *The Newly Born Woman* (University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

<sup>22</sup> Marilyn Desmond, *Reading Dido: Gender Textuality, and the Medieval Aeneid* (University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 1-3.

Dido is also a point of identification for the Other who was traditionally denied access to the literary canon of Latin literature, and of the western elite male style of learning. Walter J. Ong, S.J. notes that Latin "...was a sexually specialized language, used almost exclusively for communication between male and male," hinting at the constructed exclusivity that is threatened by the wider dissemination of Virgil beginning in the early modern era.<sup>23</sup> And by displacing not only the traditional Latin with modern language, but also the hero Aeneas with the new focus (Dido), the proverbial era of re-reading Virgil becomes a point of disruption of patrilineal focus and convention-- and the culprit is the nonacademic, nonelite (and potentially female) Other. The old exclusion of Woman and Other from the study of classical languages (and by extension Virgil's Latin text) also instilled a subordination of this group in the cultural psyche; but the new accessibility of the text brought new readerships and new perspectives. In other words, *history* became *herstory* as well.<sup>24</sup>

If readers of the *Aeneid* have historically been men as the above authors imply, and the inflated attention to the Dido character only comes about with the more modern re-reading of the text by a larger and more egalitarian readership, then Dido represents something of a threat to the patriarchal structure. But she also functions as a poster child for the group traditionally silenced by the academic system (namely women, the colonized other and the lower-class individual among others). And if the academic

---

<sup>23</sup> Walter J. Ong, S.J., "Latin and the Social Fabric," in *The Barbarian Within and Other Fugitive Essays and Studies* (New York, 1962), 211.

<sup>24</sup> Here I mean to invoke the neologism of second-wave feminists in the 1960s that gets at the traditional silence imposed on women from history within a patriarchally-coded telling of cultural events, for Dido is often invoked by feminists (like Cixous, but also others) as a figure of suffering, and one who deserves a bigger voice than that granted her in the *Aeneid*.

system, traditionally male, has utilized Virgil as a tool for turning out educated masculine members of society, then we can view the repeated study of the Dido-Aeneas narrative as a privileged class-specific ideal of masculinity. Marilynn Desmond places Virgil's Aeneid at the center of the exclusive male in-group of the academic system, one set on the development of male youths. She even goes so far as to employ the term "homosocial," as a means of describing the academic context in which Virgil's text traditionally functions. The patriarchal institution is a place for male-male honing of intellect and other desirable traits.

When women enter the male sphere of academic art, and trample traditional sexual politics in decadently alluring costumes that leave male individuals vulnerable to female whims, anxiety and defensiveness create an embattled public where genders collide. Fuseli's *The Death of Dido* watches the war of the sexes from its place on the wall, sometimes taking on the brunt of cultural growing pains and at other times fanning the fire on embittered sexual difference.

## CONCLUSION

### INFELIX DIDO

Fuseli's *The Death of Dido* occupies a perpetually liminal space: between past and present, pagan and Christian, moral and offensive. Its principle figure has likewise been called beautiful and vulgar, formally problematic and ideal. Perhaps it is that the contested presence of Fuseli's painting at the 1781 Somerset House exhibition has to do with this very literal disjunctiveness rooted in the composition itself. There is also a connection between the mechanics of Dido's disparate appearance and the larger paradox of a "new Classicism," as this painting presents a unique hashing out of the place of the feminine in the modern public sphere via a classical figure-type. The allegorical (classical) female figure seems to find commonality with her modern counterpart, who occupies public space.

There is also a significant connection between the precarious, and perhaps less accepted place, which Fuseli the foreigner occupies in the British Royal Academy, and his infamous Dido figure. Originally born Johann Heinrich Füssli in Zurich, Switzerland, the identity of the Swiss artist might have influenced public reception of his painting, which acquired the reputation of a foreign anomaly that was not quite "at home" in its English exhibition space. Just as Fuseli Anglicized then Romanized his name, a very telling symbol of his attempted naturalization as a British academic painter, perhaps he

attempted a similar naturalization via this composition (albeit unsuccessfully in light of the criticism cited here). Fuseli's choice of the death of Dido as his subject in 1781 shows an effort to put himself in direct comparison to the President of the Royal Academy Sir Joshua Reynolds. This was done, assumedly, in an effort to gain notoriety and traction in the academic sphere, but there is also a reputation of Englishness, or local resonance, to be gained from this highly political move. With Fuseli's painting consistently being read as exaggeratedly erotic in comparison to that of Reynolds, or his persona as quirky or "eccentric" (read: bewildering, or not understood), it is likely that the artist, like his painting, was not quite fully enveloped into the English Academy at this time.<sup>1</sup>

