

Chapter 7

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Epic Remembrances: Contesting the Gender of Memory in Kae Tempest's *Brand New Ancients* and Tessa Hadley's 'Dido's Lament'

In their recent works, Kae Tempest and Tessa Hadley aim for the center of classical antiquity, and when the former's poem and the latter's story strike home, they reorient both their target and themselves. Tempest's *Brand New Ancients* and Hadley's 'Dido's Lament' invoke the three most influential literary works from Greco-Roman antiquity, the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and *Aeneid*, and their engagement with these epics shifts the significance of their modern pieces as well as Homer's and Vergil's ancient poems. Many of these links relate to memory, a topic at the core of epic. Through allusions and similes, Tempest and Hadley recall Homeric and Vergilian moments of remembrance or forgetting, with the result that their modern characters, who reside in early twenty-first century London, may also be viewed against the backdrop of the world of epic. Through foregrounding their reimagination of the relationship between memory and gender in this way, *Brand New Ancients* and 'Dido's Lament' showcase the newfound agency with which the works' female characters and authors create memory and contest it.

The characteristics of memory in ancient epic highlight how profound a shift in agency Tempest and Hadley effect. Memory was consistently gendered as masculine in Greco-Roman epic and its subsequent reception. As a few representative examples show, Homer's and Vergil's heroes strive to secure honor for themselves while bemoaning opportunities for commemoration that have been lost. When Achilles, for instance, sends Patroclus off to war without him, he tells him to return before reaching Troy's walls not out of concern for his safety, but rather because of the worry that 'You will make me less honored' (ἀτιμότερον δέ με θήσεις, Homer, *Iliad* 16.90).¹ In a similar manner, Aeneas bemoans the location of

1 All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

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his potential death when he is caught in a storm at sea. Rather than suffer the anonymity of such an ending, Aeneas wishes he could have been among those ‘whose lot it was to die before their fathers’ faces under Troy’s high walls!’ (*quis ante ora patrum Troiae sub moenibus altis / contigit oppetere!*, Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.95–96).

Not only, as these quotations show, is commemoration a singular aim for epic’s male characters, but the control of memory is likewise gendered masculine in the poems’ production and their subsequent reception. As Philip Hardie notes, ‘Memory is the ground and goal of the epic’,² and, just as characters like Achilles and Aeneas yearn to be remembered, Homer and Vergil foreground their privileged relationship with the Muses, the daughters of the goddess Memory. Homer’s epics showcase the poet’s access to the Muse in their opening lines: ‘Sing, goddess, of the wrath of Achilles, son of Peleus ...’ (Μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεὰ, Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος ..., *Iliad* 1.1) and ‘Tell me, Muse, of the man of many ways ...’ (Ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροπον ..., *Odyssey* 1.1). The *Aeneid* continues in this tradition, as Vergil commands ‘Muse, tell me the causes ...’ (*Musa, mihi causas memora ...*, *Aeneid* 1.8). Along with male poets enjoying special access to memory as they create their epics, later male artists assumed a similar position in their responses to these poems. The term generic memory elucidates how the reception of earlier writing likewise entails an act of memory, as subsequent authors remember Homer and Vergil’s works as they create their own art.³ Here as well control of memory is gendered masculine, since so high a proportion of these later artists were men.

Tempest and Hadley avail themselves of epic’s mnemonic power in order to destabilize the typical relationship between gender and memory in a work’s production, contents, and reception. Through invoking the epic canon and showcasing their departures from it, Tempest and Hadley offer a new epic landscape where they and their female characters produce and contest memory.⁴ Their female characters’ hopes to remember and forget look back to Homer’s and Vergil’s epic heroes, while their acts of generic memory foreground their own mnemonic control as active participants in classical reception. Tempest’s and Hadley’s simultaneous recall and subvention of epic norms prompt a reevaluation of their stories as well as of the earlier tales they recall, as these contemporary authors

2 Hardie (1990: 263).

3 Hardwick (2003), Martindale and Thomas (2006), Gloyn (2014), and Tatum (2014) offer discussions of reception and reception theory with bibliography.

4 Tempest’s and Hadley’s responses to antiquity are examples of a range of recent non-males’ writing that contributes to the classical tradition. For discussion of other non-male writers and the classical tradition, see Braund (2012), Theodorakopoulos (2012), and Cox and Theodorakopoulos (2013).

showcase how a boldly remembered Greco-Roman literary canon offers the chance to reframe conversations about the mnemonic value of antiquity today.

