4 Maenad Brides and the Destruction of the City

EPIC IS A GENRE THAT DEALS PRIMARILY WITH MEN'S DEEDS. Yet powerful female characters form the very fabric of both Greek and Latin epic, even if their presence is largely dictated by the needs of narratives driven forward by men. Some of the most memorable scenes in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* revolve around women. It is in Greek tragedy, however, that women truly occupy center stage. The prominence of women in tragedy has attracted the interest of feminist scholars, who have done much to demonstrate that gender conflict is placed at the heart of the tragic plot. In Latin literature, however, only Roman elegy can claim a similar share of feminist scrutiny. Women in epic have been studied less, often, usually seen as vehicles of opposition to male authority, an opposition eventually overcome by and assimilated to the demands of epic and empire. Yet women's role in epic (as in other genres) deserves a reevaluation in view of more recent work, which has invited scholars to move beyond examining gender categories or women's place within the social hierarchy.[1] Rather, a more fruitful avenue is the study of the different ways in which women become visible and powerful in the social and political arena.

In Greece and in Rome, women are largely absent from the historical record. Nevertheless, women in literature are represented as capable of playing critical roles in public life. In Greek tragedy, women serve as vehicles for the exploration of issues of civic ideology and identity.[2] Drama itself is part of an institution that is both religious and civic, which aims

[1] See, most recently, Cole 2004 and Goff 2004.

[2] See, for instance, Zeitlin 1996 and Foley 2001.

at raising civic consciousness and celebrating Athens' growing hegemony in the Greek world. The central role of women in such a context is all the more striking given the limited access that Athenian women had to many aspects of public life. Similarly, in the *Aeneid*, a national epic hailing the dawning of a new era for Rome, women play a pivotal role in the plot and contribute to the articulation of a new Roman national ideology and identity.

Ritual, both public and private, is a sphere where women are indispensable and powerful. Women's ritual activity is closely connected with their social status and sexual role and constitutes a means by which they can exert power: they occupy center stage in marriage ceremonies, lamentations, and burials. Much work has been done to demonstrate the importance of ritual in Greek tragedy as a domain that, though not exclusively female, was a means of participating in and contributing to the life of the *polis*. Aside from female-only rituals, such as the Thesmophoria, women had a central role in other major civic festivals such as the Panathenaia. Similarly, in ancient Rome, women's participation in rituals formed an important part of their lives, although scholars of Roman religion argue that the role of women was peripheral to that of the men (Scheid 1992; Beard et al. 1998: 296–300). Yet there is ample evidence that women participated in public rituals in important ways: their role was prominent in the festival of the Parentalia; the Salian virgins officiated in processions marking the opening and closing of the military campaign season (Scheid 1992: 385); the wives of priests executed important religious tasks, such as sacrifices (Sheid 1992: 384). Moreover, scholarly opinion tends to underestimate the centrality of some female priesthoods and cults in Roman consciousness and their importance for the Roman state, as the priesthood of the Vestal Virgins, the cults of Ceres and of Fortuna muliebris, and the rites of the Matronalia and Matralia attest.[3]

The representations of women's rituals in the *Aeneid*, as well as in Roman epic in general, tell a story different from that suggested by other historical records: women's rituals are potent enough to shape events

[3] On the Vestal Virgins, see Beard 1980, 1995 and Scheid 1992: 381–84. On the cult of Ceres, see Spaeth 1996; on the Matronalia and Matralia, see Scheid 1992: 385–87. See also Schultz 2006.

affecting the whole community. Women as performers of religious activity become visible agents and articulate a different point of view. The literary evidence thus reflects and refracts social realities, tensions, and anxieties about women's ritual activity in Roman public and private life.

A close look at women's rituals in the *Aeneid* reveals the remarkable fact that there is no single female figure in the poem that is not associated with ritual, in actual or metaphorical terms. Aeneas meets Andromache as she pours libations to Hector's cenotaph; Dido performs sacrifices to find out whether the gods favor a union with Aeneas; Lavinia is sacrificing at an altar; and Amata conducts a bacchic revel. Further examination shows that in almost all cases women are involved in the worship of Bacchus and bacchic rituals, actual or metaphorical. Ritual correctness, however, does not accompany the execution of ritual acts. This distortion of correct ritual procedure results in situations where women appear to resist male authority and thus transgress gender boundaries, confuse sexual hierarchies, and pose a threat to the hero and his mission. As a result, they emerge as empowered representatives of a point of view that is opposed to the one that champions victory and empire. As we have seen in previous chapters, the use of the motif of corrupted or perverted ritual to articulate cultural and political crises is one of the characteristics of Greek tragedy. The ritual perversion developed over the course of the play is eventually replaced by a restoration of the disrupted religious order through the correct performance of ritual or the institution of a new cult. The placement of the women of the *Aeneid* at the heart of the epic conflict shares many elements with the representation of women in Greek tragedy.

In the *Aeneid*, women often instigate war and violence around them, especially in the poem's second half. Nevertheless, they appear to suffer the consequences of war more keenly than their male counterparts. Furthermore, the death of a woman is frequently necessary so that Aeneas' mission can continue. Through this double role as aggressors and victims, women present a threat to the completion of the goals of Rome, while they also embody and therefore underscore the cost of victory and empire. Many of the women in the *Aeneid* represent moral and social values and ideals important to the welfare of Rome, ideals dismantled through their death. As a result, women both pose a threat to male action and appear capable of articulating alternative points of view,

which, though doomed to failure, nevertheless call into question the very processes that cause their destruction. Ritual activity is instrumental in the deployment of this double portrayal of women in the epic.

In what follows, I examine the ways in which women's rituals illuminate the role of women in the epic. The prominence of bacchic ritual in their representation, however, requires first a brief discussion on Bacchus in Greece and Rome, and on the function of the bacchic element in Greek tragedy.

I. BACCHUS IN GREECE AND ROME

Dionysus is an Olympian god, but he also possesses chthonic qualities (Henrichs 1979: 2–3; Segal 1997: 10). He crosses the boundaries between god and beast; his appearance displays characteristics appropriate to both males and females; he is both Greek and Asian; and he transcends social hierarchies, offering the gift of wine and ecstasy to all, men and women, rich and poor. The god's ambiguous identity can be a source of creative energy but also a source of destruction.[4] It is precisely because of the god's ambiguous nature that the Greeks were never quite at ease with Dionysus (Henrichs 1979: 3).

In Dionysiac cult, fusion replaces the demarcation of individuality, primarily by means of intoxication, an element apparently shared by all festivals honoring the god.[5] Dionysiac worship was celebrated in state festivals as well as in smaller group festivals, the *orgia*, which took place every other year. Secret cults and mysteries also developed at an early date (Burkert

[4] Segal 1997: 13. I largely follow Segal's exposition of the god's attributes in worship and ritual. Burkert (1985: 164) also notes that the myths concerning the discovery of wine contain dark and ominous elements. On Dionysiac ambiguity, see also Vernant 1988b.

[5] Burkert 1985: 163. Dodds (1960: xiii), however, argues that the maenadic ritual does not seem to be a wine festival, since the time to celebrate would be the time of the new wine, the spring. But he does not offer an explanation of how the maenads achieved their ecstatic union with the god, a state often described as insanity. The problem of the relationship between the rites described in literary texts and actual cultic practice is a vexed one. For a recent discussion of the issues and relevant bibliography, see Goff 2004: 214–17; 271–79.

1985: 163). Men and women expressed their worship in different ways: men celebrated him as the god of wine in festivals, while women held biennial rites that took place in midwinter and on mountain tops (Henrichs 1979: 2). Maenadism, however, is mainly associated with women (Des Bouvrie 1997: 84–88). In particular, it brings together married and unmarried women, thus temporarily subverting societal restrictions that confine them to the household. In the ritualized state of maenadism, the *polis* defines "a controlled period in which female susceptibility to Dionysiac frenzy may be both expressed and contained" (Seaford 1994: 258).

