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Ancient History (MA Hons)

How Significant is Lavinia to the *Aeneid*?

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Introduction

Lavinia is seemingly a paradox when one considers her physical presence in only 18 of the 9,896 lines of Virgil's *Aeneid*, in comparison to the importance of her character to the epic poem. The purpose of this dissertation is to illuminate the paramount significance of Lavinia to the *Aeneid*, something that has often been overlooked. Lavinia is the daughter of King Latinus, the king of Latium in Italy, and the ultimate destination of Aeneas and the *Aeneid*'s narrative. There is a general prioritisation, by both academics and audiences, of the first six books of the *Aeneid* compared to the latter six.¹ It is partly because of this that there is a lack of scholarly attention devoted to Lavinia, as she does not physically enter the narrative until the second half of the *Aeneid*. As a result of this focus upon the first half of the *Aeneid* and the characters with a greater physical dominance within the narrative, Lavinia's centrality to the *Aeneid* fades away. However, more significant in the lack of academic study of the complete character of Lavinia is the concept that her importance to the *Aeneid* is confined within her famous blush in book 12 – reflected through the majority of secondary literature concerning Lavinia focussing upon this alone.

In comparison, the female character of Dido, who occupies much of the narrative within the first half of the *Aeneid*, has received vast amounts of scholarly discussion and focus, highlighting the disproportionate amount Lavinia has received in contrast. The work of both Woodworth and Cairns, which focuses upon Lavinia's contribution to the *Aeneid* as a whole, are distinctive because of an otherwise lack of academic attention paid to Lavinia outside of the confinements of her blush. The

¹ Tarrant (1997a), 179.

aim of this dissertation is to demonstrate that Lavinia contributes far more to the *Aeneid's* development and purpose than simply a colouring of her cheeks.

This dissertation shall be conducted by the study of Frederick Ahl's translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*. This is because he acknowledges that as a translator he must avoid transferring any of his assumptions upon the text through attempting to de-familiarise with the text, in order to allow the most accurate representation of the Latin that is possible within the English language. Whilst some of the subtleties present within the original Latin text are lost, Ahl's translation of the *Aeneid* enables those not versed in Latin to explore the role of Lavinia extensively.

To fully assess the contribution Lavinia has to the *Aeneid* she must be explored both by her influence on the narrative itself, its development, and her position within the overarching purpose of the *Aeneid*. Through looking at Lavinia's position as the ultimate destination of both Aeneas' physical and moral journey, it will become apparent that Lavinia acts as a catalyst to much of the narrative. Her effect on the characters of the *Aeneid* marks her out as an indispensable figure. Furthermore, through examining the context of the *Aeneid*, both in terms of its contemporary setting and genre, it will be shown that Lavinia was created by Virgil to be not just important to the *Aeneid*, but also to the shaping of his audience. It would be inexcusable to conduct this analysis upon Lavinia without commenting on her blush, as a failure to do so would be to ignore Virgil's most active display of Lavinia. Ultimately, through the consideration of these themes, the indispensability of Lavinia to the *Aeneid* will be exposed and her significant role to the *Aeneid* and its audience will be incontestable.

Lavinia's role within the *Aeneid's* narrative.

Lavinia is, for the most part, denied any physicality within the narrative appearing physically only four times throughout the whole twelve books of the *Aeneid*.² Her minimal physical presence does not however reduce her significance for it is clear that her character is a driving force behind many of the plot developments within the narrative. Lavinia's significance transcends her own physical actions, for her character indirectly affects other characters and their actions; a literary trope commonly utilised within the narrative of epic poetry to reflect a character's significance.³ For example, Helen's importance to the narrative of the *Iliad* is represented not through her own actions but through her omnipresence articulated by the continual reference to her person.⁴ This device is demonstrated by the old men's comment regarding her beauty (Homer, *Iliad* 3.156-8); they understand why the Trojans and Greeks have been fighting over her for so long. Helen has not been active in the passage herself, but the audience is aware of her significance to the plot of the *Iliad*. An exploration of Lavinia, and her marriage to Aeneas, will show that she is one of the most pivotal characters to the plot and is a driving force of the narrative.

From the outset the reader is made aware that the ultimate destination for the poem's protagonist, Aeneas, is Lavinia's coastline. It is this phrase 'Lavinia's coastlands' (Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.2-3) which is so imperative to the text as it creates an unspoken allusion between the geographical destination and Lavinia; the ultimate

² Within a religious setting (7.71-80), being taken to the woodland by her mother Amata (7.386-388), her famous blush (12.64-69) and mourning her mother's suicide (12.605-606).

³ Cairns (1989), 153.

⁴ Cairns (1989), 155.

aim of the book. As a result, the two become intrinsically coupled together and as such Lavinia becomes a physical representation of Lavinium.⁵ With the audience aware of the conclusion, the figure of Lavinia becomes a clear motivating factor to the protagonist's activities within the *Aeneid*. While her character lacks a voice and presence within the narrative, her significance to the poem's development can be seen through her influence on events.⁶ The instant establishment of a relationship between Lavinia and the topography ensures her omnipresence throughout the poem.

A connection between Lavinium and Lavinia becomes explicit when Aeneas declares that 'Lavinia will give this community her name' (*Aen.* 12.194), confirming the allusion that has permeated the poem throughout. The war that occupies the second half of the *Aeneid* sees Lavinia and the land of Latium become an indistinguishable entity, with victory resulting in the attainment of both land and woman.⁷ The anthropomorphism of Lavinium and Lavinia is established upon the literary tradition dating back to Ancient Greece's archaic period.⁸ This idea was taken up by the Roman poets, with Lucretius explaining the idea 'that the earth had deservedly won the name of mother, since all things are born of earth' (*De Rerum Natura* 5.821-822). It is Lavinia's connection to Lavinium that places her within significant episodes of the *Aeneid*.⁹ For example, Jupiter assures Venus during his prophecy pertaining to the might of Rome that 'Lavinium's city and promised walls' shall be seen (*Aen.* 1.258-259). The promise of Lavinium, and thus Lavinia, are told by

⁵ Keith (2000), 50.

⁶ Syed (2005), 137; Keith, (2000), 49-50.

⁷ Syed (2005), 139.

⁸ Keith (2000), 36.

⁹ Cairns (1989), 153.

Jupiter to be the will of fate, an unchangeable fact to the contemporary Roman reader.¹⁰ Lavinia's inclusion, through her indistinguishable attachment to Lavinium, within this prophecy shows that she is indispensable to the fate of Aeneas and the very founding of the Roman race. The contemporary Roman audience would have been particularly aware of how vital Lavinia was because they were living within the realisation of Jupiter's prophecy, as a result of Lavinia and Aeneas' foundation of the Roman race.¹¹

Lavinia is indispensable to the foundation of the Roman race due to her status as a Latin and the need of Latin blood within the Roman race.¹² This is made unequivocally clear by Juno's acceptance of destiny. Juno stipulates she will concede to fate, after devoting much of her attention to preventing Aeneas from reaching Italy because of her simultaneous hatred of the Trojans and love for Carthage (*Aen.* 1.16-33), on the condition that the Trojans are unable to maintain their traditions or their name (*Aen.* 12.825-828). Furthermore, she explicitly states 'Roman stock get its strength from Italian concepts of courage' (*Aen.* 12.827). So, without Lavinia's specifically Latin blood within the foundation of the Roman race, the Romans wouldn't have attained the quality of courage that had been so significant in their accession, and preservation, of world domination prophesied by Jupiter. For example, the Scipios who had been so instrumental in the expansion of the Roman Empire in Carthage, advertised this bravery on their tombstones, acclaiming 'I accumulated the virtue of my race by my *mores*' (*CIL* I² no.15), because

¹⁰ Camps (1969), 42: 'the concept of a fixed order of things, which we may call Fate'; (7.316) Juno says 'it's immovably fixed in the fate that he'll [Aeneas] marry Lavinia'.

¹¹ Griffin (1999), 289: presents the idea that the events of the *Aeneid* were not to be understood within a vacuum, but in relation to the poem's contemporary context.

¹² Syed (2005), 135.

it was so significant both to their Roman identity and for the Roman domination of the world.¹³ Without Lavinia the *Aeneid* would not be a poem about Rome and the Roman people's foundation but simply about the relocation of the Trojans to Italy. So not only is she significant to the narrative in terms of her enduring presence within it, but she is also important to the identity of the *Aeneid*'s originally intended audience.