I would like to end by way of a connection between the artist and his subject, the unhappy Dido. Aeneas finds Dido among "those souls consumed by the harsh, wasting sickness, cruel love" on his trip to the Underworld.<sup>2</sup> In Alfred Schmitz's *Infelix Dido: Étude esthétique et psychologique du livre IV de l'Énéide de Virgile* (1960) the author centers his discussion of the Dido myth on the theme of her unhappiness. However, "unhappy" does not quite grasp at the complete meaning of the word "infelix," nor does it get at the full connotation at stake in its use.<sup>3</sup> In Virgil's original Latin, Dido receives the epithet "Infelix Dido," which modern translators take as meaning unlucky, unhappy, or

---

<sup>1</sup> Jennifer Montagu, "Ut Poesis Pitura?," in Burden, ed., *A Woman Scorn'd*, 139. Montagu calls Fuseli's painting where "interest is clearly on the erotic appeal of a woman *in extremis*," in contrast to Reynolds's.

L.M. Bates, *Somerset House*, 148. Bates, who names the artist with the epithet "eccentric Henry Fuseli," notes that it was not until the schools of the Royal Academy are on the decline (according to contemporary gossip) at the turn of the century that Fuseli gained any seniority. In 1804 he became keeper of the schools and a professor of painting, but this after the death of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

<sup>2</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book VI: 500-530.

<sup>3</sup> Alfred Schmitz, *Infelix Dido* (Gembloux: J. Doculot, 1960).

“tragic” in Fagles. But for a neoclassical artist like Fuseli, the term might also recall a more modern Christian connotation, as it evokes Girolamo Savonarola’s meditation on the *Miserere*, Psalm 51, “Alas, wretch that I am...,” entitled “Infelix Ego.” The meditation was written in 1498, two weeks before the martyr was burned at the stake in the Piazza della Signoria in Florence. The meditation regales a personal struggle between body and mind, as Sarvonarola had signed a confession denying his beliefs after being tortured. There is a definite parallel to the Dido myth here, in that bodily weakness (for Sarvonarola, giving into torture, and for Dido, giving into love and desire for Aeneas) finds atonement in flames. But even more interesting is the affirmation that a divergence of mind and body inevitably leads to a vagrancy for the soul, neither at home in heaven or on earth. Sarvonarola writes:

Alas wretch that I am, destitute of all help, who have offended heaven and earth-- where shall I go? Whither shall I turn myself? To whom shall I fly? Who will take pity on me? To heaven I dare not lift up my eyes, for I have deeply sinned against it; on earth I find no refuge, for I have been an offence to it. What therefore shall I do? Shall I despair? Far from it. God is merciful, my Saviour is loving. God alone therefore is my refuge ...<sup>4</sup>

Like Dido, the infelix Sarvonarola finds himself existentially homeless. And like the artist Fuseli, the martyr finds himself in flames (though Fuseli’s come in the form of burning criticism). Is Fuseli’s own foreignness, in actuality, the Basilisk of which his critic speaks?

[Fuseli’s painting suffers] from the prevailing Power of sir Joshua’s Dido, which in all senses antagonizes poor Fuseli’s Picture, and like the fabled Basilisk, ‘look it dead.’<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> In Patrick Macey, *Bonfire Songs: Savonarola’s Musical Legacy* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> “For the Public Advertiser. Exhibition 1781,” *Public Advertiser*, 3 May 1781, 2.

In other words, does the power that Reynolds's composition holds over that of Fuseli have to do with his intimate understanding of local identity? Fuseli's vagrant subject, which finds no pure sense of belonging in any single context, seems to indicate something about the not-quite-naturalized artist in 1781. It is no wonder, then, that the inflammatory presence which *The Death of Dido* seemed to hold for its initial viewers relegated it to the role of intruder and public enemy, something to be exorcized from English consciousness, even as it held (and continues to hold) an exotic allure.<sup>6</sup> As both real woman and allegorical ideal, both moral example and provocative taunt, the Dido figure is elusive, terrifying and alluring. The foreign Fuseli likely filled a similarly contradictory role, as a talented artist and upstart, during his years prior to becoming a full academician.

---

<sup>6</sup> I am referring here to the Dido figure's similarity with the "Bare-Breasted Iphigenia" figure of masquerade culture, which provoked criticism in the press but was clearly a popular (if salacious) costume. The painting's contemporary exotic allure is something identified by Montagu, cited previously in this conclusion.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abelove, Henry. "Some Speculations on the History of 'Sexual Intercourse' During the 'Long Eighteenth Century' in England," *Genders* 6 (1989), University of Texas Press: 125-30.
- Allentuck, Marcia. "Henry Fuseli on Engravings of his Milton Paintings: An Unpublished Letter," *The Burlington Magazine* 116, No. 853 (April 1974): 211, 214.
- Bates, L.M. *Somerset House: Four Hundred Years of History*. London: Frederick Muller, Ltd., 1967.
- Bronfen, Elizabeth. *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992.
- Burden, Michael, ed. *A Woman Scorn'd: Responses to the Dido Myth*. London: Faber Limited, 1998.
- Butlin, Martin. "Fuseli at Zurich," *The Burlington Magazine* 111, No. 798 (September 1969): 578.
- Castle, Terry. "The Culture of Travesty: Sexuality and Masquerade in Eighteenth-Century England." In *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995: 82-100.
- Chappell, Miles L. "Fuseli and the 'Judicious Adoption' of the Antique in the 'Nightmare.'" *The Burlington Magazine* 128, No. 999. (Burlington Magazine Publications, Ltd., 1986): 421-422.
- Cixous, Hélène. *The Newly Born Woman*. University of Minnesota Press, 1986.
- Crow, Thomas. *Emulation: Making Artists for Revolutionary France*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995.
- Desmond, Marilynn. *Reading Dido: Gender Textuality, and the Medieval Aeneid*. University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