This chapter first investigates how *Brand New Ancients* and 'Dido's Lament' redistribute agency in the relationship between gender and memory, while its conclusion explores how Tempest's and Hadley's acts of reception prompt a re-imagining of moments of remembrance in those earlier poems. The chapter's first section focuses on *Brand New Ancients*, in which Tempest transforms the lives of modern Londoners into myth by describing everyday people as 'gods' (5) and using similes such as 'He feels like a Spartan in Troy' (23). With ancient epic recalled through these devices, Tempest projects their presence as a bard and fashions a plot that offers glory to a female character. The chapter next considers 'Dido's Lament', which likewise appropriates ancient epic's mnemonic power to reimagine how the control over memory might be complicated and contested. Connecting to scenes in Henry Purcell's 17th century opera *Dido and Aeneas* and Vergil's *Aeneid*, Hadley's story highlights how its main characters contrast with Dido and Aeneas. In 'Dido's Lament', a man, not a woman, destroys the commemorative markers of his former partner, while a woman, not a man, entertains the idea of memory as a palliative force. Building on this exploration of the disruptive potential of Tempest's and Hadley's writing, this chapter's conclusion considers how *Brand New Ancients* and 'Dido's Lament' might reframe endings in ancient epic. Tempest's poem offers its own commemorative values as a lens for viewing epic commemoration, while Hadley's story rethinks Dido and Aeneas' Underworld meeting in the *Aeneid*, literary interactions that showcase the potential for acts of generic memory to prompt the reevaluation of their target texts.

Brand New Ancients: Reimagining Epic Memory

In *Brand New Ancients*, Kae Tempest subverts epic's typical associations between memory and gender through their presence in the poem and their depiction of the character Gloria. As narrator, Tempest shapes the poem's relationship to antiquity and its significance for its present-day audience with similes and allusions in their story as well as with the forceful interruptions of their own voice. By projecting their presence, Tempest takes the mantle of mnemonic control most often associated with male poets in antiquity. With Gloria, meanwhile, Tempest transforms a character who enters as a background figure into the poem's heroine. Instead of existing as a figure shaped by men's actions, Gloria receives the renown lavished on Homer's and Vergil's male heroes. This section of the chapter first describes how Tempest projects their control over the poem's relationship between ancient and modern and then considers how their treatment of Gloria likewise genders mnemonic control as female.

Tempest foregrounds their poetic control over their bold reimagining of the present world. The title *Brand New Ancients* creates a tension between the most extreme elements of old and new. The perspective of modernity is privileged by the position of *Brand* and *New* as the title's first words and by the fact that these two words are counterbalanced by only one word signifying the past, *Ancients*. At the same time, though, this sole noun contains the same number of syllables as the adjectives preceding it, and it gains emphasis as the title's last word. Tempest elucidates the nature of their blend of myth and modernity through the poem's diction, similes, and narratival incursions. The poem's modernity is evoked by its locales (living rooms and bedrooms, bars and strip clubs, sidewalks and offices) and its characters' occupations (bartender, advertising illustrator, checkout clerk), while its argot, studded with phrases such as 'nicking dinner money' (13) and 'one of her majesty's henchmen' (45), conjures a specific socio-economic section of London life.⁵ Tempest characterizes these characters as examples worthy of epic commemoration through various similes and descriptions, wherein phrases such as a 'Brand New Pandora' (11) or 'a hero, knee deep in the desolate grind' (13) are interlaced with everyday actions. Moreover, the centrality of themes so redolent of antiquity, such as adultery, violence, and anger, likewise place Tempest's modern characters on a mythological level.⁶

Along with these devices within the narrative that blur the boundaries between ancient and modern, Tempest also proclaims to their audience that today's stories match the grandeur and emotion of ancient tales. Once at the poem's beginning, once near its end, and twice in its middle, Tempest's voice imbues their poem's everyday world with mythical power. Near the poem's start, Tempest claims (4–5):

The stories are here,
the stories are you,
and your fear
and your hope
is as old
as the language of smoke,
the language of blood,
the language
of languishing love.

The Gods are all here.
Because the gods are in us.

5 Familiar with south London through living there herself, McConnell (2014: 203–204) remarks how the poem is both 'richly evocative of this area of London' while still leaving the possibility that the setting of *Brand New Ancients* could be 'any British metropolis.'

6 McConnell (2014: 198) comments on these and other 'epic' features of *Brand New Ancients*.

The gods are in the betting shops
 The gods are in the caff
 The gods are smoking fags out the back...