In Rome, the ancient local deities Liber-Libera were initially associated with Ceres and had a general jurisdiction over fertility. It seems that as early as the sixth century Liber Pater was assimilated with Dionysus and over time became a synonym for wine (Bruhl 1953: 23–29; Dumézil 1970: 377–78, 516). Roman authors of the republic and the Augustan age often refer to Bacchus; yet it is difficult to discern which elements derive from Roman religious life and belief and which are modeled on Greek, or more precisely Alexandrian, influence.[6] Catullus, Vergil, and Ovid, however, describe maenadic rites that, though they owe a great deal to poetic imagination, display a vividness of detail that has led scholars to suggest that they also represent actual cultic practice.[7]

Such a ritual is attested to by Augustine (*De ciuitate dei* 7.21), who relates that in certain Italian cities the cult in honor of Liber-Libera took the following form: a phallus, carried in a chariot into the country, was brought back to the city in triumph; at Lavinium a whole month was consecrated to Liber, during which everyone indulged in obscene words until the moment when the phallus, after being carried through the Forum, was restored to its resting place; the most virtuous matron had the duty of crowning it with wreaths in public, thus driving away the *fascinatio*, or enchantment, from the fields and assuring a prosperous harvest. Thus it appears that certain kinds of indigenous bacchic rites took place around the deities of Liber-Libera.[8]

[6] Bruhl (1953: 133–44) presents a survey of the use of Bacchus in Latin literature through the time of Augustus.

[7] Catullus 64.251–64; Ovid, *Met.* 6.587–600.

[8] Bruhl (1953: 27) suggests that Amata's bacchic orgy in *Aeneid* 7 may be modeled upon Euripides' *Bacchae* but that its inclusion in Vergil's text indicates that it reflects a certain Roman reality. See also Pichon 1913: 164.

The ancient Liber Pater, however, had never been involved in anything that might have disturbed the Senate, and in 186 BCE he was regarded as having no connection with the scandalous Bacchanalian affair (Dumézil 1970: 516). There appears to be a tension in Roman thought between those aspects of the god that are beneficial and those that can be threatening for the community. Livy's account of the affair (39.8–19) and the preserved *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus* inform us of the official stance of the Roman state. The authorities treated the scandal as a prime example of pernicious Greek influence,[9] but their reluctance to extirpate the cult reveals the profound attachment of the Italian and Roman people to the god. The *senatus consultum* restricted access to the cult almost exclusively to women; a male citizen had to ask permission to become a bacchanal. (Dumézil 1970: 521). Livy's account emphasizes the devastating consequences for the morality and masculinity of the men who participate in what was considered a female cult: male initiates to the bacchic mysteries are said to undergo a feminization that affects their ability to be suitable Roman soldiers.[10]

This summary exposition of the major aspects of Dionysiac worship and cult demonstrate the close connection between the Greek and

[9] Bruhl 1953: 114–16; Dumézil 1970: 516; Beard et al. 1998, 1: 95–96. See also Gruen (1990: 34–78), who argues that the Bacchanalian affair supplied the Roman state with a means to curb individual inclinations toward Hellenism.

[10] See Liv. 39.15.9–10, where the consul explains to the Roman people the evils of the bacchic mysteries: *Primum igitur mulierum magna pars est, et is fons mali huiusce fuit; deinde simillimi feminis mares, stuprati et constupratores fanatici, uigiliis, uino strepitibus clamoribusque nocturnis attoniti* [First, then, the great majority are women and this was the source of this evil; then the males become very much like women, committing and submitting to the most obscene sexual acts, frenzied by staying up late, by wine, the uproar and shouts of the night]. In 39.15.13–14, the consul explicitly discusses these young men's fitness to serve in the military and represent the community of Romans: *Hoc sacramento initiatos iuuenes milites faciendos censetis, Quirites? His ex obsceno sacrario eductis arma committenda? Hi cooperti stupris suis alienisque pro pudicitia coniugum ac liberorum uestrorum ferro decernerent?* [Do you think, Quirites, that those young men who are initiated in this cult ought to become soldiers? That weapons ought to be entrusted to those brought up in that shrine of obscenity? That those who have been buried in their own debauchery and that of others would distinguish themselves in war defending the chastity of your wives and children?]

Roman ritual practices, a connection that allowed Vergil to use bacchic ritual elements to enrich and complicate the epic narrative and plot. The representation of maenadism in the *Aeneid* has often been dismissed as a metaphor for insanity. Yet a close reading of the poem does not allow for unilateral interpretation. In the following pages, I argue that the bacchic element as seen in Greek tragedy has a profound significance for an understanding of women's rituals and their role in the *Aeneid*. A brief sketch of maenadism in Greek tragedy is in order, however, before we can engage with the women of the Vergilian epic.

II. TRAGIC MAENADS

The connection of Dionysus with tragedy is as famous as it is mysterious. In Athens, tragic performances were an integral part of the celebration of Dionysiac festivals, yet the more precise connection of Dionysiac worship with the representations of the god Dionysus as well as the role of Dionysiac elements in the plays is the object of heated debate. In the most recent treatment of the Dionysiac element in Greek tragedy, Richard Seaford has argued that most Greek tragedies center around the destruction of the household (*oikos*).[11] The annihilation of the *oikos* is usually divinely inspired and eventually brings salvation to the *polis* in the form of cult (Seaford 1994: 354). Maenadism, whether it is represented as ritual enactment or used as a metaphor, is closely linked with this theme. While in ritual practice maenadism is a benign communal negation of female adherence to the household, in tragedy it is represented as uncontrollable, causing the collapse of the structures that preserve the integrity of the *oikos* (ibid.: 352).

[11] Seaford (1994: 235–80) has provided the most important (and controversial) discussion of this issue. He argues that the Dionysiac element is absent in Homer because the god is identified with the democratic *polis*. As a result, all tragedies are essentially Dionysiac in that they depict the triumph of the *polis* over the aristocratic household. Dionysus appears in Homer, however: we are told of his persecution of the Thracian king Lycurgus in *Il.* 6.130–40, the longest episode concerning the god; Andromache is twice compared to a maenad (*Il.* 6.389, 22.460); and references to Dionysus can also be found in *Il.* 14.325 and *Od.* 11.325 and 24.74.

Though tragic maenadism is brought about by divinely inspired frenzy, frenzy is never the sole reason behind maenadic behavior. It is occasioned by other features such as resistance to the male (ibid. 357). Indeed, the theme of female transgression into the male sphere is a pivotal component of the thematic structure of most tragedies. This transgression may take the form of negation of the bridal transition, which often results in the destruction of the *oikos*. Women who participate in this negation are frequently portrayed as maenads, actual or metaphorical. Thus, in tragedy, according to Seaford, the image of bacchic frenzy followed by the maenadic departure from home is associated with the negation of marriage ritual and the destruction of the household (355–57).