Lavinia's role within the *Aeneid*, as the marriage partner of Aeneas, not only dictates many of Aeneas' actions but also requires the removal of multiple characters from the narrative. The first character to fall victim to their marriage is Creusa. Creusa is the Trojan wife of Aeneas, and the mother of young Ascanius. Her character, and ejection from the poem, had to be constructed with great care due to Augustus' claim of descent from the divine through Ascanius, Aeneas and thus Venus. Virgil often portrays the demise of female characters within the *Aeneid* as a direct consequence of overindulgence in one's femininity.¹⁴ For example, despite Camilla being a socially unconventional female character, it is still on account of succumbing to her 'feminine tastes, in her passion for booty and plunder' (*Aen.* 11.782), that she falls. Creusa defies this trope; instead she is created within the same positive moral purpose as Lavinia. Furthermore, their roles in the narrative are an inversion of each other. The loss of Creusa is paired with the loss of Troy, whereas as Lavinia is paired with the attainment of Lavinium.¹⁵ The removal of Creusa, who is established within Virgil's framework of the idealised Roman woman, helps to illuminate the

¹³ Galinsky (1996), 84.

¹⁴ Nugent, (1999), 263.

¹⁵ Syed (2005), 141.

significance of Lavinia.¹⁶ Lavinia's role within the narrative's development is so extensive that even a character such as the esteemed Creusa is not allowed to occupy a place within the plot outside that of a flashback to Troy. Creusa is permitted self-awareness and acknowledges her lack of scope within her husband's narrative and the narrative of Rome. She tells Aeneas that she has no position within his fate, because he is going to reach Italy where lies his 'royal partner in marriage' (*Aen.* 2.783-784). This articulates clearly to the audience that Lavinia, and her role within the plot, are the sole reason that Creusa must be removed from the *Aeneid*.

Furthermore, chronologically it shows that Aeneas was aware of a foreign bride and their fated marriage, even before the audience enters the poem. Lavinia's presence thus extends further than the time-frame of the *Aeneid*. The removal of Creusa, due to her husband's fated marriage to Lavinia, is another example of Lavinia dictating the events of the *Aeneid* before she herself enters the narrative. It is significant that instead of falling victim to the wiles of her own femininity, like so many other female protagonists within the *Aeneid*, Creusa is removed in accordance with 'heaven's guidance' (*Aen.* 2.777-778). The divine interference represents Creusa's superiority over the other female characters removed from the *Aeneid*. Creusa's defining moment within the *Aeneid* comes after her death when she appears to Aeneas as a ghost and reveals why she has been taken from him (*Aen.* 2.771-794). Creusa's physical function within the *Aeneid* illuminates that even a beloved and moral wife will be removed to allow for the marriage between Aeneas and Lavinia. This removal of a character for no reason other than to allow for the predestined marriage union shows Lavinia's significance to the narrative's development.

¹⁶ Laird (1997), 303.

In comparison to Creusa, Dido has a far more physical role within the *Aeneid*'s narrative. Dido is used by Virgil differently to show the audience the pivotal role Lavinia's marriage to Aeneas plays within the plot of the *Aeneid*. The huge level of scholarly attention devoted to Dido, in comparison to the other female characters of the *Aeneid*, could be used to argue that Dido is by far the most significant female character within the text. However, Dido is actually less significant than the level of scholarly literature suggests as she has little effect on other characters in the narrative.¹⁷ Dido's impact on the narrative ceases after her suicide in book 4 (*Aen.* 4.705), she is not even permitted speech during her appearance in the underworld (*Aen.* 6.450-476), and yet Dido is prominent within discussion of the *Aeneid*. The emotive depiction of Dido resonates with the ancient audience, as is reflected by Augustine's comment that he would 'weep for dead Dido, because she killed herself for love' *Confessions* (1.13), and it is due to this, rather than her impact on the events of the *Aeneid*, that has led to her receiving such great attention within scholarly discussion. This hugely sympathetic portrayal of Dido is born out the necessity for Aeneas to leave her for Lavinia.¹⁸ So, once again a character is removed from the narrative because of the position Lavinia holds within it.

When Jupiter is made aware of the relationship between Aeneas and Dido, his reasons for sending Mercury to ensure Aeneas' departure from Phoenicia are the need for Aeneas to 'make *Italy* pregnant with empires' and establish 'a new breed out of noble Teucer's blood' (*Aen.* 4.229-231). Jupiter is also exasperated at Aeneas'

¹⁷ Cairns (1989), 153.

¹⁸ Heinze (2004), 105.

lack of thought for his 'Ausonian sons and Lavinian ploughlands' (*Aen.* 4.236). This message from Mercury serves as a declaration of the will of the gods. As a result of this message, in which Lavinia's position within Aeneas' fate is once again declared, Aeneas leaves Dido resulting in the Carthaginian Queen taking her own life before she is destined to die (*Aen.* 4.696). This episode illuminates Lavinia's significance to the plot. Once again, the audience witness divine intervention as a necessity to ensure the union of Aeneas and Lavinia. The reoccurring intervention by the gods would have stressed to the Roman audience the importance of Lavinia and Aeneas' marriage because supernatural forces held an integral position within Roman society, so their intervention would have been seen as a reflection of the absolute importance of the marriage.¹⁹ Furthermore, Lavinia is again the catalyst behind the progression of the narrative and also one of the most memorable, and emotive episodes of the *Aeneid*: the tragic death of Dido. Dido's succumbs to her femininity, unlike Creusa, and is forced to defy her own destiny. The destruction of a once formidable female because of the predestined union between Aeneas and Lavinia, shows the huge impact that Lavinia's role has on the plot development of the *Aeneid*.

Lavinia's narrative significance culminates within the second half of the *Aeneid* for she is explicitly cast as the primary motivation for the war that occupies the final six books. Virgil comments that it was Lavinia who 'sustained his [her father's] home and position of power' (*Aen.* 7.52), and it is this role which introduces her as an important tool for legitimisation of rule, and thus why marital union with her is a matter over which to wage war. Turnus' pursuit of Lavinia is futile, as Latinus has been made aware his 'sons-in-law will arrive from a foreign world' (*Aen.* 7.98), and

¹⁹ Camps (1969), 47; 49.

establish the Roman race. The importance of attaining Lavinia in order to establish legitimate rule within Italy is demonstrated through the importance she holds within her father's rule. Lavinia is described as a means by which Latinus 'sustained his home and position of power' (*Aen.* 7.52). The subtle hyperbaton 'only a daughter sustained his home and position of power' (*Aen.* 7.52), exaggerates the uniqueness of Lavinia's position and emphasises her exclusive position within the *Aeneid*.²⁰ Furthermore, this discussion of Lavinia as a tool of political power marks a change in tone from the personal first half, to a more politically driven second half.²¹ Lavinia is a political tool because of her status as an unmarried figure, her societal significance lay within her position as a marriage partner, and not in her character.²² Lavinia holds a level of political significance, even if she does not hold any political autonomy, and this explains why she is a motivating factor for the impending war.

However, it is the political and social legitimisation that marriage to Lavinia would bring that encourages the manipulation of Turnus by the Gods, and justifies his motives for war as can be seen through the persuasion of Allecto. Allecto, in the guise of Calybe, articulates the centrality of Lavinia to the attainment of political power by asking Turnus if he is going to 'let the sceptre that's yours be signed over to immigrant Dardans? He's going back, this king, on the marriage he promised you' (*Aen.* 7.422-23). It is clear that marriage to Lavinia and the realisation of political power are one and the same. There is a clear association between the loss of sceptre and Lavinia, showing that the loss of Lavinia constitutes a loss in his claim to rule. This is represented further by an indistinguishability between the household of

²⁰ Horsfall (2000), 80.

²¹ Horsfall (2000), 81.

²² Cairns (1989), 152.

Latinus and his politics, as Virgil tells us that Allecto ‘shattered Latinus’ political scheme – and the whole of his household’ (*Aen.* 7.407). It is through the emphasis of the political dimension of marriage to Lavinia that Allecto attempts to urge Turnus to wage war against Aeneas. This episode exposes the political significance that Lavinia holds.