In this and other intrusions, Tempest links their characters to antiquity, implying that they live with the same intensity as the gods and heroes of mythical tales. In making this claim, Tempest foregrounds their own voice as the one shaping these stories and takes on a position almost exclusively gendered as masculine in antiquity.⁷

Just as Tempest assumes a mnemonic role associated with men in antiquity, their treatment of Gloria likewise reconfigures epic's typical dynamics of memory. After not entering the poem's foreground until it is about two-thirds complete, Gloria fends off an attempted sexual assault in its climactic scene, and the passage's details endow her with the renown typical of Homer's and Vergil's male heroes. The impact of this innovation is heightened by its place within the poem's narrative, which nowhere raises the possibility of Gloria's heroism and is in fact structured around the lives of two half-brothers, Clive and Tommy. Clive's parents are Brian and Mary, and they are neighbors of Kevin and Jane, the pair Tommy believes to be his mother and father. Yet, as only Brian and Jane know, Brian is Tommy's biological father. Anger and violence fill Brian and Mary's house, and the two divorce when Clive is still young. As Clive grows into a young adult, his world becomes one of violence and anger, marked not just by a lack of aspirations, but a robust antipathy toward them. Tommy, meanwhile, enjoys support and love in his childhood, and when he does sense a level of coldness at home, he moves out in the hope of a career as an author and illustrator.

Tempest's descriptions of Tommy at ages 19 and 25 raise the expectation that he will be the poem's hero. As Tempest describes Tommy's late teens, they hints at the potential for transformation both in his life and artistic work (20):

Walking round in a day dream
 trying to work out what to do with his life:
 he's a passionate painter,
 he draws all through the night,
 but he keeps it to himself,
 he doesn't show nobody else.
 He writes stories, comic book style, makes drawings,

7 As McConnell (2014: 198) notes, this opening to the poem highlights 'the performance poet as narrator.' This effect would have been even more pronounced during Tempest's oral performances of the poem, which included performances at the Battersea Arts Centre in London, England September 4–22, 2012, and at the North Wall, Oxford February 25–26, 2014. (For the Battersea performances, see Hunt [2012], and for the Oxford performances, see McConnell [2014].) Reflecting on her attendance of one of Tempest's performances, McConnell (2014: 205) remarks that Tempest 'brings us closer to the experience of an ancient bardic audience than many of us have been before.'

his hero is a young man, whose life might seem boring
 on the surface: by day
 he works in a factory packing dog food,
 but by night,
 he's a rebel with a devil to fight.

In these two sentences, which display the same length and the same contrast between day and night, Tempest establishes Tommy's liminal position. Sure of his passion but reluctant to share it, Tommy aspires to success, much like his story's hero whose nocturnal fighting contrasts with his mundane daytime activities. Six years later, after a publisher does not respond to Tommy's manuscript, Tempest focuses on his emotional despair: 'He feels like a Spartan in Troy. / He feels like his heart is destroyed' (23). Associating him with the *Iliad*, the first verse likens him to a soldier in an enemy city, whereas the second showcases the ruin of his professional hopes. For the reader familiar with Homer's tale, the simile conveys the heroic depth of Tommy's disappointment, even as it promises that he will one day succeed in his battles, just as the Spartans did after ten years of war.

While Tempest's depiction of Tommy makes his hopes central to the poem, Gloria's first appearances relegate her to a supporting role. In an episode several years before Tommy and Gloria meet, Clive encourages his friend Spider to approach a girl he likes. The object of Spider's interest is Jemma, and, when he does speak to her, 'She giggles' and then 'grips her best friend Gloria by the arm and they burst out laughing' (18). This incident portrays Gloria as a secondary character, a prop to emphasize the extent of Spider's humiliation. Tempest's next description of Gloria, even as it brings her closer to the center of *Brand New Ancients*' plot, still depicts her as a figure unlike the heroes of ancient epic. In a lengthy summary of Gloria's life, Tempest relates how she ran away from home and later escaped a relationship with an abusive boyfriend. While the extent of this section makes it clear that Gloria will become a significant figure in *Brand New Ancients*, she is associated with solidity and straightforwardness rather than bravery or glory. Tempest writes that 'if [Gloria] was a statue she'd be less marble, more cement' (22). Even when Gloria is imagined as an object that commemorates her for the future, she is associated with the utility and persistence of cement rather than the gleam and glamor of marble.