Renate Schlesier presents a few further characteristics in her typology of tragic maenads, which complement those outlined by Seaford. Maenads in tragedy may be said to fall into three categories: maenadic activity is often accompanied by the killing of the maenad's offspring or mate; women may be attracted to maenadism as a result of a violent and painful love, which may not necessarily lead to murder but which may include it; and maenadism can characterize a warrior's excitement on the battlefield (Schlesier 1993: 97–99).[12]

Euripides' *Bacchae* provides us with the most detailed examples of female bacchic behavior and amply illustrates that women's engagement with bacchic ritual is a source of empowerment. Although the play offers a positive view of women's maenadism in the image of the Lydian worshippers, it quickly focuses on the uncontrollable rites of the Theban

[12] Instances of the first category include Agave, who, under the influence of Dionysus, kills her son Pentheus; Euripides' Heracles, who, in a bacchic frenzy inflicted by Hera, slays his sons and wife; and the Erinyes, the divine agents of the slain Clytemnestra in Aeschylus' *Eum.* (500), who, while threatening to kill her son Orestes, call themselves maenads. In the second category, we encounter in Euripides' *Hippolytus* the figure of Phaedra, whose unrequited love for her stepson is cast in terms of maenadic frenzy and ultimately causes the young man's demise, and in Sophocles' *Trachiniae* that of Deianira, whose disillusioned passion for Heracles also brings about the hero's death. Schlesier finds instances of the third type, the warrior's frenzy on the battlefield, in the description of Hippomedon in Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* (498) and in the reference to the anonymous warrior in the parodos of Sophocles' *Antigone* (136).

maenads, which culminate in a perversion of the ritual act of sacrifice.[13] The Theban women's empowerment turns them against male authority and results in the dismemberment of Pentheus, the destruction of the Theban royal *oikos*, and perhaps of the *polis* itself; the lost ending of the play makes it impossible to know if any restoration of the corrupt bacchic ritual ever took place.[14] What we can see, however, is that once the women return from their maenadic exit to the *polis*, they are directed to the appropriate channels of women's ritual involvement, namely, weddings and funerals (Goff 2004: 352).

As in tragedy, so in the *Aeneid* instances of bacchic madness range from accounts of ritual enactment to the use of maenadism as metaphorical imagery. Vergil thus also explores issues peculiar to tragedy, such as the destruction of the powerful household, the blurring of gender distinctions, and the collapse of the structures that guarantee the integrity of the civic and religious order.

III. MAENAD BRIDES

The tragic themes just outlined, resistance to male authority, negation of the bridal transition, and destruction of the household, are central in several episodes of the *Aeneid*, and they are closely linked with women's engagement in bacchic ritual activity. Amata, Dido, the Sibyl, and Helen are all presented as maenads, actual or metaphorical. Through their bacchic activity, the women become powerful agents who enter the public sphere of politics and war, their agency articulating a point of view opposed to that of the men. In addition, the ritual they conduct is a perversion of marriage ritual. This perversion is linked with the outburst of violence between Latins and Trojans, a conflict that is cast as civil. The departure from standard ritual procedure of the women's bacchic activity appropriates that of the Theban maenads in Euripides' *Bacchae*,

[13] On the killing of Pentheus as sacrifice, see Foley 1985; Seaford 1994; and Segal 1997.

[14] On this debate, see Seaford 1994: 402–405; Segal 1997: 380–93; and, more recently, Goff 2004: 350–52.

which emphasizes the catastrophic rather than the beneficial aspects of the god, resulting in the dismemberment and death of Pentheus and the destruction of Cadmus' household. The destructive nature of the god is opposed to the benign deity that is equated with Augustus in Book 6 (804–805) and that is commensurate with the triumph of the forces of civilization.[15]

I will begin my analysis with Amata, as she displays the most extensive maenadic behavior in the poem, and then will continue with the other female figures in the order in which they appear in the narrative.

1. Amata

The outbreak of violence in *Aeneid* 7 is closely linked to the theme of marriage. Aeneas is to marry Lavinia, the daughter of King Latinus and Queen Amata. Through this marriage the union between Latins and Trojans will be achieved, and the two peoples will eventually produce the Roman nation. In Roman myth, as in history, marriage often averts or puts an end to war. The Sabine women are the most celebrated example. Though seized by force from their fathers, the women soon become assimilated into the Roman state and eventually mediate between their husbands and fathers. In this instance, women act as guarantors of social stability as they and their children embody the connective links between the warring sides and succeed in cementing the peace.[16] By offering to take the blame for conflict upon themselves, the Sabine women's bodies function as the site on which appropriate male homosocial bonds may be forged. In the *Aeneid*, by contrast, Amata, by not allowing Lavinia's body to serve as space that would defuse hostility, ends up unleashing it on a grand scale.

Amata's resistance to the unifying wedding of Lavinia and Aeneas destabilizes social as well as sexual relations and serves to promote war. The theme of resistance to marriage is ubiquitous in Greek and Roman

[15] The passage names the god with his Roman name, Liber, thus stressing his native Roman/Italian character. He is depicted as controlling the forces of the wild and, along with Heracles, champions order and civilization. On Aeneas as Dionysus, see Weber 2002.

[16] Liv. 1.9–13.8. On the Sabine women episode in Livy and women's association with civic values, see Miles 1995: 179–219.

literature. Reluctance on the part of the bride as well as on the part of her natal family is one of the standard features of wedding narratives.[17] This resistance reflects the pain at the prospect of separation and loss that a bride and her family suffer and may take various forms: the young girl is compared to a delicate flower refusing the male's touch, a city that is sacked by the enemy, or a wild animal resisting domestication.[18] Eventually, however, everyone eagerly anticipates the girl's new life as a wife and mother.

Bacchic ritual is often used as a means to express resistance to marriage in Greek tragedy, and the same theme is at work in the *Aeneid*. The Latin queen Amata exemplifies this type of resistance. She passionately wishes for Turnus to marry her daughter, Lavinia. Juno, eager to help anyone who opposes Aeneas, sends the Fury Allecto, who infuses the queen with madness and pushes her to conduct a bacchic revel. The operation of the Fury on the queen gradually escalates into uncontrollable bacchic frenzy. Amata's bacchic activity provides the blueprint for all the themes associated with maenadism throughout the poem: the dangers associated with female sexuality, resistance to marriage, the killing of kin, and ultimately the destruction of the city.

Allecto's attack on the Latin queen foreshadows her eventual maenadic state and displays the link between female sexuality and bacchic activity as dangerous forces for the community.[19] Critics have duly noted the erotic implications of the vocabulary of fire in these lines, which depicts Amata as a woman of fiery passion, harboring feelings for Turnus

[17] See, for instance, the wedding poems of Catullus: 61.82; 62.59–66; 64.118–19.

[18] See Catullus 62.39–47 for woman as flower; 62.25 for marriage as the sacking of a city. The likening of the bride to a wild animal is a topos in Greek and Roman literature, on which see, e.g., Burkert 1983: 58–72 and Seaford 1994: 301–11.

[19] Furies themselves are often depicted as maenads in Greek tragedy: Aesch. *Eum.* 500; Eur *Or.* 339, 411, 835; Seaford 1994: 348. Allecto's serpentine nature is another link between the Furies and Dionysus. The god's association with snakes points to the chthonic aspects of his nature. Serpents are particularly prominent in *Bacchae*: Pentheus' father is Echion, whose name is the masculine of the snake-monster Echidna. The story of his savage death suggests that Pentheus shares in his father's monstrous and chthonic character, to which Dionysus' divine and Olympian nature will be opposed. On Pentheus and the snakes, see Segal 1978–79: 128–36 and Dodds 1960: 144.

that may be considered inappropriate.[20] The snake's motion on Amata displays a physicality that borders on the erotic: *ille inter uestis et leuia pectora lapsus* [that one glides between her clothes and smooth breasts] (349); *fit tortile collo/ aurum ingens coluber, fit longae taenia uittae / innectitque comas et membris lubricus errat* [the huge serpent becomes her necklace of twisted gold, becomes the band of her long fillet and entwines itself into her hair and, slippery, it slides over her limbs] (351–53). In Euripides' *Bacchae*, snakes exhibit a similar behavior as they are said to lick the chins of the maenads (698), while after the bloodbath of Pentheus' *sparagmos* the snakes lick the blood from their cheeks (767–68). In the *Aeneid*, the serpent's motion also indicates Amata's conversion into a bacchant: it becomes her golden necklace and the headband that holds her hair. Amata thus resembles the Theban bacchants in Euripides' play (*Ba.* 101–104). By transforming into the queen's accoutrements, the snake displaces the emblems of her status as a queen and threatens the stability of her social identity within civilized society.