The political construction of Lavinia is reflective of the contemporary politics in which Virgil was writing. Augustus utilised his female relatives in a marital context for political gain; like Lavinia, these women were seen as tools for political advancement, and this is clearly demonstrated in their depiction in the ancient sources.²³ Octavia is a prime example; when her marriage to Mark Antony is mentioned, it is always in a political context, and she is given no scope for choice or indeed a voice. This marriage brought about a reconciliation between Antony and Augustus; bringing an end to civil strife alongside a strengthening of the Roman state as a whole (Appian, *Civil Wars* 5.64).²⁴ Appian talks very little about the actual marriage, choosing not to mention any of Octavia’s personal attribute but focuses on the temporary peace that the marriage brought about. This decision to hone in on the political benefits of marriage, illuminates Octavia’s significance as a high-born Roman woman, vulnerable to politically-led manipulation.²⁵ The nature of Appian’s *Civil Wars* means that events are going to be assessed within a political context, however the political purpose of this union is seen elsewhere. Plutarch stresses that the marriage of Octavia and Antony only came to be because of a need for ‘a stronger security’ between the triumvirs, and the marriage would ‘restore

²³ Sullivan (1992), 70-71.

²⁴ Wallace-Hadrill (1993), 32.

²⁵ Sullivan (1992), 70-71.

harmony and be their [the Romans] complete salvation' (Plutarch, *Antony* 31.1-2). By creating a context in which Lavinia is an essential political pawn, Virgil pays homage to the contemporary reality of Augustan Rome. Therefore, Aeneas' destiny to be the founder of the Roman race with Lavinia is indisputably significant to the narrative's development due to the politicisation within the poem.

Furthermore, Lavinia is the motivator - for Turnus and Aeneas - from the very beginning of the war until Turnus' death. Before the idea of war has even been incited within Turnus, Juno prophesises war as a means for Aeneas and Lavinia to 'consummate [their] union' with Lavinia receiving 'both Rutulian and Trojan dowries of blood' (*Aen.* 7.317-319). Lavinia is thus a catalyst for and immovable from the looming war, for spilt blood is the price that must be paid for her marriage to Aeneas. Later in the narrative, Turnus becomes 'even more ardent for war', following Lavinia's famous blush (*Aen.* 12.71).²⁶ Whilst this passage calls into question whether Turnus' desire for marriage to Lavinia is more political, or emotive, it does confirm again that it is Lavinia who is inspiring the warfare, hence driving the narrative of the second half of the *Aeneid*. Moreover, upon Turnus' defeat he concedes, 'You've won... Lavinia's your wife' (*Aen.* 12.936-937); a clear demonstration that the purpose of this war was to win Lavinia's hand in marriage. The defeat of Turnus, and in turn the Latins, furthers Lavinia's amalgamation with the victory over the land resulting in victory of Lavinia.²⁷ Finally, Virgil is explicit within his narrative that Lavinia is responsible for the war, declaring 'virgin Lavinia, cause of this great disaster' (*Aen.* 11.479-480). It is rare Virgil provides the audience

²⁶ Lavinia's blush will be explored within Chapter Three.

²⁷ Mitchell (1991), 226.

with such explicit explanations for happenings within the narrative, as one of his greatest skills within the *Aeneid* is to allow the audience to explore the work themselves and form their own conclusions through his use of ambiguity.²⁸ This direct assertion from Virgil represents the indisputable importance of recognising Lavinia's role within the narrative. There is no other conclusion: Lavinia is responsible for the actions throughout the second half of the epic poem.

Considering Lavinia's endurance as the driving force behind the action of the *Aeneid*, and the persistent inevitability of her marriage to Aeneas, it might be expected that the plot would culminate in their union. However, the marriage of Lavinia and Aeneas never physically enters the narrative; it is something that happens after the time frame of the *Aeneid*. There is no need to feature the marriage in a literal sense within the narrative because the power of fate is so powerful and overarching.²⁹ By not including it within the text Lavinia, and her marriage, fall into the same category, of existence beyond the text, of the future power and prestige of Rome. Turnus' death and the culmination of the *Aeneid* reflects the power of Lavinia's marriage, the foundation of the Roman race and the subsequent glory of Rome. The narrative and the future formation of Rome have been governed by something so powerful – fate – which nobody, no matter what their stature, can stand in the way, with those who attempt to being removed from the narrative.³⁰ Turnus' death is the final necessary character death of the *Aeneid*, and once again it is his threat to Lavinia's marriage, as was the case with Creusa and Dido, that results

²⁸ Anderson (1969), 3.

²⁹ Woodworth (1930), 180: the marriage of Lavinia and Aeneas being prescribed within fate, and thus unavoidable in of for the Roman race to be founded.

³⁰ Horsfall (1995), 158: Turnus can't marry Lavinia for the more important reasons of both fate and state.

in his death. It shows that gender does not affect fate, for female and male characters alike will be removed to make way for Lavinia and her fated marriage to Aeneas.

It has been demonstrated that even if Lavinia is not always present and active within the narrative, she is nonetheless crucial to the plot.³¹ Lavinia's role within the moral purpose of Virgil's *Aeneid* only further highlights Lavinia's significance to the epic poem.

³¹ Smith (2005), 121.

Lavinia's role within the *Aeneid's* moral agenda

In order to assess the role, and the extent to which, Lavinia contributes to the moral agenda of Virgil's *Aeneid*, one must first establish whether Virgil was indeed writing with moral purpose. This requires the moral framework within which Virgil was writing to be defined. On doing so, it is possible to determine whether Lavinia was, or was not, created as an exemplar Roman *matrona*. This evaluation requires a discussion of Lavinia's actions, or lack thereof, enabling allusions to her character, and a comparative analysis of Lavinia, versus the other female characters of the *Aeneid*. Through the exploration Virgil's literary strategies, this chapter will argue, it becomes evident that Lavinia does hold a significant position within the moral purpose of the *Aeneid*.

Before being able to discuss the role of Lavinia, and the other female characters of the *Aeneid*, it is important to understand the context in which the *Aeneid* was written in terms of both education and the Principate. When assessing Lavinia's role within the *Aeneid's* moral agenda, a lack of evaluation and contextualisation of the poem's contemporary environment leads to a failure of appreciation for the true potential of the text. Modern readers utilise the *Aeneid* as a means of assessing the society of Augustan Rome, due to the cultural influence that it had on both its contemporary audience, and the contemporary society had on it, as a 'national epic'.³² However, for the contemporary Roman reader, far from being simply a piece of literature, it helped the Roman nation comprehend the newly founded Principate

³² Syed (2005) 2: articulates the significance of the *Aeneid* on the Roman self; Horsfall, N. (1995), 249: the *Aeneid* transformed the 'Aeneas-legend' from a political device to a means expressing a national identity.

whilst simultaneously justifying and promoting the values of the Principate.³³ The *Aeneid* was far more than a literary work in the ancient world; it was a piece of political propaganda. Failure to analyse it within this context would result in a diminishing of its intended significance and the role within which Lavinia was created. The *Aeneid* does not and cannot hold the same connotations to our 21st century lives as it is not being utilised by our society in the same way that it was by the Augustan age.³⁴

The genre of Virgil's *Aeneid* - epic poetry – significantly impacted how it would have been received in Augustan Rome. Epic poetry was widely believed to have the ability to affect, and in turn shape, the audience's morality through its emotive qualities (Quintilian, 1.8.5). In addition, Stoic philosophy, founded by Zeno of Citium, considers epic poetry to possess the capacity to entice the uneducated into a moral education through emotive, as opposed to intellectual pathways.³⁵ The educational use of epic poetry is consolidated by Virgil's contemporary, Strabo, who confirms this notion of 'illiterate and uninstructed' people, who are incapable of leading a virtuous life through intellectual reasoning. Epic genre, on the other hand, is 'capable of exciting fear as well as pleasure' within these people and thus 'influences not childhood only, but age as well' (Strabo 1.2.8). Within this established concept of epic poetry the *Aeneid* was conceived; it can be presumed that Virgil would have been aware of the potential moral influence his *Aeneid* would wield and chose to pursue this genre purposely to achieve this.³⁶ Therefore, the *Aeneid* would have

³³ Levick (2010), 259.

³⁴ Camps (1969), 8.

³⁵ Syed (2005), 49.