Once Tommy and Gloria's relationship begins, Tempest's description of Tommy's art and their play with the form of Gloria's name increase the expectation that Tommy will take on the hero's role. After meeting Gloria in a bar the night before, Tommy arises from bed to draw her: 'Overcome, he runs to his desk and sketches a scene, / the hero at peace with his queen' (24). Tommy depicts Gloria as a figure who enables him to play the hero within a domestic setting, and the rhyme between 'scene' and 'queen' emphasizes how Tommy wields commemora-

tive control over their relationship through his art. This link between art, Gloria, and Tommy's fame is furthered a year later, after Tommy learns his work will be published. When he tells Gloria, 'she makes him feel like a superhero in a way he's never known' (26). Just as when Tommy draws her, Gloria enables Tommy's heroism. Tempest's play with Gloria's name further establishes her position as a marker of his success. Through its Latin meaning of 'glory' and its closeness to that English word, 'Gloria' already carries with it the connotation of fame, but Tempest brings those implications to the surface by referring to her as 'Glory.' As Tommy weighs the demands of art and financial reality, he realizes that 'he could do graphics for adverts, / make enough cash to support him and Glory / while he wrote his big story' (29). Tempest's use of 'Glory' rather than 'Gloria' projects the character's supporting role in Tommy's success, and the rhyme between 'Glory' and 'story' connects Tommy's artwork and the renown it will bring him. Moreover, the proper noun 'Glory' invokes the use of that word as a verb, a play that erases the character Gloria and introduces the idea that Tommy already glories in his twin markers of success: the money that he makes and the big story that he writes. A subsequent play with Gloria's name reflects Tommy and Gloria's diverging perspectives. Tommy, after work would 'come home to Glory', while 'Gloria supported him / as best she could' (30). 'Glory' points to Gloria's status as a testament to Tommy's renown and to Tommy's rejoicing in his triumphs, while 'Gloria' leaves the character solely in a role of support, with no credit for herself.

Brand New Ancients' climax overturns the expectations of Tommy's shining success and Gloria's silent support. This lengthy section begins with Tommy celebrating at an upscale bar while Gloria works at a neighborhood pub, and the juxtaposition of these settings creates a tension between surface and substance. At Tommy's 'trendy bar' all the people are 'fake laughing and talking far too loud', a situation that prompts Tommy to think 'of the graphic novel that he's yet to write' (31). Although Tommy realizes that his relationship with Gloria 'had become mechanical, [and] he had to make it better' (32), he nonetheless proceeds with his coworkers to a strip bar, another venue that prizes appearance over reality. Tommy's realization of his personal failures increases as he looks at a dancer's 'face painted and monstrous, sexy by numbers', and 'at last' he leaves to go see Gloria (37). He moves through the city on a journey with heroic overtones: 'The tube becomes a chariot of fire, / and his heart is renewed with an honest desire, / his shoes become wings and he flies toward her side...' (37). The chariot simile and winged shoes allude to myth and epic; now, though, instead of portraying Tommy as a hero in search of his own fame, they showcase his efforts at repairing his relationship with Gloria.

At the same time as the fake nature of Tommy's settings prompts him to realize his flaws, Gloria's authenticity and heroism come to the fore when the

threat of violence is introduced. Attending to ‘the regulars’ at her bar (32), Gloria ‘serves them happily, / listens when they speak to her’ (33). When Clive and Spider enter this amicable setting, even though ‘they look out of their minds, / red eyes, on fire from what looks like a big binge’, Gloria ‘summons the energy to offer them empathy’ (34). The pair’s demeanor becomes increasingly threatening as the night continues. Once the pub is empty, Clive asks ‘don’t you wanna have some fun?’ and Spider stands at the bolted door ‘like a minotaur playing at a sheriff’ (36). Highlighting the monstrous authority Spider assumes, this jarring simile gives the scene the patina of antiquity and raises the expectation that if Gloria is to be saved, it will be by a man. When the attack begins, though, it is Gloria who saves herself, as she remembers earlier abuse she had suffered at the hands of men and even ‘Tommy’s silent stares / looking past her, looking through her’ (39). She smashes Clive with one bottle after another until she sticks him ‘and twisted till she felt him bleed’ (40). Subverting the expectations of ancient epic, Gloria is victorious in her physical combat as she assumes a role gendered masculine in antiquity.

Tommy’s entrance into the bar completes Gloria’s transformation into the poem’s hero and the recipient of its renown. Tommy sees the situation but cannot react: ‘Frozen to the spot, summoning the heroes he used to draw ...⁸ / But his supermen abandoned him’ (40). Tommy cannot become the heroic protagonist of his drawings, and his earlier sketch’s vision of himself as the hero to Gloria’s queen is an empty promise. Instead, the markers of heroism accrue to Gloria (40–41):

... Glory burned brighter than any one of Zeus’s daughters,
the fight in her eyes was inspiring.
He saw her, the quiet resolution, the timing,
her steadfast compassion that kept her beside him
and he saw her as if for the first time: fire in her eyes shining.