Female sexuality is therefore perceived as opposed to civilization, finding release in bacchic activity, as is the case in *Bacchae*: Pentheus, when informed of the Theban women's maenadic departure from their homes, assumes that maenadism is an excuse for sex:

> ἄλλην δ' ἄλλοσ' εἰς ἐρημίαν
> πτώσσουσαν εὐναῖς ἀρσένων ὑπηρετεῖν,
> πρόφασιν μὲν ὡς δὴ μαινάδας θυοσκόους,
> τὴν δ' Ἀφροδίτην πρόσθ' ἄγειν τοῦ Βακχίου. (222–25)
>
> In hiding spots one by one the women
> serve the beds of men
> under the pretext that they are maenads
> but they put Aphrodite before Bacchus.

The charge that maenadism is a pretext for illicit sexual activity is congruent with common views concerning new mystery cults at Athens in Euripides' time (Dodds 1960: 97–98). These views were shared by the Romans, as seen in Livy's narrative of the Bacchanalian scandal of

[20] See Lyne 1987: 13–19 and Zarker 1969: 7–8. On the scene, see also Feeney 1991: 165–68.

186 BCE (see note 10 to this chapter). Amata's first reaction to the snake's attack is said to reflect her rights as a mother while she attempts to dissuade Latinus from agreeing to a political alliance with Aeneas (*solito matrum de more locuta est* [she spoke in the usual way of mothers], 357). But Latinus remains unmoved by her arguments, and the snake attacks a second time, causing an explosion of maenadic behavior:

> His ubi nequiquam dictis experta Latinum
> contra stare uidet, penitusque in uiscera lapsum
> serpentis furiale malum totamque pererrat,
> tum uero infelix ingentibus excita monstris
> immensam *sine more* furit lymphata per urbem. (373–77)

> After trying with these words in vain,
> she sees Latinus opposing and the snake's maddening evil
> glides deep in her heart and slithers through her whole body.
> Then indeed the unlucky queen, goaded by enormous monsters,
> *improperly* rages through the huge city drunk.

Amata's activity is now described as *sine more*: she goes against proper decorum befitting her station. By roaming through the city in an intoxicated state (*lymphata*),[21] Amata confuses the spatial differentiation between male and female and abandons the socially acceptable activities of a female and a queen. What is more, her maenadism is an instance of perverted ritual, one that negates the benign nature of bacchic rites, as is also implied by the word *more*, which in ritual indicates that due procedure is followed. Once again, maenadic behavior merges with the erotic in the use of the word *infelix*, which evokes Dido's frenzied state, the result of love gone awry. Amata, a queen strong-willed and empowered like Dido, will pose a similar threat to Aeneas and his mission.[22]

[21] Fordyce (1977: 132) points out that the word *lymphata* is used by Pacuvius in the context of bacchic frenzy: compare 392–93 *D' Anna* 1967 (of Hesione) *tamquam lymphata aut Bacchi sacris / commota* [as drunk or in ecstasy by the rites of Bacchus]. See also König 1970: 152. The term was also used by Catullus (64.254): *quae tum alacres passim lymphata mente furebant* [these, then, were raging here and there in ecstasy with their mind drunk].

[22] The kinship between the two queens has long been noted by a number of scholars. See, for example, Putnam 1965: 160–62, 177–78, and LaPenna 1967.

Finally, the scene also signals that Amata's future bacchic activity will be disastrous not only for her own household and city but also for her offspring. In *Bacchae*, Agave's madness results in the dismemberment of her son. In Euripides' *Heracles*, Lyssa, a figure whose affinity to Allecto has long been noted,[23] infects the hero with bacchic madness[24] and causes him to murder his family. As a result, Amata's impending activity reinforces the notion that her madness is going to turn her against her own. Amata pushes Lavinia to the background and often appears as having assumed the role of the bride for herself. Amata's actions, however, result in the death of her would-be son-in-law, Turnus.

Maenadic resistance to male authority is also linked with the theme of female resistance to marriage. Allecto's mission is specifically to put a stop to Lavinia's marriage to Aeneas (*neu conubiis ambire Latinum / Aeneadae possint* [that the sons of Aeneas may not be able to sweet-talk Latinus with a wedding], 333–34) and to destroy Latinus' household (*odiis uersare domos* [destroy households with hatred], 336). Both purposes are achieved when the women engage in bacchic ritual. The use of maenadism as a means to indicate resistance to marriage is often found in Greek tragedy: in Euripides' *Troades*, for instance, Cassandra, seeking to avoid an unwanted and shameful marriage with a foreigner and an enemy (Agamemnon), resorts to bacchic frenzy, singing her own wedding song.[25] Amata employs a stratagem similar to that of her tragic counterparts: she hides her daughter in the woods and proclaims her a maenad (*te lustrare choro, sacrum tibi pascere crinem* [it is you she honors with

[23] König 1970: 123–36. See *contra* Horsfall 2000: 238.

[24] 889–97, 966, 1086, 1119, 1122, 1142. On similarities between *Bacchae* and *Heracles*, see Seaford 1994: 353–54.

[25] Heinze 1915: 187, n.16 (= 1993: 184). See also Seaford 1994: 356. Another such instance seems to have occurred in Euripides' lost play *Protesilaus*, where Laodameia falsely claimed that she was dedicated to Bacchus in order to avoid marriage. See König 1970: 153. The summary of the play provided by Hyginus (*Fabulae* 104) reports that she had constructed an effigy of her husband, Protesilaus, not one of Bacchus (*Kannicht*: 634). Statius' *Silv.* 2.7, however, reveals that there was also a version of the myth according to which Laodameia practiced a fake cult of Bacchus (*Silv.* 2.7.124–25: *haec te non thiasis procax dolosis / falsi numinis induit figura* [not shameless in deceitful dances does she clothe you in the shape of a false deity]). See Heinze 1915: 186 (= 1993: 151).

the dance, for you she grows her sacred tresses], 391). The peculiarity of Amata's hiding of her daughter rests on the fact that the negation of marriage is initiated by the mother of the bride, whereas in parallel cases in tragedy, it is always initiated by the bride herself. The union that the queen envisions between Lavinia and the god precludes not only a union with Aeneas but also, surprisingly, a union with Turnus. It appears that Amata, by dedicating Lavinia to Bacchus, denies her daughter's bridal transition altogether as she relegates her to the status of a maenad forever under the god's control. The mother's natural resistance to the separation from her daughter, which is expressed in maenadic terms, turns here into a perverse negation of Lavinia's right to marriage.

The description of Amata's ritual employs elements peculiar to both bacchic and marriage rituals: she brandishes a blazing torch (*flagrantem . . . pinum*, 397), which evokes the torches held at the marriage ceremony and the pine thyrsus customarily held by maenads. The wedding song that she sings on behalf of Lavinia and Turnus (*natae Turnique canit hymenaeos*, 398) stands in contrast to Lavinia's previous dedication to Bacchus and Amata's assertions that Lavinia is also a maenad. In addition, Amata insists on her role and rights as a wronged mother (*si iuris materni cura remordet* [if care of a mother's right stings your heart], 402). At the same time, despite the narrator's claim that we are witnessing a fake bacchic revel, Amata's behavior as a possessed maenad is unmistakably genuine: she is frenzied (*feruida*, 397); her eyes are bloodshot, her gaze wandering (*sanguineam torquens aciem*, 399);[26] she screams savagely (*toruumque . . . / clamat*, 399–400); and the Fury's control over her is explicitly labeled as bacchic (*reginam Allecto stimulis agit undique Bacchi* [Allecto drives the queen far and wide with the goad of Bacchus], 405).