- Von Erffa, Helmut. "An Unidentified Subject by Fuseli Identified," in *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 89, No. 529 (April 1947): 106-07.
- Fagles, Robert, trans. *The Aeneid* by Virgil. London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 2006.
- Haskell, Francis and Nicolas Penny. *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500-1900*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981.
- Hibbard, Howard. *Michelangelo*, 2nd ed. Cambridge: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1985.
- Irwin, David. "Fuseli's Milton Gallery: Unpublished Letters," in *The Burlington Magazine* (December 1959), Vol. 101, No. 681: 436-437, 439-40.
- Jackson, John, trans. Virgil, *The Aeneid*. London: Wordsworth Editions, Ltd., 1995.
- Jones, Claude E., ed. *The Female Thermometer and Other Writings*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1960.
- Lindsay, Suzanne G. "Emblematic Aspects of Fuseli's Artist in Despair," in *The Art Bulletin* (September 1986), College Art Association, Vol. 68, No. 3: 483-84.
- Longinus. *Peri Hypsous* (On the Sublime) in *Aristotle, The Poetics; Longinus, On the Sublime; Demetrius, On Style*. W. Rhys Roberts, ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927.
- Myrone, Martin. "Henry Fuseli and Gothic Spectacle," in *Huntington Library Quarterly* 70, No. 2 (2007), University of California Press: 289-310.
- Nardo, Anna K. *Milton's Sonnets and the Ideal Community*. University of Nebraska Press, 1979.
- Nelson, Robert S. and Richard Schiff, ed. *Critical Terms for Art History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Nochlin, Linda. *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2001.
- Ong, Walter S.J. "Latin and the Social Fabric," in *The Barbarian Within and Other Fugitive Essays and Studies*. New York, 1962.
- Pigler, A. *Barockthemen : eine Auswahl von Verzeichnissen zur Ikonographie des 17. und 18.* Budapest : Verlag der Ungarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1956.

- Powell, Nicolas. "The Auckland Collection of Fuseli Drawings," in *The Burlington Magazine* 110, No. 781 (April 1968): 224, 227-28.
- Powell, Nicolas. *Fuseli: the Nightmare*. New York: Viking Press, 1973.
- Pressly, Nancy L. and the Yale Center for British Art Staff. *The Fuseli Circle in Rome: Early Romantic Art of the 1770s*. New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 1979.
- Rosenblum, Robert. *Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967.
- Russo, Kathleen. "A Comparison of Rousseau's 'Julie' with the Heroines of Greuze and Fuseli," in *Woman's Art Journal* 8, No. 1 (Spring-Summer 1987), Woman's Art, Inc.: 3-7.
- Ruzicka, Joseph. "Fuseli, Napoleon, and 'Themistocles at the Court of Admetus,'" in *Master Drawings* 26, No. 3 (Autumn 1988), Master Drawings Association: 253-58, 300.
- Savonarola, Girolamo. "Meditation on the *Miserere*, Psalm 51 (1498). In Patrick Macey, *Bonfire Songs: Savonarola's Musical Legacy*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998.
- Schiff, Gert. *Johann Heinrich Füssli (1741-1825)*, two volumes. Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1973.
- Schiff, Gert. *Johann Heinrich Füssli's Milton-Galerie*. Zurich: Fretz and Wasmuth, 1963.
- Schmitz, Alfred. *Infelix Dido*. Gembloux: J. Doculot, 1960.
- Solkin, David H., ed. *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibition at Somerset House 1780-1836*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001.
- Solomon-Godeau, Abigail. *Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation*. London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1997.
- Steinberg, Leo. *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.
- Vidler, Anthony. *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*. New York: MIT Press, 1994.
- Winckelmann, Johann Joachim. *Reflections on the imitation of Greek works in painting and sculpture*. La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1987.

Woodward, John. "Paintings and Drawings by Fuseli," in *The Burlington Magazine* 92, No. 565 (April 1950): 111-13.

Reynolds, *Ninth Discourse*, in Helen Zimmern, ed., *Sir Joshua Reynolds' Discourses*. London: Walter Scott, 1887.