Recalling the glint of heroes’ armor in Homer’s epics, the words ‘burned brighter’ and ‘shining’ endow the aptly named ‘Glory’ with epic renown. In her relationship to antiquity, she is raised above *Brand New Ancients*’ male characters. While Tommy may be likened to a Spartan soldier or Spider to the Minotaur, Tempest’s comparison of Gloria with Zeus’ daughters figures her as divine. Moreover, just as these verses shift the gender of heroism from masculine to feminine, they transform the qualities deemed worthy of commemoration. Rather than strength or skill in weapons being valorized, it is Glory’s ‘resolution’, ‘timing’, and ‘steadfast compassion’ that lead to Tommy’s recognition of the fire in her eyes.

The poem’s last depiction of Gloria and Tommy emblematizes the paradox *Brand New Ancients* creates in its reformulation of the relationship between

⁸ This ellipsis is present in Tempest’s text.

gender and memory. Here the focus is again on Tommy's perspective as he thinks back to Gloria 'defending herself like a heroine, a god. / And with his eyes he apologized for every night / he hadn't kissed her right. / And he knew that he was understood 'cos he felt her hold him tight' (42). For Tommy, Gloria is no longer a testament to his success, but rather a heroine because of her own actions. Here, though, while Gloria shares these ancient heroes' ability for self-defense, the quality that is emphasized the most is her empathy. Already, Tempest marks this attribute when they describes the 'empathy' (34) Gloria summons when Clive and Spider enter the bar, and now, in this closing image, Gloria's understanding of Tommy binds their relationship. This focus on Gloria's ability to understand others furthers Tempest's reimagination of epic. By drawing on the ancient genre most deeply invested in memory's construction, Tempest reformulates the values that are worthy of commemoration and emphasize the brilliance not of destroying others, but of understanding them.

'Dido's Lament': A Specific Reorientation

Like *Brand New Ancients*, Tessa Hadley's 'Dido's Lament' interrogates epic's construction of the relationship between gender and memory, but it does so in a different manner and with different results. Whereas Tempest's poem invokes the milieu of Homeric epic and then engages with its general treatment of commemoration, Hadley's piece compares its own battles over memory with those portrayed in a very specific story from antiquity. Questions of remembering and forgetting dominate Hadley's story, and these issues are brought further to the fore through the invocation of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and Vergil's *Aeneid*. By alluding to these works, Hadley juxtaposes the role of memory in her characters' interactions with its place in Purcell's and Vergil's renditions of Dido and Aeneas' relationship. In the encounter between Toby and Lynette, the main characters of Hadley's story, each member of this divorced couple assumes the actions and beliefs associated with the opposing gender in *Dido and Aeneas* and the *Aeneid*. This blurring destabilizes the association between masculinity and memory and raises questions about how literary reception may function as a form of memory. After exploring the centrality of memory in 'Dido's Lament', this chapter considers how Hadley's allusions to Purcell's and Vergil's works reimagine the value of memory and spotlight the possibilities for contemporary authors to draw on the potential of antiquity.

Lynette and Toby's encounter foregrounds the theme of memory, a focus that enriches the comparisons to Purcell and Vergil created by Hadley's allusion. Divorced for nine years, Lynette and Toby meet in London after he jostles her in a crowd. Only seeing the man who pushed her from behind, Lynette follows him to an Underground station and then reaches out to get his attention. Once Toby turns

around, Lynette realizes who he is and never confronts him about the push. Instead, the two chat first in the station and then on a train, before proceeding to Toby's house. After drinks and conversation there, Lynette departs and Toby remains, and the story ends with him at his house and her at a bar. Memory plays a central role throughout the story. From Lynette's perspective, the person who bumps her goes on 'oblivious of any trouble he'd left in his wake' (63), while when Lynette realizes that this man is Toby, she thinks 'naturally, he'd forgotten her' (64). This tension between remembering and forgetting persists at Toby's house: Toby, after cleaning mud from Lynette's coat, announces 'You can't see any trace of it' (67), while Lynette wonders 'Had Toby forgotten [her] so thoroughly...' (65), asks him 'Do you remember our car crash?' (66), and thinks back to their marriage's end. Moreover, after the pair separate, Toby erases the phone number Lynette wrote on his kitchen chalkboard and she sits in a bar, waiting to see if Toby will call about the package she forgot at his house.