Marriage and bacchic ritual elements are thus combined to create a bizarre and disturbing effect. To be sure, the narrator had hinted at this by calling the rite fake. This charge appropriates a famous passage from the *Bacchae*, where Pentheus accuses the women of Thebes of faking

[26] Compare Agave's gaze at the moment she is about to tear Pentheus to pieces: ἡ δ' ἀφρὸν ἐξιεῖσα καὶ διαστρόφους / *κόρας ἑλίσσουσ'*, οὐ φρονοῦσ' ἃ χρὴ φρονεῖν [foaming at the mouth and *rolling her eyes* all around, not thinking what she ought] (1122–23). West (1969: 49) finds a parallel between the rolling of Amata's eyes and the rolling of the top in the simile at *Aen.* 7.381–82.

bacchic possession in order to have illicit sex:

> γυναῖκας ἡμῖν δῶματ' ἐκλελοιπέναι
> πλασταῖσι βακχείαισιν, ἐν δὲ δασκίοις
> ὄρεσι θοάζειν τὸν νεωστὶ δαίμονα
> Διόνυσον, ὅστις ἔστι, τιμώσας χοροῖς... (217–20)
>
> Our women have left their homes
> for *fake bacchic rites*, and in the shady
> mountains they sit honoring with dances
> the new god, Dionysos, whoever he is...

Pentheus' words display the link between bacchic activity and uncontrollable female sexuality, which jeopardizes the stability of social roles: the women have abandoned their homes and roam far from the city in the wild. Vergil's similar charge against Amata and the Latin mothers maligns the power women can exert through their ritual activity and demonstrates the dangers of their interference in the affairs of men. The same slur is used to describe the rite Helen performs during the sack of Troy in *Aeneid* 6.512–29: she faked a bacchic revel in order to help the Greeks (on which see section 3). Amata, however, very much like the women of the Thebes, is genuinely possessed by divine forces.[27] This important distinction is testimony to the extraordinary powers associated with the performance of ritual. Amata may have begun her rite as a fake bacchic revel; by the end of the description, however, a benign return to norms is impossible: the entire community is infected, and the effects of this pollution are pernicious for Latins and Trojans alike.

Amata's perversion of marriage and bacchic rituals in order to resist her daughter's marriage turns into a women's collective movement that succeeds in reversing social norms: Amata's maenadism transgresses her role as a wife and queen and causes others to do the same. Not only has she left her home and taken refuge in the wild, she has also crossed

[27] The narrator is revealed, then, to be just as mistaken as Pentheus and just as hostile toward the women's activities. Moreover, as the maenads caused the dismemberment of Pentheus' body, so the maenads of the *Aeneid* cause the destruction of the main narrative (that of the narrator) and offer their own version of events, an alternative "narrative." The women's maenadism thus articulates the ideological stance of resistance to male social and political authority.

the threshold of silence that Lavinia observes throughout the poem. As the ritual unfolds, the queen raises her voice progressively higher (*locuta*, 357; *uociferans*, 390; *canit*, 398; *clamat*, 400), as bacchic action renders female speech successful where it had failed before (*his ubi nequiquam dictis experta* [after trying in vain with these words], 373). Amata's voice was unsuccessful when she spoke in a way that was socially prescribed (*de more*, 357). In her maenadism (*sine more*), however, Amata's voice has the power to stir the Latin mothers to bacchic frenzy, and they too collectively abandon their homes and run to the woods:[28]

> fama uolat, *furiis*que accensas pectore matres
> idem omnis simul ardor agit noua quaerere tecta.
> deseruere *domos*, uentis dant colla comasque;
> ast aliae tremulis ululatibus aethera complent
> pampineasque gerunt *incinctae pellibus* hastas. (392–96)
>
> Rumor flies about and the mothers, their breast fired by *madness*,
> are all driven at once by the same passion to seek new abodes.
> They abandoned their *homes*, baring to the wind their necks and hair;
> and some filled the air with quavering cries
> and *dressed* in *fawnskins* bear vine-covered wand spears.

As on other occasions throughout the *Aeneid*, *fama*, the personified voice/rumor, is the agent of this escalation, converting private passion to public response.[29] Amata and the Latin mothers are transformed from civilized beings and respected pillars of the community into maenads. Their shedding of their social status as Latin women is evident in their change of dress: they let their hair loose (394) and wear fawnskins (396).

[28] See the intertextual kinship between the maenadic exit of the Theban women in the Bacchae and that of the Latin *matres* (the words italics in indicate words almost identical in Greek and Latin, the dotted underline words that are very close semantically): πρώτας δὲ Θήβας τάσδε γῆς Ἑλληνίδος / ἀνωλόλυξα, *νεβρίδ' ἐξάψας* χροὸς / θύρσον τε δοὺς ἐς χεῖρα, κίσσινον βέλος [Out of this land of Hellas, I have first stirred Thebes / to my cry, *fitting* a *fawnskin* to my body / and taking a thyrsus in my hand, an arrow of ivy] (23–25); τοιγάρ νιν αὐτὰς ἐκ δόμων ὤιστρησ' ἐγὼ / *μανίαις* [and I have driven them (sc. the women) *with madness* away from their *homes*] (32–33).

[29] On *Fama* as spreading bacchic frenzy, see *Aen.* 4.173–97 and my discussion of that passage on pp. 137–38.

As a result, the movement of the maenads into the wild not only suggests the collapse of the spatial differentiation between human and animal, civilization and the wild, but also dissolves gender and social hierarchies. The women's bacchic ritual, in turn, interferes with warfare, triggering violence among men:

> tum quorum attonitae Baccho nemora auia matres
> insultant thiasis (neque enim leue nomen Amatae)
> undique collecti coeunt Martemque fatigant. (580–82)
>
> The kin, then, of those mothers who in ecstasy danced for Bacchus
> in the wilderness (Amata's name no light encouragement)
> came in from everywhere with cries for Mars.

Women's power to instigate war becomes directly related to their role as mothers (*matres*) as well as to their bacchic ritual activity. Under Amata's ritual lead,[30] women have lost their individuality and act collectively. At the same time, the bacchic rite may render mothers dangerous to their sons, as the example of Agave in Euripides' *Bacchae* poignantly attests. In the *Aeneid* too, the women's frenzy affects their sons: the mothers' bacchic rage is indirectly transferred onto their male offspring as they gather to prepare for battle.

This perverted blend of bacchic and marriage ritual is so potent that it overcomes the authority of men. The women's actions result in stripping King Latinus of his power: soon after he announces his withdrawal from the public sphere, Latinus is confined within the house (*saepsit se tectis*, 600), secluded and silenced, withdrawn from action and speech (*neque plura locutus*, 599). As we have seen, through their bacchic activity, women take on the exteriority associated with men, thus endangering the integrity of the *domus*, which stands to be destroyed in the absence of the women who normally secure its welfare. At the same time, Latinus' resignation from the action suggests that the entire state is in peril as a result of the women's ritual action (*rerumque reliquit habenas* [he dropped the reins of state affairs], 600). The violence that the women's bacchic rituals generates not only threatens social stability but also jeopardizes

[30] The name Amata could perhaps indicate a ritual title, as it was a name attributed to Vestals (Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 1.12.14). See also Beard 1980: 14–15.

altogether the success of Aeneas' mission, the creation of the Roman state. Women's interference initiates the war that ends in the death of Turnus, thus permanently transforming Amata's "wedding" ritual into a funeral.