³⁶ Heinze (2004), 373.

been composed, not necessarily with a moral agenda as the primary purpose, but as significant consideration.

By looking at how the Romans utilised the *Aeneid* within education, it becomes clear that the text was deemed to adhere to the morally didactic conventions of epic poetry. The *Aeneid* attracted much attention following its publication in 19BC particularly by the *grammatici*, a reflection of Virgil having ‘achieved perfection in his own branch of literature’ (Velleius Paterculus, 36.3), which lead to the *Aeneid*’s position as a bulwark in Roman education for centuries to come.³⁷ Quintus Caecilius Epirota, a *grammaticus* under the Augustan Principate, ‘opened a select school for older pupils and was the first to lecture on Virgil’ (Suetonius, *On Grammarians* 16). This school had been open since 27BC, so it is reasonable to assume there was not a long period between the *Aeneid*’s publication and its introduction into the Roman educational system; due to its literary style and effect on morality. There was a belief that the *Aeneid* played a significant role in shaping Rome’s youth, and therefore, they were exposed to it early, and persistently, throughout their educational career.³⁸ The enduring prominence of the *Aeneid* as a tool within education is evidenced by Augustine’s remarks of having to read the *Aeneid* within his Latin lessons, showing that the text was still being utilised within education in the 3rd century AD (Augustine, *Confessions* 1.13). The *Aeneid*’s primary masculine focus enabled its use within the Roman education system because it helped to legitimise the patriarchal society of Rome through the heroic deeds of the men, and domination of female characters.³⁹ Furthermore, although the Roman educational

³⁷ Bonner (1977), 213

³⁸ Keith (2000), 11.

³⁹ Keith (2000), 35.

system was not a state led institution, Augustus would not have permitted the *Aeneid* to hold such a prominent position within education, if it had not aligned with his regime. It was the *Aeneid's* espousal of the traditional Roman virtues, which Augustus was promoting with the Principate (*Res Gestae* 8.5), that enabled the *Aeneid* to establish itself so enduringly within the Roman educational system. So, it can be concluded that the moral didacticism of the *Aeneid* was supportive of the moral principles of Augustan Rome.

In order to accurately assess whether Virgil was, or was not, attempting to place his *Aeneid* within the 'Augustan moral framework', said framework must be defined. Galinsky terms Virgil as an 'Augustan' poet, meaning that he was affected by the Augustan society he was living in, and that the *Aeneid* is a reaction to this environment. This does not necessarily mean that Virgil was endorsing the Augustan Principate and its ideologies.⁴⁰ One of the quintessential 'Augustan' aims was to overturn the moral decline that was rife within Rome. Augustus' Principate aimed to renew traditional Roman values such as *pietas* (piety), with a real focus on enforcing *pudicitia* (virtue).⁴¹ The potential argument that Virgil was unaware of Augustus' moral agenda, due to the poet's death before the infamous 18BC *leges Juliae* legislation, would be incorrect. Firstly, it is difficult to believe that Augustus would have passed revolutionary laws, like the *leges Juliae*, without some precursory measures towards them.⁴² Secondly, there is evidence to suggest that Augustus had actually made attempts to pass similar legislation to the *leges Juliae*,

⁴⁰ Galinsky (1996), 245.

⁴¹ Bauman (1992), 106; Habinek (1997), 29: Augustus' moral legislation placed sexual behaviour within a public sphere to enable the regulation of it.

⁴² Galinsky (1996), 131.

before 18BC. The poet, Propertius, who was writing in 26BC, tells of his and his lover Cynthia's adulation at the rejection of a law that would have prescribed the lovers to part ways (Propertius, 2.7.1-3). Considering that the *lex Julia de adulteriis* saw adultery transformed into a crime under Roman law (Justinian, *Digest* 4.4.37), it can be argued, judging from the reasons for Propertius' and Cynthia's celebration, that Augustus had attempted to pass legislation of a similar nature before 26BC.⁴³ Furthermore, Dio (53.21.1-3) states that Augustus would bring laws before the people, assess their response, and then adjust them if necessary. This, in conjunction with Propertius' poem, is an indication that Dio's vague statement refers to Augustus, as early as 27BC, contemplating the need for moral legislation within Rome and showing the direction this legislation would be going.⁴⁴ Therefore, it can be confidently concluded that Virgil, especially with regard to the close relationship that existed between him and Augustus, but even as merely a resident in Rome, would have been acutely aware of the Augustan moral agenda.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the 'patronage' role Augustus played in the literary sense to Virgil would act as an assurance for the promotion of Augustan values.⁴⁶

The core moral values of the Augustan age can be epitomised in one example.⁴⁷ In 27BC Augustus was awarded, by the senate, a golden shield inscribed with four traditional Roman virtues: *virtus*, *clementia*, *institia* and *pietas* (*Res Gestae* 34.2). These virtues are as follows: military vigour or 'manliness', acting in accordance

⁴³ Bauman (1992), 107.

⁴⁴ Bauman (1992), 108.

⁴⁵ Tarrant (1997a), 169.

⁴⁶ Levick (2010), 251: 'Augustus was a 'patron' of Virgil in the literary sense that he gave them encouragement, even material help.

⁴⁷ A full exploration of Augustan moral values is not the purpose of this dissertation, hence the consideration of only one example.

with the ideas of clemency, conducting life justly and finally the most archetypical of the Roman virtues, the idea of social responsibility.⁴⁸ Judging by the legislation and his subsequent Principate, it is reasonable to believe that this shield, and the award of the socio-religiously loaded title of ‘Augustus’ (Suetonius, *Augustus* 7.2), acted as a means of setting a precedent for his reign. The values articulated on Augustus’ shield, which spread into the wider Augustan society, are the values that dictate whether Virgil exalts, or condemns, the characters within his *Aeneid* as will be shown in later discussion. It is within this social context that the *Aeneid* is created, and hence it is these values against which Virgil’s characters were judged.

Virgil’s protagonist Aeneas is an anthropomorphism of moral values prescribed to in the *Aeneid*. Aeneas is portrayed positively by Virgil for his *pietas* in ensuring the safe route of his father, son and household gods from Troy (*Aen.* 2.721-724). In comparison, Aeneas’s self-indulgent submission to his passion for Dido, which results not only in a pause in his journey, but also a pause in his destiny, required a divine intervention to spring Aeneas back on to the correct course (*Aen.* 4.265-284). The characters adherence to the renewed traditional Roman values is telling of Virgil’s compliance with the Augustan moral framework.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the *Aeneid* survives due to Augustus overruling Virgil’s dying wish to have it burned because it had not been revised.⁵⁰ It is hard to believe that Augustus did this purely for the appreciation of the literary style; the logical conclusion is that Augustus ensured the survival of the *Aeneid* because he appreciated the ability of epic poetry to shape the

⁴⁸ Galinsky (1996), 84-86.

⁴⁹ Griffin (1999), 289: the idea that the *Aeneid* isn’t occurring within a vacuum and that events within it should be understood within its contemporary setting.

⁵⁰ Tarrant (1997a), 169.

morality of its audience. More importantly, because he valued that the *Aeneid*'s contribution to the audience's morality which was aligned with the moral agenda that the Augustan regime was pursuing. Furthermore, the *Aeneid* echoed into all spheres of Roman society, from lines of the *Aeneid* appearing in graffiti, to Aeneas' inclusion in prominent Augustan monuments, for example the Ara Pacis, indicates that the *Aeneid* was easily absorbed into the culture it entered.⁵¹ Therefore, it can be concluded that the *Aeneid* was working within, and to the purpose of, the Augustan moral framework. Considering the length of time, and attention Virgil devoted to the *Aeneid*, it is unfeasible to say that this adherent character of the poem was not a conscious decision by the poet.⁵² So, it can be said with near certainty, that Virgil had created the *Aeneid* with the purpose of promoting the new Augustan moral regime.

Virgil's promotion of Augustan moral agenda, to the purpose of educating Augustan society was further implemented via the female characters of the *Aeneid*. Lavinia's most significant role, and purpose, within the *Aeneid* is that of being the exemplary Roman matron. The ideal Roman matron was a well-established concept within the Roman mind-set; the most notable, and highly-esteemed Roman matron being the figure of Lucretia.⁵³ Lucretia's chastity is held in the highest regard by the Roman audience, and it is this, combined with her beauty, that makes her an object of admiration (Livy, 1.57.10). The significance of chastity as a matronly quality is made explicit when Lucretia places greater value on her honour than her life for 'what is a

⁵¹ Tarrant (1997b), 56-57: the depiction of Aeneas within the role of the heroic founder-figure is seen to be significant in Aeneas' inclusion within the Augustan monuments.