Hadley's allusion to Purcell's and Vergil's works add new layers to the questions 'Dido's Lament' raises about remembering and forgetting. The story's title already recalls Dido, but an allusion makes the connection more specific. Near the story's end Toby asks Lynette about her singing, a question Lynette brushes off as she ponders her lack of success. Toby's follow-up question, though, occasions a more extensive reflection (66):

'And you have felt free? You told me that as long as we were together you weren't free to give yourself over to your work completely.' [said Toby]

'Did I say that? How pretentious of me!' [said Lynette]

She felt a spasm of exasperation that Toby had stored up all the nonsense she'd ever spoken and taken it so seriously. In fact, she was guesting in a student production of 'Dido and Aeneas', in which Aeneas was got up as the captain of an American football team and Dido as a cheerleader; it worked surprisingly well. Toby didn't know anything about music, anyway. Lynette hummed to herself the opening lines of Dido's lament, as she looked around at the beautiful room. How strange that Toby was so simple and yet his simplicity had had all these solid, complicated effects in the real world, these material accumulations and accretions – and children, too, the branching out and infinite complication of children. Whereas her own complexity seemed to have had no consequences. It was all wrapped up inside her – she had nothing to show for it. She didn't even own anything significant.

Along with revealing Lynette's feelings about her marriage with Toby and their current situations, these paragraphs foreground the story's treatment of memory and gender by situating it within a larger context.

The mention of the student production of 'Dido and Aeneas' invokes Purcell's opera as well as Dido's role in Vergil's *Aeneid*, while Lynette's humming of the opening of Dido's lament recalls a specific moment in Purcell's work. Near the opera's end, Dido resolves to commit suicide after she learns Aeneas has decided

to sail to Italy.⁹ The designation 'Dido's lament' refers to these final words Dido utters (Act III, Scene ii).¹⁰

When I am laid, am laid in earth,
 may my wrongs create
 No trouble, no trouble in thy breast.
 When I am laid, am laid in earth,
 may my wrongs create
 No trouble, no trouble in thy breast.
 Remember me, remember me, but ah! Forget my fate.
 Remember me, but ah! Forget my fate.
 Remember me, remember me, but ah! Forget my fate.
 Remember me, but ah! Forget my fate.

Scholars of opera have remarked on how these verses are one of Purcell's 'noblest lyric inspirations',¹¹ as he 'rises within narrow limits to monumental grandeur',¹² and the lines' details recall earlier musical phrases in the opera, thereby giving Dido's final utterance 'splendor from its sheer inevitability'.¹³ Through its musical force, Lynette's humming of this lament inserts ideas of loss and monumentality into her interchange with Toby while increasing its emotional significance.

This allusion's juxtaposition of Lynette and Toby's relationship with Dido and Aeneas' opens a series of questions about how Hadley's story relates to *Dido and Aeneas* and the *Aeneid*. The sentiments expressed in Dido's lament offer a lens for viewing Lynette's attitude toward Toby. The lament's first lines, in which Dido announces her death and asks that her earlier wrongs not trouble Aeneas, fashion Lynette and Toby's meeting as a terminal encounter and convey Lynette's hope that their divorce no longer disturbs Toby. Moreover, Lynette's realization about her and Toby's creations takes on a greater mnemonic significance. Lynette is struck by how the many monuments of Toby's simplicity contrast with the lack of material effects produced by her complexity. Dido's request that she, and not her fate, be remembered underscores Lynette's hope that Toby remember her rather than her lack of material monuments or musical accomplishments.

Along with highlighting Lynette's efforts to control her commemoration, the connection between Hadley's short story, Purcell's opera, and Vergil's epic poem reveals how 'Dido's Lament' destabilizes the gender roles typical of the *Dido and*

9 Harris (2018: 3–30) offers a synopsis of the opera as well as its relationship to earlier versions of this story. Orr (2016: 433–436) discusses the political context of the opera and questions about the date of its original performance.