2. Dido

As we have seen, Dido performs a number of complex and important ritual acts in Book 4. Yet the theme of maenadism figures prominently in the portrayal of her anguish. In this section, I argue that Dido's association with maenadism is not a mere metaphor for madness but is closely related to the tragic model of bacchic frenzy. In tragedy, as Schlesier has shown, maenadism is often linked to the excitement of a violent and painful love, a state of mind that may lead to murder. Dido, unlike other maenads who experience violent emotions, such as Deianeira and Phaedra, does not cause the death of her mate. Yet both her curse to Aeneas and her performance of a magic ceremony that aims at his death indicate that she desires his destruction. As in tragedy, then, in this instance maenadism is paired with aggression against the male generated by the frustration of erotic desire. Furthermore, maenadism's contagious nature turns private madness into public frenzy.

The frustration of Dido's erotic desire triggers the onset of the queen's association with maenadism, as her reaction to the news of Aeneas' departure from Carthage is compared to a bacchant's orgy:

> saeuit inops animi totamque incensa per urbem
> *bacchatur*, qualis commotis excita sacris
> Thyias, ubi audito stimulant *trieterica* Baccho
> orgia *nocturnus*que uocat clamore Cithaeron.[31] (300–303)

[31] The rite described closely appropriates elements of the various rites represented in Euripides' *Bacchae*: it is biennial (ἐς δὲ χορεύματα / συνῆψαν *τριετηρίδων*, / αἷς χαίρει Διόνυσος [and they joined (sc. the rites of the mother goddess) to the dances of the *biennial festivals*, in which Dionysus rejoices], 132–34), produces a contagious frenzy (πᾶν δὲ *συνεβάκχευ'* ὄρος [the entire mountain *reveled along* with them], 726), and is performed at night (τὰ δ' ἱερὰ νύκτωρ ἢ μεθ' ἡμέραν τελεῖς; / *νύκτωρ* τὰ πολλὰ· σεμνότητ' ἔχει σκότος [do you perform the rites by night or by day? / mostly *by night*. Darkness brings awe], 485–86).

> In her helplessness she goes wild and throughout the city
> *rages* ablaze *like a maenad*, like a Thyias stirred by the shaken
> emblems when she has heard the cry of Bacchus; the *biennial*
> revels excite her and *at night* Cithaeron calls her with its din.

Dido's likening to a maenad illustrates the intensity of her emotional turmoil. Unable to fulfill her erotic desire, Dido experiences a violent anger, which finds expression in the aggression that maenadism affords and which is directed against her mate and his kin, as is the case with Deianeira in Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and Phaedra in Euripides' *Hippolytus*.[32] Dido contemplates dismembering Aeneas (*non potui abreptum diuellere corpus* [could I not have seized him and tear his body apart], 600) and killing his son (*non ipsum absumere ferro / Ascanium patriisque epulandum ponere mensis?* [kill Ascanius himself with the sword / and serve him as a meal on his father's table?], 601–602). She puts this thought into action in her magic rite, which, as we have seen, is really a *defixio* aiming at Aeneas' destruction.[33] Although she does not ultimately succeed, she still poses a threat to Aeneas and his people even after her death, as Carthage will continue to challenge Roman superiority in the coming centuries.

Dido's frustrated desire turns into maenadic intoxication, which is at the root of her self-destruction. Her maenadic state is expressed in her dreams, where she sees herself as Pentheus pursued by Furies:

> Eumenidum ueluti demens *uidet* agmina Pentheus
> et *solem geminum* et *duplices* se ostendere *Thebas*. (469–70)
>
> as maddened Pentheus *sees* bands of Furies
> and *two suns* and *two Thebes* are revealed.

This is perhaps the most famous instance of Vergilian allusion to *Bacchae*. In the play, Pentheus, dressed as a maenad and in ecstasy, declares:

> καὶ μὴν ὁρᾶν μοι δύο μὲν ἡλίους δοκῶ,
> δισσὰς δὲ Θήβας καὶ πόλισμ' ἑπτάστομον. (918–19)

[32] See Oliensis 2001: 51, where Dido's dreams express her desire to commit infanticide and incest and therefore indicate that Aeneas also stands in the place of a son. On Dido and Euripides' Phaedra, see Hardie 1997b: 322. On Hippolytus in the *Aeneid*, see Dyson 2001: 147–57.

[33] See my discussion in Chapter 2, pp. 51–52.

I think I *see two suns*
and *two Thebes* and the sevenmouth city.

The lines indicate Pentheus' maenadic state, the complete victory of the god over him, and signal his eventual destruction at the hands of his own mother. The simile thus illustrates the intensity of Dido's madness and foreshadows her (self) destruction. Dido's maenadism is emblematic of her passion for Aeneas, a passion that destroys her life; the doubleness of her vision suggests the rift that Aeneas' presence has caused within her own identity. While she previously identified with her city and her people, she now sees herself as separate from them (hence in this dream she sees herself alone and deserted by the Tyrians, 466–68). This split in Dido's own identity and her failure to unite with Aeneas result in suicide.

The simile thus illustrates that maenadic behavior is closely linked with the shifting of identities: women who resort to maenadic activity by defying the spatial differentiation between male and female also defy traditional gender roles, and thus blur gender distinctions. Dido, however, a woman and the leader of her country, had always defied the sexual categorization imposed by social norms: in the beginning of the epic narrative she emerges as a woman engrossed by the duties of leadership, occupying a traditionally male domain. Paradoxically, this does not present a problem for Dido or her city. Her contact with Aeneas arouses the erotic passion associated with the female and causes a split in her identity. Although Dido's dangerous femininity is emphasized through her maenadism, she is compared exclusively to male tragic figures (Pentheus, Orestes). Both these young men, however, share with Dido an identity crisis, as they have trouble making the transition from adolescence to adulthood.[34] Similarly, Dido is unable to make the transition from her androgynous state to full femininity as a wife and mother. Maenadism thus expresses in ritual terms the problematic and conflicting elements of Dido's self.

Although Dido's maenadism indicates the potentiality of female aggression against the male, the simile portrays just the opposite:

[34] On Orestes' depiction as a youth on the verge of adulthood, see Zeitlin 1984: 170–71 and Bierl 1994: 85–96. On Pentheus' similarly problematic transition, see, for instance, Segal 1978–79.

Pentheus' pursuit by the Furies casts Dido in the role of the pursued and Aeneas in the role of the Furies. In the Greek play, Pentheus is not pursued by Furies. Nevertheless, as we have seen, both in tragedy and in the *Aeneid*, Furies are often presented as exhibiting bacchic behavior (see note 19 to this chapter). Dido herself is earlier portrayed as a Fury (4.384–87; Hardie 1993: 41). The fury of maenadism and the *furor* inflicted by Furies and other such creatures are thus closely linked. Dido's frustrated erotic desire when she first learns of Aeneas' plan to abandon her presents the potentiality of recourse to bacchic behavior. As this initial desire continues to be thwarted, further maenadic symptoms are generated, a progression that corresponds to Amata's two consecutive assaults by the serpent. The association of Furies with maenadism at this juncture also foreshadows the pernicious outcome of maenadic behavior in the second half of the epic.

Just as in the case of Amata, so in the case of Dido, maenadism causes a movement from the private realm of womanhood to the public domain of war and destruction. Most tragic heroines, such as Deianeira, Phaedra, Alcestis, as well as the Latin queen Amata in the *Aeneid*, die in their *thalamoi*. Their death thus confirms their connection with marriage and maternity.[35] Dido too chooses to end her life in the innermost recesses of her house (the pyre is erected *tecto interiore*, 494, and *penetrali in sede*, 504). She utters her final words weeping on her marital bed (645–50). Yet unlike the other heroines, Dido's speech is a kind of *res gestae* and reconnects her with her city and her former identity as androgynous leader:

> uixi et quem dederat cursum Fortuna peregi,
> et nunc magna mei sub terras ibit imago.
> urbem praeclaram statui, mea moenia uidi,
> ulta uirum poenas inimico a fratre recepi... (653–56)
>
> I have lived and finished the course that fortune had given me
> and now a great image of what I was will go to the earth below.
> I have founded a glorious city, I have seen my own walls,
> I have taken revenge for my husband from my brother who is my foe.