⁵² Camps (1969), 4-5.

⁵³ Severy (2003), 13: attests the *matrona* as well-respected figure in Roman society. Thus, the concept of the Roman matron was an established idea.

woman when her honour is lost?' (Livy, 1.58.4-5); Lucretia valued her chaste reputation over her life, and the violation of her maidenly quality sees her honour removed.

If Lavinia is going to be created within the mould of the ideal Roman matron, then she is required to unequivocally adhere to this chaste characteristic. From Lavinia's entrance in the poem (*Aen.* 7.71) it is apparent that Virgil is devoted to impressing upon the audience Lavinia's status as a maiden. She is physically introduced into the poem as 'Virgin Lavinia' (*Aen.* 7.71). There is no 'Virgilian ambiguity', the audience is explicitly made aware that Lavinia possesses her pre-marital chastity because it is of the utmost importance to her character development, and moral purpose, for the audience to be aware of this. Virgil proceeds in the next line to refer to Lavinia's 'chaste hands' (*Aen.* 7.72) which only acts to further this argument. The obvious stress placed upon Lavinia's maidenly qualities within the first two lines of her physical appearance clearly demonstrates that her chastity is paramount to her purpose within the *Aeneid*. When considering this with regard to the tale of Lucretia, the embodiment of traditional womanly Roman virtues, it becomes apparent that Virgil created Lavinia within this mould in order to fulfil his purpose of presenting his female audience with an archetypal model for themselves.⁵⁴

It is Lavinia's role within both Virgil's moral agenda and narrative development that dictates her characterisation. As previously discussed in Chapter One, Lavinia is the culmination of the plot and the end-goal of Aeneas; she dictates much of the action,

⁵⁴ Frascchetti (2001), 13-14: Lucretia as the exemplary Roman women, with no parallel in terms of feminine virtue, and thus became a model for the Roman matron.

but her physical role within the narrative is only as the pre-destined wife of Aeneas. It is this role as the eventual wife of the founder of the Roman race that requires Lavinia's 'lack' of characterisation, because of the traditional female qualities of passivity and subordination.⁵⁵ Lavinia's most memorable action is her blush, and even that makes no direct impact on the narrative of the *Aeneid*.⁵⁶ The ambiguity of whether it is indicating Lavinia's love for Turnus, her embarrassment at the mention of her marriage to Aeneas, or her discomfort about her role within her mother's demise, is irrelevant. Virgil's use of the blush enables him to convey that Lavinia is acting in accordance to the social practices of the Roman world and doing as her father dictates with regards to her marriage, even if potentially that makes her uncomfortable or is not what she desires.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Virgil had a precedent in which to shape Lavinia this way. Augustus exploited his sister, Octavia, as a passive political pawn in order to cement his political union with Mark Antony.⁵⁸ The sources that describe this arrangement never tell of Octavia's feelings towards this marriage, they only stress the political benefit of it (Plutarch, *Antony* 31; Appian, *Civil Wars* 5.64; Dio, 48.31.1).⁵⁹ This is because, like Lavinia's feelings, Octavia's feelings towards her marriage were seen as irrelevant in the face of the political benefit the marriage would bring.⁶⁰ So, according to her position as a Roman matron, much like Lavinia, Octavia does what is beneficial for both her family and the state. In addition to this utilisation by Augustus, we see Octavia applauded for

⁵⁵ Nugent (1999), 260.

⁵⁶ The blush shall be explored in detail within Chapter Three.

⁵⁷ Gardner (1986), 10.

⁵⁸ Bauman (1992), 92.

⁵⁹ The political nature of the *Civil Wars* is appreciated, so other sources have been used in conjunction to also show the political context in which the marriage is presented.

⁶⁰ Woodworth (1930), 187; Monti (1981), 9: 'code of behavior which regulated political relationships was essentially a code of inter-personal relationships'.

similar traits as Lucretia, as she ‘in addition to her beauty possessed great dignity’ (Plutarch, *Antony* 31). It can be seen that Virgil is taking traits from women renowned for virtue within both the Republic and the Principate, and shaping Lavinia as the ultimate Roman matron in order to use her as a relatable and morally educational female projection for his audience.

Moreover, Lavinia’s characterisation compared to other women in the *Aeneid* enables Virgil to further the moral agenda of his poem. The most ‘memorable’ characters within the *Aeneid* are those who rebel against their socially prescribed characteristics, destiny, or both.⁶¹ One example of this is the Dido’s character following her ‘marriage’ to Aeneas (*Aen.* 4. 166-168). Immediately following their marriage, Virgil informs the audience that the first day after the wedding ‘began the disasters’ (*Aen.* 4.169). This supposed marriage provides two explanations for Dido’s demise. Firstly, the act of marriage violates her oath to never marry again following the death of her former husband. So, not only does it disable her from the honour of being viewed as a *univira*, but the violation of an oath would have been condemned profusely in Roman society.⁶²

Furthermore, Aeneas’ declaration that he and Dido are not ‘formally wed’ (*Aen.* 4.338-339), characterises this relationship between Aeneas and Dido as a non-martial affair. In conjunction with Roman societal norms, it would be Dido that

⁶¹ Nugent. (1999), 260.

⁶² Horsfall (1995), 127: remember the *Aeneid* pre-dates the legislation which requires women to re-marry following being widowed so when Virgil was writing having only been married once would have honourable status attached to it; Warrior (2005), 18: the precautions involved in Roman oath’s to ensure their fulfilment is reflective of the status religious oaths held within Roman society.

would be chastised for her promiscuity and have her character degraded, not Aeneas.⁶³ Characterising Dido as the archetypal chastised woman, Lavinia's prowess becomes further illuminated, elevating her in comparison to the other morally inferior women of the *Aeneid*. In addition, Dido and Aeneas' marriage acts as a means to prevent Aeneas leaving Carthage and accomplishing his destiny of marrying Lavinia. It is this combination of the smearing of Dido's character, in particular through her promiscuity and deranged nature following Aeneas' departure, combined with her active defiance of destiny, which warrants her demise. Virgil uses Dido to further exalt Lavinia's virtuous qualities, and show her acceptability, in accordance with Roman values, as Aeneas' partner in the foundation of the Roman race.

Furthermore, this difference between the character of Dido and Lavinia can be seen as reflective of moral development of Aeneas. Dido represents immature sexual desire, whereas Lavinia is the ultimate marriage partner (John of Salisbury, *Policraticus* VII.xxiv.817d); Aeneas' progression from Dido to Lavinia is parallel to his own character progression of fugitive Trojan to father of the Roman race.⁶⁴ The character of Dido is utilised by Virgil to comparatively demonstrate Lavinia's suitability as a female consort. Aeneas' progression from Dido to Lavinia reflects his character's maturation and moral development towards holding the position, with Lavinia at his side, as the father of the Roman people.⁶⁵ Lavinia only appears in the narrative within the mould of the ideal Roman matron, whereas Aeneas is a malleable character progressing from an atypical Trojan into a recognisable Roman

⁶³ Horsfall (1995), 127; Gardner (1986), 127.

⁶⁴ Wilson-Okamura (2011), 110-119.

⁶⁵ Woodworth (1930), 194.

figure.⁶⁶ As a consistent and relatable figure of the Roman ideal, Lavinia not only facilitates the founding myth but also becomes a character of self-identification for the Roman audience. Despite Dido being created as the more complex and dramatic character, she is remembered for her negative traits of impulsiveness, desire and irrationality, which all come together to be represented by the episode of her suicide (*Aen.* 4.642-705). Whereas, Lavinia is memorable for her Roman matronly virtues, thus it is Lavinia who holds the moral pedestal because of the use Virgil intended for his poem - essentially an educational work.