10 Text is from Price (1986), who offers a complete score. The above quote may be found in Price (1986: 176–178).

11 Westrup (1937: 121).

12 Westrup (1937: 123).

13 Price (1986: 36).

Aeneas story. Already, shifts appear in the movement from *Aeneid* 4 to *Dido and Aeneas*.¹⁴ While in Vergil's telling, Aeneas nowhere professes his love to Dido and nowhere promises to stay, Purcell's Aeneas does both.¹⁵ And while rage and regret dominate Dido's reaction in the *Aeneid*, in Purcell's opera the queen's last words are conciliatory. Hadley changes the story further, as its plot associates Toby and Lynette with attributes from the characters whose gender opposes theirs. While Aeneas is the one who leaves in the *Aeneid* and *Dido and Aeneas*, it is Lynette, not Toby, who brought about their divorce, and it is Toby, not Lynette, who reacts with emotion to their separation. Almost immediately after Lynette catches up to Toby and realizes who he is, she thinks back to how 'the parting had been all her doing, he had just suffered it intensely, with a white, fixed, wronged stare and outbreaks of baffled protest' (63).

Building off these structural and emotional shifts, Hadley destabilizes the gender typically associated with remembering and forgetting in *Dido and Aeneas*' story. The theme of memory becomes most prominent in Hadley's story right before and after Lynette leaves Toby's house. As their conversation comes to a close, Toby cleans off the mud that had stained Lynette's coat when he pushed her. After he announces 'You can't see any trace of it', Lynette responds by saying 'Here's my number' and then writes it on his kitchen blackboard (67). The juxtaposition of these actions clarifies the aims of each. Toby desires to erase any traces of his and Lynette's meeting, while Lynette creates a mnemonic marker of her visit. Moreover, when Lynette does depart, she accidentally leaves behind her shopping bag, another monument to her presence. As soon as he is alone, Toby sets to work ensuring no traces of Lynette remain (67):

... he noticed Lynette's number written on the chalkboard. After a moment's hesitation, he erased the number with a wet cloth, wiped the whole board clean, then rewrote 'pasta, Calpol, kitchen towel, black olives.' He washed out the cloth and ran tap water in the sink, rinsing away the dried mud he'd brushed off her coat, sending it spinning down the plughole.

With these two markers of Lynette destroyed, Toby realizes that Lynette left behind her shopping bag. At first, he does not know what to do with the bag, as he can neither throw it away (lest Lynette return for it) nor keep it around the house (lest his wife and children notice). After thinking of how 'The item incriminated him, whatever he did' (67), Toby hides the bag in the back of his office cabinet.

¹⁴ Watson (2014) offers an overview of the opera, its relationship to the *Aeneid*, and its reception.

¹⁵ Orr (2016: 433) describes how Purcell's presentation of Dido fits into a version of Dido that comes to the fore in the late seventeenth century, which is focused on questions of morality and emphasizes Dido's responsibility both for her affair with Aeneas and its consequences.

A comparison with the *Aeneid* reveals that Hadley redistributes the genders previously associated with remembering and forgetting. Soon after Dido learns that Aeneas is set to depart in *Aeneid* 4, he tells her (4.333–336):

*ego te, quae plurima fando
enumerare vales, numquam, regina, negabo
promeritam, nec me meminisse pigebit Elissae
dum memor ipse mei, dum spiritus hos regit artus.*

I will never deny, queen, that you deserve the greatest number of things you can count out in speech, nor will I ever regret remembering Elissa [Dido], so long as I remember myself, so long as my spirit controls these limbs.

Aeneas' statement to Dido that he will remember her and her help is a promise that memory can offer honor and an emotional connection in the face of physical absence. Lynette's writing of her phone number is nowhere near as forward as Aeneas' promise, yet it too implies that her and Toby's past can be remembered without pain and that a connection between them is still possible.

Toby's destruction, meanwhile, of every item that Lynette leaves behind recalls Dido's attitude toward memory. In Vergil's *Aeneid*, once Dido understands that Aeneas is set to sail, she asks her sister to place his belongings on a pyre and claims that 'it helps to destroy all the monuments of that wicked man' (*abolere nefandi / cuncta viri monimenta iuvat*, *Aeneid* 4.497–498). Dido yearns to erase any traces of the Trojan, with the understanding that she can quell her emotional pain by no longer being reminded of his presence. In Hadley's story, though, it is Toby who erases the three traces of Lynette's presence: her phone number, the mud from her coat, and her shopping bag. Later, as Toby ponders his motivations, he thinks that 'it would be better if Jaz didn't know that Lynette had been here, in this house, printing her presence everywhere so that it haunted him wherever he looked. If Jaz didn't know, then he didn't have to think about what it meant' (67). For Dido, Aeneas' possessions remind her of his wickedness, while in Toby's mind any marker of Lynette would lead to his wife's knowledge of her presence, which in turn would prompt his emotional turmoil and purposeful ignorance of his thoughts. In fact, an earlier flashback in the story reveals that this was Toby's exact attitude during their divorce: "Take whatever you like," he'd said. "Everything you've touched is spoiled for me now" (67). Toby and Lynette's opposing actions foreground Hadley's reversal of the dynamics of memory from the *Aeneid*. In her story the female character seeks to create monuments and implies that memory can have a palliative effect, while the male character destroys remnants of earlier times, which can only bring him emotional and intellectual pain.