[35] Loraux 1987: 23–24. Dido's mode of suicide mimics the sexual act and reveals that sexuality was the reason behind her demise. See also Goff 1990: 38 n.17.

Dido's *comites* witness the queen's death, and their lamentation resounds through the palace walls out to the whole city. The women's collective voice of lamentation is identified with Fama:

> ... it clamor ad alta
> atria: concussam bacchatur Fama per urbem.
> lamentis gemituque et femineo ululatu
> tecta fremunt, resonat magnis plangoribus aether,
> non aliter quam si immissis ruat hostibus omnis
> Karthago aut antiqua Tyros, flammaeque furentes
> culmina perque hominum uoluantur perque deorum. (665–71)
>
> ... The cries rise to the high
> roof: Rumor rages like a bacchant in the stricken city.
> The palace roars with the moanings of lamentation
> and the women's wailings, the air resounds with the great beatings,
> as though all of Carthage or ancient Tyre were
> collapsing as the enemy rushes in, and raging flames
> roll over the roofs of men's houses and god's temples.

Fama's movement is cast in maenadic terms: by spreading the word about Dido's death, it also spreads the lamentation of the Carthaginian women, which is thus connected with Dido's earlier maenadic behavior.[36] Dido's madness, therefore, emerges as comparable to that of the women's lament. The disruptive and dangerous nature of female lamentation is further illustrated in the simile that compares the women's lament to the falling of a city. The simile, then, does not simply equate the fall of Dido with the fall of Carthage but also suggests the dangers that female lamentation may pose to the integrity of the state.[37] The fury of the flames burning the city in the simile corresponds to the fury of Fama and, of course, to that of the dying Dido. The link between Fama, maenadism, and the eruption of violence occurs again in Book 7, where

[36] Note also that the women's wailing is described as *ululatus*, a word etymologically linked with the Greek term for the bacchic cry, ὀλολυγή.

[37] The lamentation over Dido's death fuels the perpetuation of Carthage's hatred for Rome. This hatred may be seen as causing the rise of Hannibal, which will result in the ultimate destruction of Carthage. On the major theme of female lamentation and the dangers it poses for the state, see Chapter 5, this volume.

Fama instigates the maenadic exit of the Latin *matres* (7.392–96). As we have seen, the women's maenadic activity also jeopardizes the stability of Latinus' household.

Fama's effect on the women of Carthage is thus very much like that of Allecto on Amata in Book 7. A combination of Fury-like and maenadic attributes accompanying the description of Fama (4.173–95) renders this supernatural creature yet another agent of female destructive empowerment. The passage skillfully includes the ancient etymology of the word *Dira* (*ira . . . deorum*, 178) as a means to identify this monstrous bird. Fama's pedigree (178–79) also reveals her chthonic nature. In addition, intertextual contact with Homer's description of Eris (*Il.* 4.442–43 and *Aen.* 4.175–76) fits neatly in the poem's overall depiction of the Furies and Discordia as partners in crime (see Chapter 3, pp. 90–92). Fama's avian nature and habitat will eventually echo in the description of the Dira portending the death of Turnus in *Aeneid* 12.[38]

Dido's maenadism is therefore organically linked with the central issues of the book and of the epic as a whole. It symbolically enacts the queen's movement from public figure to a woman in love and back to her former self, rooted in the public sphere as a leader of Carthage. This movement, highly sexualized in ritual terms, leads to the destruction of Dido's household and city and presents an important threat to the Roman state in both narrative and historical terms. Dido's death may be a requirement for the foundation of Roman cultural order (Keith 2000: 115); nevertheless, as we shall see (Chapter 6, pp. 182–98), her maenadism does not detract from her moral excellence and successful leadership, which constitute both a model for imitation on the part of Aeneas and a reminder of the losses that his order dictates.

3. The Sibyl and Helen

The figures of the Sibyl and Helen in Book 6 anticipate the themes of female resistance to marriage and the destruction of the household.

[38] Compare 4.186–88: *luce* ***sedet*** *custos aut summi* ***culmine*** *tecti / turribus aut altis* [by day she sits as a guardian on a high rooftop / or on lofty towers] and 12.863–64: *quae quondam in bustis aut* ***culminibus*** *desertis / nocte* ***sedens*** [which, sitting often by night on graves or on deserted rooftops]. On Fama and the Dira in *Aeneid* 12, see Putnam 1965: 195.

These themes are here associated with ritual maenadism and will receive full treatment in the later parts of the poem. The description of the Sibyl's divinely inspired prophecy is rife with bacchic attributes, while Helen is shown to enact a maenadic rite during the sack of Troy. Each of these two figures exemplifies the power that ritual affords women and the dangers it may present to society and the state.

More specifically, the depiction of the prophetess Sibyl as a maenad embodies the problem of female resistance to sexual initiation and the bridal transition. The link between bacchic frenzy and prophetic ecstasy in Greek and Roman thought and literature[39] offered Vergil fertile ground upon which the Sibyl's maenadic portrait could be deployed. Even before the prophetess is designated as a raving bacchant, the description of her possession by Phoebus contains elements that point to maenadism: contortion of facial features (47), loosening of the hair (48),[40] general excitement and signs of trance (48–49). The Sibyl's maenadic state, however, is rendered explicit when the god takes full possession of her body:[41]

> At Phoebi nondum patiens immanis in antro
> bacchatur uates, magnum si pectore possit
> excussisse deum; tanto magis ille fatigat
> os rabidum, fera corda domans, fingitque premendo. (77–80)
>
> But the prophetess, no longer enduring Phoebus, raves wildly
> like a bacchant in the cave, if she could shake off the mighty god
> from her breast; so much more he tires
> her raving mouth, tames her wild heart, and molds her by pressing.

The Sibyl's frenzy is represented as a struggle against the god: vocabulary borrowed from descriptions of horse taming emphasizes the theme of resistance, while it also demonstrates the god's eventual mastery over the maiden (*fera corda domans*).[42] Similar motifs in Greek literature

[39] See Plato's *Ion* 533a–534a, where Socrates relates poetry to bacchic possession.

[40] According to custom, however, the prophetess' hair should be unbound, as the sacrifice had been made: see Conington 1884, 2: 432.

[41] Lucan presents his Sibyl in similar terms (5.169–224).

[42] The sexual implications of the description were noted by Norden (1926: 144–46), but dismissed by Austin (1977: 66–67). Ovid's account of the Sibyl

describe female sexual initiation as the "taming" of a maiden by her husband.[43] This portrait of the Sibyl is thus consistent with her usual depiction as the god's bride (Burkert 1985: 117). Horse-taming vocabulary is also used in the description of Amata's maenadic state (*reginam Allecto stimulis agit undique Bacchi* [Allecto drives the queen far and wide with the goad of Bacchus], 7.405). Maenadism is thus important in the representation of the Sibyl's resistance to the god and connects her with the larger theme of female negation of sexual initiation.

In maenadism, female resistance to the male also represents resistance to the bridal transition. The Sibyl's prophecy confirms that this issue is important here as well, since it announces a future wedding:

> causa mali tanti coniunx iterum hospita Teucris
> externique iterum thalami. (93–94)
>
> the cause of such great evil for the Trojans is once again a foreign bride
> and once again a foreign marriage.