For the Roman audience, in particular, when presented with the character of Dido there would have been a natural association with the Egyptian Queen, Cleopatra. Before the Battle of Actium in 31BC, Augustan propaganda had portrayed Mark Antony as succumbing to the charms of Cleopatra, and through prioritising her over the needs of the Roman Empire, he brought harm to the Roman people.⁶⁷ It is difficult to not recognise similar themes in Aeneas' love affair with Dido, in which he stays and helps her build Carthage, as opposed to following his destiny at the expense of Ascanius and his descendants (*Aen.* 4.271-276). In addition, both women lose their lives through the masculine, and honourable, act of suicide (*Aen.* 4.664-665; Plutarch, *Antony* 85.3-86.1).⁶⁸ This association between the women of the *Aeneid* and Virgil's contemporary goes further. Through his propaganda, Augustus contrasted the symbol of foreign temptation that Cleopatra represented, and his

⁶⁶ Woodworth (1930), 176: Virgil's conscious construction of Lavinia as the Roman matron; Heinze (2004), 223: the idea of a development of Aeneas into a characteristic Roman through the development of the *Aeneid*.

⁶⁷ Cairns (1989), 57.

⁶⁸ Camps (1969), 34: says that Dido's suicide resembles 'that of a hero of tragedy who cannot live dishonoured and feels that only by death can he preserve the honour which he earned in his past life'.

sister Octavia, the ideal Roman women and Antony's legal wife, to help justify his war against Antony.⁶⁹ It can be assumed that this propaganda would have still resonated with Virgil's contemporary audience as it was only a decade or so since the Battle of Actium when the *Aeneid* was published.⁷⁰ So, through the association between Dido and Cleopatra, and as previously discussed between Lavinia and Octavia, there is a natural promotion of Lavinia's character compared to that of Dido, particularly for Virgil's contemporary Roman audience.

Another female character that serves to further elucidate Lavinia as the pinnacle of the ideological Roman matron, within Roman society, is Camilla. Camilla is an incredibly interesting character within the *Aeneid*. It is clear that Virgil is full of admiration for her: he refers to her as 'godlike Camilla' (*Aen.* 11.657). Furthermore, he is intent on pressing on his audience her virginal character (*Aen.* 11.507; 11.583; 11.604), because of the redemption quality this had within Roman society. Camilla is also sought after as a paradigm of the *matrona*, for 'mothers in every Etruscan town so hopelessly wanted her as a bride for their son' (*Aen.* 11.581-582), illustrating the respect Virgil has for Camilla; a girl's role in Roman society was to gain respect through the fulfilment of their matronly role in order to attain a marriage partner.⁷¹ Presenting Camilla as a popular choice of marriage partner illustrates Virgil's approval of her character.⁷² However, Camilla does not adhere to the passive Augustan female role; instead 'her tender hand whirled spears, like a boy' (*Aen.* 11.578). Virgil explicitly states that Camilla is playing a male's role opposed to her

⁶⁹ Wallace-Hadrill (1993), 32.

⁷⁰ Cairns (1989), 57.

⁷¹ Severy (2003), 55: the shame cast upon women who did not fulfil this matronly role represents the respect cast upon the women who did fulfil it.

⁷² D'Ambra (2007), 46.

appropriate female role. Therefore, the death of Camilla serves as the ultimate example of Virgil utilising the other female characters of the *Aeneid* in order to project Lavinia as the example his audience should follow. Also, the significant women of the *Aeneid* can be seen as progressing and culminating in the pinnacle of Lavinia; Dido is the antithetical matron, Camilla is admired but does not adhere to societal convention and Lavinia is the ideal. It is Camilla's deviation from the social constraints of Roman society that forces Virgil to remove her from the *Aeneid* in order to fulfil his moral agenda. This narrative strategy by Virgil is used to show that women are capable of pursuing an opposing path to that which society dictates, but the female characters who choose this path fall victim on account of this alternative route, and as consequence this alternative route is not portrayed as a feasible option.⁷³

Through a comparison of the outcome of the mortal women in the *Aeneid*, the moral significance of Lavinia is presented. As previously stated both Dido and Camilla are removed from the *Aeneid* due to their unacceptability within the Augustan moral framework. Further removal of morally unacceptable characters is seen within the narrative of Lavinia's mother, Amata. Amata is removed because of her promotion of Turnus as Lavinia's marriage partner. Not only does Amata oppose destiny but she actively defies Latinus' decision to marry Lavinia to Aeneas (*Aen.* 7.358- 373). This protest against the decision is contradictory to the values of the patriarchal society in which Virgil's audience lived.⁷⁴ The expected obedience of women to the male head of the household was reflected in the contemporary Roman society

⁷³ Nugent (1999), 263.

⁷⁴ Fraschetti (2001), 4.

through the powers of the *paterfamilias* in Roman law, which extended as far as control over life or death.⁷⁵ In addition, Amata's support of Turnus obstructs the fulfilment of her role as Queen, to protect her subjects, due to the subsequent wars that stem from this support.⁷⁶ So, in order for the *Aeneid* to conform to the moral framework in which Virgil is writing, Amata has to be removed to show the immorality of spousal disobedience. In comparison, Lavinia in no way consciously expresses her preference of marriage partner, and instead adheres to her position, as that of a daughter under the *manu patris* of her father.⁷⁷ Thus, Lavinia is created as the epitome of Virgil's educational example of female morality because not only does she adhere to the socially accepted virtues for females, but more significantly, because she survives the narrative of the *Aeneid*.

It has been demonstrated that Virgil both had a moral agenda to his *Aeneid*, and that Lavinia was vital within this agenda. Having considered Lavinia's contribution, both narratively and within Virgil's moral purpose, it is now appropriate to comment upon Lavinia's blush. It is important to approach this blush with an appreciation of Lavinia's contribution to the *Aeneid* as a whole, and not as a purely isolated incident.

⁷⁵ Gardner (1986), 6.

⁷⁶ Burke (1976), 25.

⁷⁷ Woodworth (1930), 187.

Lavinia's blush

There can be no evaluation of Lavinia's role within the *Aeneid* without an exploration of her famous blush.

‘Tears flowed over Lavinia’s fevered cheeks as she listened,
Noting her mother’s appeal. An intense blush crimsoned her features,
Spreading its radiant warmth through her face with suffusions of fire.
As when the blood of the sea-mollusc violates Indian ivory’s
Pureness, as lilies when set among roses erupt with a rubied
Tinge to their whiteness, so the girl’s face gleamed changes of colour.’

(*Aen.* 12.64-69).

This blush is the first, and only time, in which Virgil allows the audience to view Lavinia as a character in her own right, rather than as the destined wife of Aeneas, and mother of the Roman race.⁷⁸ The involuntary nature of Lavinia's blush enables Virgil to maintain the passivity of her maidenly role, whilst also allowing her a singular moment of individuality within the poem.⁷⁹ The ambiguity that encapsulates the blush - a typical attribute of the epic form and of Virgil's own literary style - engages the intended audience and encourages the reader's own personal interpretation of events.⁸⁰ However, the blush itself is highly atypical in comparison to Lavinia's otherwise silent role to the *Aeneid*, and it is because of these characteristics that Lavinia's blush has become 'one of the most memorable and

⁷⁸ Todd (1980), 29: 'here alone Lavinia is not an adjunct, not portent, symbol convention, but a person in her own right'.

⁷⁹ Woodworth (1930), 186.

⁸⁰ Anderson (1969), 3: 'It is the poetic responsibility of the epic poet – and his opportunity – to shape his narrative so that his audience experiences and judges the events for itself'.

tantalising moments in the poem'.⁸¹ To ignore Lavinia's blush would be to ignore the only time that Virgil invites the audience to engage with Lavinia as a person.

The blush follows an exchange between Turnus' 'seething emotions' (*Aen.* 12.10), and King Latinus' 'measured response' (*Aen.* 12.18), with the outcome being Turnus' proposition of singular combat between himself and Aeneas. Then Lavinia's mother, Amata declares her suicide in the outcome of Turnus' death, and it is from this speech that Lavinia's blush occurs. It is the latter part of this speech that has attracted much attention because of the subsequent blush of Lavinia, which is often regarded as a direct result - with many different interpretations as to why - of the final lines of Amata's speech.

'For, Turnus, when you leave the envious eye of the day's light,

I go. I won't watch, chained, if my son-in-law must be Aeneas'

(*Aen.* 12.62-63).