This wedding, however, instead of bringing alliance and peace, will produce a second Trojan war, and the bride will prove to be a second Helen. The Sibyl's description of a wedding buried in bloodshed, an inversion of marriage to an interminable funeral, illuminates her earlier portrayal as a maenad resisting the god. Her maenadic demeanor is appropriate given the distorted nature of the marriage she is about to prophesy. In this light, the Sibyl's maenadism follows the pattern of maenadic behavior in the epic as indicative of female resistance to marriage. The Sibyl's emphasis on the evils of this new union points to the perverted nature

(*Met.* 14.129–53) exposes Vergil's intimations of sexual invasion and attributes to her Cassandra-like features (see the following note); Ovid, however, does not appropriate the maenadic aspects of Vergil's Sibyl.

[43] First found in Anacreon (*PMG* 417). Subsequent poets further elaborated the image of yoking as a metaphor for sexual initiation. The same connotations are found in the Latin terms *iungere*, *coniunx*, etc. The vocabulary of the taming of a horse employed in the description of the Sibyl's frenzy replicates the portrayal of Cassandra in Aeschylus' *Ag.* 1064–67. Moreover, Cassandra's famous rejection of Apollo's sexual advances also supports the argument that the Sibyl's resistance to Phoebus is linked with the theme of female resistance to sexual initiation.

of this wedding and thus detracts from the benefits that will eventually arise from it, namely, the Roman state and empire.

The Sibyl's maenadism is thus linked with the larger question of the role of women in the formation of the new state. The prophetess's importance in this respect is stressed through her ritual role. It is precisely that role that makes her Aeneas' guide as he is about to perform a katabasis, one that is directly linked with his own transition into a new role as a Roman leader. Although Anchises eventually takes over as Aeneas' guide to the Roman future, the Sibyl, a woman in ritual garb, is an enabling intermediary. As a result, a female ritual role is cast side by side with fatherly guidance as a necessary element for Aeneas' assumption of his new identity.

Maenadism as linked with the negation of marriage and the destruction of the household emerges fully in Deiphobus' narrative of the sack of Troy as engineered by Helen. Deiphobus recounts to Aeneas Helen's maenadic ritual that orchestrated both the fall of his household and that of their city:[44]

> illa chorum simulans euhantis orgia circum
> ducebat Phrygias; flammam media ipsa tenebat
> ingentem et summa Danaos ex arce uocabat.
> tum me confectum curis somnoque grauatum
> infelix habuit thalamus, pressitque iacentem
> dulcis et alta quies placidaeque simillima morti.
> egregia interea coniunx arma omnia tectis
> emouet, et fidum capiti subduxerat ensem:
> intra tecta uocat Menelaum et limina pandit,
> scilicet id magnum sperans fore munus amanti,
> et famam exstingui ueterum sic posse malorum.
> quid moror? inrumpunt thalamo... (517–28)
>
> That one, faking a dance, led around the Phrygian women in orgiastic rites
> singing 'euhoe'; she herself was holding a huge torch
> in the middle and was calling the Danaans from the topmost citadel.

[44] This story is also told in *Od.* 4.271–89: Helen signals to the Achaeans inside the wooden horse, Deiphobus running behind her (276). Vergil's version, however, recasts a Homeric scene by using the tragic function of maenadism.

> At that time my ill-starred bridal chamber held me worn from cares
> and heavy with slumber, and, as I lay, sleep, sweet and deep,
> very much like peaceful death, was weighing on me.
> Meanwhile, my illustrious wife takes all the weapons from the house
> and even drew my trusty sword from under my head:
> she calls Menelaus inside the house and opens the door,
> hoping, no doubt, that this would be a great gift for her lover,
> and thus the fame of her old misdeeds would be erased.
> Why say more? They break into the bridal chamber...

Helen's rite is identical to that of Amata in Book 7: they are both said to conduct a fake rite, stand in the middle of the chorus (6.517 and 7.389), and rouse the Phrygian women into maenadic frenzy (6.518 and 7.397–98). Once again, we witness a reversal of the usual distinction between male and female spaces: Helen revels outside, throughout the city and on the citadel, while Deiphobus rests in the marital chamber. What is more, Helen is described as taking up arms and disarming her sleeping mate, opening the *limen* of her household to outside aggressors, and offering her husband's life as a gift to her lover. Helen's rites result in the destruction of both Deiphobus' household (*inrumpunt thalamo*) and Troy.[45]

At the same time, however, there is poignant irony in this narrative as told by Deiphobus, who presents the situation with obvious bias: he describes Menelaus as *amans*, the adulterer, while he assumes the role of the lawful husband (Suzuki 1989: 100–101). Yet Deiphobus' mutilated body tells a different tale, as it evokes the punishment a Roman adulterer would incur (Anderson 1969: 60). Similarly, in the case of Amata's fake rite, the queen's maenadism attests to the authority of ritual over the narrator's version of events and promotes the articulation of an alternative point of view.

The episode of the Sibyl reveals a similar problem in identifying the narrative voice. Since the possessed prophetess is a vehicle for the god, the Sibyl's prophecy is an instance of ventriloquism, the real voice of the Sibyl elided. Aeneas' request, however, to hear the prophetess' voice

[45] A further link between the two bacchic instances in this book is the coincidence of the Sibyl's name, Deiphobe, with that of the narrator, Deiphobus.

(*ipsa canas oro* [I request that you yourself sing], 76) is no idle statement. The prophecy's focus on the issues surrounding maenadic resistance to marriage betrays a female perspective. Ritual thus in this instance also emerges as powerful enough to help women articulate the loss and perversion that the men's war brings.

Deiphobus' narrative therefore exposes a more general perversion of marriage at work, generated by both men and women, one that has disastrous consequences for both the royal house and the city.[46] Helen's episode, following the Sibyl's prophecy of a second Helen and a second Trojan War, serves to emphasize that this perversion of marriage persists even as Aeneas is about to found a new settlement.

Vergilian maenads thus closely adhere to the pattern of tragic maenadism as outlined by Seaford and Schlesier. Recourse to bacchic behavior in Vergil springs from female resistance to the male: Dido refuses to comply with Aeneas' decision; the Sibyl resists Apollo's invasion; Helen turns against Deiphobus, Amata against Latinus. Like their tragic counterparts, these women appear as both aggressors and victims, at once responsible and blameless for their actions: Venus in large measure causes Dido's demise; Apollo seeks to dominate the Sibyl; Venus absolves Helen of all responsibility for the sack of Troy (2.601–602); and the Fury Allecto brutally invades Amata.

Moreover, as in Greek tragedy, maenadic resistance to the male enables the articulation of female resistance to social and political constraints. The women's negation of marriage and sexual initiation is intimately bound up with the function of marriage in ancient Rome as a homosocial bond, one that ensures the forging of political alliances that will eventually lead to the Roman Empire. Ritual, and maenadism in particular, empowers the women to oppose the role of subordination and mediation that the men require of them. This resistance launches fresh bouts of violence that threaten to destroy the social and political fabric. Nevertheless, the representation of these women as victims makes a compelling case for their point of view, rendering it an alternative ideological

[46] Helen's maenadic behavior exemplifies the dangers that Dido poses to Aeneas (Suzuki 1989: 101). Helen's bacchic rite therefore serves to confirm that Dido's maenadic state is not simply a metaphor to denote her madness but linked to the episode's major themes.

position to that of male authority and empire. To be sure, this position is ultimately untenable. Maenadism, however, enables it to be registered most poignantly on the poem's ideological map.

Maenadism's importance in the *Aeneid* is not restricted to the women's bacchic activity. It resurfaces in the act of female lamentation. In the next chapter, we shall see the ways in which ritual mourning, maenadism, and the formation of state identity intersect through the involvement of women.

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