The relationship between these final lines of Amata's speech and Lavinia's blush is made apparent by Virgil. He tells of Lavinia 'noting her mother's appeal' (*Aen.* 12.65), and it is immediately following this notation that 'an intense blush crimsoned her features' (*Aen.* 12.65). So, clearly there is something within Amata's speech that is the cause of Lavinia's famed blush. Given the immediacy of the blush following Amata's concluding remarks, it is these final lines that are most noteworthy. The interpretation of this cause, however, is not so clearly illuminated by Virgil.

⁸¹ Tarrant (2012), 105.

Lyne offers up the interpretation of Lavinia's blush as being representative of the young maiden's love and preference of Turnus as her husband.⁸² Lyne's argument rests upon this connection between Amata's speech and Lavinia's response, with the blush being more than a response, and actually a mimic of Amata's attachment to Turnus as the preferred marriage partner. It is both Amata and Lavinia's tears that result in Lyne making such a comment, that Lavinia 'weeps... like, and with, the weeping of Amata', to mean that their tears are for the same reason: grievance over Turnus departing for the dangerous task of single combat against Aeneas, Turnus' inevitable death, and thus Lavinia having to marry Aeneas.⁸³ The blush of Lavinia is a consequence of the guilt Lavinia experiences having revealed her love for Turnus. Lyne substantiates this idea through other literary precedents. Using the example of another virgin maiden who's 'tell-tale flush bears witness to the girl's distress' of having been caught in the compromising position of having a lover's token by her mother (Catullus, *Carmina* 65). Lyne uses these two examples together to suggest that a blush was a literary device used to express the embarrassment of modest, virginal girls caught in the position of having displayed their affections.⁸⁴ Furthermore, he utilises the two similes to advance his argument. Saying that the 'violates Indian ivory's pureness' (*Aen.* 12.67-68) is also actually a metaphor for the Lavinia's virginal purity, which had become defiled by her love for Turnus.⁸⁵ Also, the use of the dual flower imagery, 'as lillies when set among roses erupt with a

⁸² Lyne (1987), 117-122.

⁸³ Lyne (1987), 117.

⁸⁴ Lyne (1987), 118.

⁸⁵ Lyne (1987), 121. Also, Ahl (2007), 436 points out the association with this simile and Homer, *Iliad* 4.141 in which the wound on Melelaus' leg, following being struck by Pandarus' arrow, is described in a similar. This wound signals the end of a truce between Menelaus and Paris that had been negotiated, with the two men agreeing to duel for Helen. Also, in another sense this simile had been interpreted as the ivory dream of Rome, at the end of book 6, becoming blooded over.

rubied tinge to their whiteness' (*Aen.* 12.68-69), places the blush further into an erotic framework because of Propertius' description of his lover, Cynthia, with reference to both lilies and roses (Propertius, *Elegies* 2.3.10-13). Despite these points, and contextualisation within literary precedents, this argument is unconvincing. Firstly, Lyne fails to acknowledge that Virgil immediately follows Lavinia's blush with the line 'love disturbs Turnus' heart. He stares at this girl, full of longing' (*Aen.* 12.70). There is the potential for Lavinia's blush being presented to the reader through Turnus' eyes, and thus the erotic connotations attached to the similes being due to delivery via Turnus' perspective.⁸⁶ Furthermore, this misinterpretation by Turnus can be seen to be symbolic of the delusional character that Turnus has been created as through his persistence to make Lavinia his wife, despite it being made abundantly clear that she is fated to marry Aeneas.⁸⁷ The consistency and persistence in Virgil's creation of Lavinia's role as the exemplar *matrona* would be fundamentally undermined if Virgil were to now reveal to the audience she was in love with the opposition to the foundation of the Roman race, Turnus.⁸⁸ Lyne's argument that it was Lavinia's 'guilt' over exposing her love for Turnus that caused her blush further undermines Virgil's establishment of Lavinia as the mother of the Roman race, as it due to this position Virgil could not allow for her character to be blemished by guilt.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Tarrant (2012), 105.

⁸⁷ Todd (1980), 30.

⁸⁸ Lyne (1983), 136-137.

⁸⁹ Burke (1976), 28: the idea that Lavinia 'cannot be stained with guilt' is presented by Burke in the context of an exploration of Amata's suicide, and the burden of guilt held for the war between the Latins and Trojans, but the sentiment is still applicable.

Due to the ultimate Roman matron's mould within which Lavinia has been so consciously created, it is logical to assume that the one time that Virgil gives Lavinia a form of personal expression, it would align with this role. It is primarily because of this that the interpretations that Lavinia's blush stems from a concept of maidenly modesty are far more convincing. There is an interpretation that Lavinia's blush was born out of her distress over the conflict within the household over whom was to be her marriage partner.⁹⁰ This is because women were supposed to disappear into the Roman household, not to mean they were not important to it and its functioning, but the importance was placed upon exhibiting the household promoting the status of the *paterfamilias*.⁹¹ Through the objection and defiance of Amata towards Latinus it has firstly, portrayed Latinus as weak in his position as head of the household. Secondly, it resulted in a war in which many of their subjects, who are part of their household in political terms due to Latinus and Amata's position as King and Queen, died because of the consequence of war.⁹² This conflict would be immortalised by Amata's suicide, to which she threatens in the final line of her speech before Lavinia's blush. Thus, this blush can be interpreted as being because of Lavinia's discomfort over her marriage being the source of conflict within her household, and also for the anguish of a feeling of responsibility over her mother's potential suicide.

Furthermore, there has been a lack of attention to the similarity in which Lavinia is described after Amata's threat of suicide, and the announcement of Amata's suicide.

⁹⁰ Tschidel (1995) as cited in Cairns (2005), 196; Tarrant (2012), 105.

⁹¹ Milnoir (2005), 139.

⁹² Burke (1976), 25: Amata's failure to fulfil her socially prescribed role of wife, mother, or political as Queen.

Following Amata's death, Lavinia is described with 'tears at her rose-coloured cheeks' (*Aen.* 12.606). This is in essence a more concise description of the events of Lavinia's blush with the primary actions being mimicked: crying and blushing. The echo is made specific, and purposeful, through Virgil's use of roses to create the image of Lavinia. It is the parallel between these two scenes that lends weight to the argument of Lavinia's blush being directly connected to Amata's suicide because of the reverberation between these two descriptions of Lavinia, and the only common feature being the mention of Amata's suicide. Lateiner, takes this concept in a slightly different direction, stating the conflict that Lavinia felt shame over, was actually the 'conflict of familial and national pieties with personal inclinations'.⁹³ Whilst this interpretation is more feasible than Lyne's due to its place within the concept of the blush stemming from Lavinia's role of the Roman matron, it still bears the idea of Lavinia being in love with Turnus, which would compromise Virgil's 'characterisation' of Lavinia.⁹⁴ It is because of this that Lateiner's argument must be dismissed.

There are further interpretations of the blush that facilitate the image of Lavinia as the ideal Roman woman. Many of these revolve around an embarrassment of Lavinia because of her centrality to the discussion of her marriage. Fantham claims Lavinia blushed because of her status as the 'prize', and motivation for the duel in which Turnus is to participate. This is made explicit by Amata's declaration that Turnus' death in this duel would mean her 'son-in-law must be Aeneas'.⁹⁵ There

⁹³ Lateiner (1998), 170.

⁹⁴ The term characterisation is used with caution as throughout this dissertation there had been much discussion over Lavinia's lack of character. The term is used here because fundamentally the role of Lavinia as the Roman matron is her characterisation.

⁹⁵ Fantham (1998), 147.

would also be an expectation of someone of Lavinia's stature, a girl of a high social class and unmarried, to find reference to her marriage a source of embarrassment, because of pure and virginal state, by her mother so publically. This embarrassment would be exacerbated by Amata's preference of Turnus, the enemy to Lavinia's destiny.⁹⁶ Finally, there is also literary precedent for this argument of Lavinia's blushing because of the mere subject of her marriage, and it is this precedent that had led to Cairns heralding this argument as the 'single correct answer'.⁹⁷ This is seen within Cydippe's blush in Callimachus' *Aetia*, which sadly survives only in fragmentary evidence, but can be partially recovered through Ps-Aristaenetus' *Epistles*. Cydippe stopped reading out aloud the oath inscribed upon an apple given to her by Acontius because 'it mentioned marriage, something a modest maiden would have blushed at even if it was spoken by another' (Ps-Aristaenetus, *Epistle* 1.10).⁹⁸ This explanation can be transferred onto Lavinia's blush because Cydippe is the ultimate precedent for Lavinia. Cydippe herself is a young, virginal girl who displays the upmost obedience to her parents, so unlike the deviant model of Medea, Cydippe could be utilised as Virgil to model Lavinia. Furthermore, Callimachus' *Aetia* was so established within Roman culture that Virgil would have felt no need to provide explanation for Lavinia's blush because of the established example of Cydippe's within his contemporary reader's mind.⁹⁹

However, there is argument that Virgil deliberately presented Lavinia's blush ambiguously, like he did so many other scenes, for example Aeneas' departure from

⁹⁶ Tarrant (2012), 105.

⁹⁷ Cairns (2005), 197.

⁹⁸ As cited in Cairns (2005), 198.

⁹⁹ Cairns (2005), 197-202.

the underworld through 'ivory portal' (*Aen.* 6.898), purposefully forcing the reader to engage with the text due to the need for self-interpretation.¹⁰⁰ Virgil purposefully made this blush ambiguous to illustrate Lavinia's position as the ideal Roman matron; Lavinia's feelings were inconsequential. She was a young girl of marital age from a politically significant family. Her purpose in Roman society was as a marriage partner, preferably in a way that was socially and politically beneficial, and her personal feelings were not seen as having any significance.¹⁰¹ The ambiguity of her blush invites the audience to question whom Lavinia desired to be her husband. Whatever interpretation the audience arrives at, they witness no action by Lavinia in helping to interpret the cause or meaning of her blush, or in order to ascertain the outcome of these numerous interpretations. The prioritisation of her duty to the state, in terms of marrying Aeneas, compared to whatever other feelings she may have had, leads to Woodworth establishing parallels between Lavinia and Livia on account of placement on their value as a citizen, ahead of personal feelings.¹⁰²

It is impossible to answer, despite Cairns' claim, to definitively state what Virgil intended by Lavinia's blush, due to him not explicitly providing an explanation himself. Virgil clearly meant for it to be a moment of significance due to the obvious attention it brings to Lavinia who is otherwise placed omnipresent, but never the sole subject of the narrative. Despite not being able to say definitively, it can however be concluded that this blush was not displaying love for Turnus, because it is unfeasible that Virgil would take so much care to construct Lavinia as the ideal

¹⁰⁰ Lobe (1999) as cited in Cairns (2005), 196.

¹⁰¹ Cairns (1989), 153.

¹⁰² Woodworth (1930), 194.

Roman matron within the rest of the *Aeneid*, only to undermine himself in the single episode in which Lavinia is given her own unmistakable self-expression.

Conclusion

The character of Lavinia has been shown to be a multi-functional character within Virgil's *Aeneid*. Through the discussion of her importance to the narrative and its development, her status within the moral intentions of Virgil's *Aeneid*, and an exploration of her blush it is has clearly been demonstrated that Lavinia is undeniably of paramount importance to the *Aeneid*. Furthermore, through concluding remarks it will be demonstrated how the themes of these chapters in turn influence each other and as consequence Virgil's construction of the character of Lavinia.

The narrative significance of Lavinia is twofold: she is both a catalyst to, and culmination of the plot. Firstly, an inseparability of Lavinia and Lavinium is established from the outset of the poem. This amalgamation of woman and land, an association already established within both Greek and Roman literary precedent, allows Lavinia an enduring presence within much of the narrative despite the absence of her physical character. Aeneas' attainment of both Lavinia and Lavinium are of prime importance in the foundation of the Roman race – the whole purpose of Aeneas' journey and thus the *Aeneid*. Thus, Lavinia's position as Aeneas' destined foreign bride acts as motivator both behind Aeneas' progression to Italy, and the removal of characters that act as an obstruction to this marriage. There are multiple occasions upon which divine intervention is utilised by Virgil to ensure the advancement of Aeneas' journey to Italy, and Lavinia. Jupiter's instructions to Mercury (*Aen.* 4.222-237) is an example of this, and what is significant is the stress Mercury's words place upon the need for Aeneas to reach both Lavinium and Lavinia to fulfil his destiny, and result in Aeneas' departure from Carthage. The enduring presence throughout of Lavinium and Lavinia as the ultimate aim to

Aeneas' journey provides Lavinia a catalytic presence within the narrative. Furthermore, the removal of the exemplary wife Creusa, the hugely emotive and literary striking removal of Dido and the elimination of the formidable Turnus, demonstrate a narrative power of Lavinia that is far-reaching and indiscriminate. All of these characters are removed as a direct consequence of their position as obstacles to the marriage of Lavinia and Aeneas. It is the pre-determined nature of Lavinia as Aeneas' partner in order to found the Roman race by fate that ensures her supremacy over character that acts as obstructions. Ultimately, Lavinia is of huge narrative significance to the *Aeneid*; without her the entire founding story collapses, as she constitutes the essential half of the union.

When evaluating a piece of literature it is important to consider what the author's purpose was because this reflects what was intended to be taken away by the audience. It has been demonstrated that Virgil intended for his *Aeneid* to be morally educational in accordance within the newly established framework of Augustan morals. This is because firstly, the genre of epic poetry was widely attested to hold morally educational characteristics within the thought of Roman society. So, Virgil's production of an epic poem would be expected to hold these same characteristics in order to adhere to the genre, thus it is unfeasible that Virgil did not create his *Aeneid* with some intention of moral education. Secondly, given both the patronage of Augustus, and Augustus' role in ensuring the survival of the *Aeneid*, it is difficult to believe that it was not viewed within its contemporary society as promoting the morality which the Augustan legislation was striving to achieve. It is within this context that the character of Lavinia is created.

Lavinia is established as the exemplary Roman matron within the ideal conception of Augustan society within which Virgil is both living and espousing; this is a prerequisite of her role as the Mother of the Roman race. She is presented as a unification of the virtues of the idealised Roman woman, from the Republican precedents of Lucretia, to the contemporaries of Virgil's time such as Octavia. Lavinia is exalted due to her possession of these female virtues and her adherence to the socially prescribed female role. In addition, her comparison to the other women of the *Aeneid* who fall short of her exemplar, and hence removed from the narrative in order to present their path as unjustifiable, further elevates Lavinia's status as the ideal Roman matron. Lavinia's position within Virgil's moral agenda is to present the female audience with an example to follow. She is created as the female counterpart to the male role model of Aeneas, particularly regarding the revival of traditional Roman values that Augustus was so actively working towards. Ultimately, it is the construction of Lavinia as the epitome of female virtues and moral example, which establishes her as the ideal Roman matron, and as a consequence, a significant individual both within the *Aeneid* and within the wider Augustan society. The moral pedestal and example that Virgil places Lavinia upon is epitomised by her survival of the narrative, in comparison to the women who fall.

It is this fulfilment of moral agenda that determines the way in which Virgil can display Lavinia's narrative significance. Lavinia is unable to be created in a vivid and narratively dominant way, such as the like of Dido, because to do so would be to undermine the passive role she must play in order to fulfil her role as the Roman matron. So, instead Lavinia is created by Virgil as being the impetus, and not the instigator, behind the narrative because of the role of martial partner that she will possess. Lavinia is given no physical action within the *Aeneid* other than the

renowned blush of book 12, and even this is an involuntary action. The blush is a unification of these two functions – narratively and morally – that Lavinia had within the *Aeneid*. Her blush allows for narrative attention to be placed upon the young maiden, whilst maintaining her inactiveness. Furthermore, the ambiguity of this blush emphasises the attention Virgil wished to be placed upon this scene because of the unavoidable need of the audience to self-interpret its meaning. An interpretation that does not consider the sustained construction of Lavinia's role within the *Aeneid* as that of the Roman matron, cannot be seen to be reflective of Virgil's intentions. This is because it is unrealistic that Virgil would strive to create Lavinia as the *matrona* exemplar to then undermine his efforts in Lavinia's only narrative focus.

It has conclusively been exhibited that Lavinia was of absolute preeminent importance to the *Aeneid*. Not only is she hugely influential and integral to the narrative, but she is also the pinnacle of Virgil's moral agenda. Lavinia was not allowed a voice within the *Aeneid* because the women of the Augustan age were not permitted a voice within society; but, following the 20th century feminist revolution academia has a duty to provide Lavinia a voice within scholarly discussion.

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