This portrait, though, is complicated by a coda to Toby's actions, which reveals that while he wishes to forestall the possibility that he will remember

Lynette, he desires that she have a specific recollection of him. Hadley reveals that Toby may have planned their meeting in order that Lynette would come away from it with a certain memory of him. The story's last description of Toby focuses on what he is *not* thinking after Lynette leaves his house (67):

He was deliberately not thinking something. He wasn't thinking that he'd put everything together – family and work and home – all so that Lynette could visit it someday and see that he'd managed to have a good life without her. He knew that if he held off from thinking that for long enough then at some point it could no longer possibly be true, and he'd forget that he'd ever thought it might be.

Toby's drive to forget is paired with a desire for Lynette to remember. The juxtaposition is striking: he may have planned the entire evening so that it would stand as a monument to his 'good life without her', but Toby wants to forget that he ever contemplated this idea. Even in his tension between wishing for Lynette to remember and for himself to forget, Toby mirrors Dido more than Aeneas. In some of her last words to the Trojan, Dido hopes that he will remember her at his death (4.382–384):

*spero equidem mediis, si quid pia numina possunt,
supplicia hausurum scopolis et nomine Dido
saepè vocaturum.*

Indeed I hope that, if the pious gods have any power, in the middle of the rocks you will drain your punishments and often call out the name Dido.

In this climactic prayer, Dido strives to ensure that Aeneas' relationship with her will be associated only with suffering. While Toby matches Dido in neither his rhetoric nor rage, he is similar to the Carthaginian queen in his desire to ensure that he has the ability to construct his own lasting image of the meaning of a previous relationship.

Just as Hadley's story invokes and destabilizes the links between gender and memory established in *Dido and Aeneas* and the *Aeneid*, so too does 'Dido's Lament' capitalize on the reception history of Vergil's epic in highlighting how new authors may remember and reimagine Aeneas and Dido's tale. On the most general level, Hadley claims her space as an author who leverages the emotional depth and complexity of Purcell's and Vergil's works in fashioning her own story of a divorced couple's meeting. While Hadley's authorial presence in 'Dido's Lament' is not as marked as Tempest's in *Brand New Ancients*, her inclusion of a pointed allusion to Purcell's opera, combined with her emphasis on this allusion in her story's title, highlights her role as an artist engaging with an earlier literary tradition. The allusion's context further underscores the range of possibilities for bringing aspects of an ancient text into the modern age. Lynette knows the start of Dido's lament because of her role 'in a student production of "Dido and Aeneas",

in which Aeneas was got up as the captain of an American football team and Dido as a cheerleader; it worked surprisingly well' (66). Through including this re-imagining of the Dido and Aeneas tale within her story's fictional world, Hadley draws attention to how new artistic productions remember and reimagine earlier works. Lynette's 'Dido and Aeneas' is a student production, much like the original performance of Purcell's opera in 1689,¹⁶ and Lynette's declaration that 'it worked surprisingly well' underscores the potential for new acts of generic memory to join Purcell's work in drawing on Dido and Aeneas' story as they offer their own interpretation of its central values and questions.

Shaping Memory: Death, Reception, and Looking Backwards

This chapter's concluding paragraphs explore how *Brand New Ancients* and 'Dido's Lament', through shifting the evaluation of the endings of characters' lives and relationships, show the potential for reevaluating commemorative moments in Homer's and Vergil's epic poems as well. As argued above, Hadley's and Tempest's works recall ancient epic and capitalize on that genre's commemorative power to reimagine the dynamics of gender and memory. In 'Dido's Lament', the female character attempts to create a positive memory, while the male character works to destroy commemorations that might cause emotional trauma. *Brand New Ancients*, meanwhile, raises and then subverts the expectations that its modes of commemoration will mimic ancient epic: Gloria, not Tommy, assumes the role of the hero and gains the renown associated with that position, and she wins her commemoration as much from her physical self-defense as from her practice of empathy. Given that Tempest's and Hadley's engagement with epic centers on moments of memory, their poem and story raise the possibility for the projection of their reinterpretation of epic's values back onto the commemoration of lives and relationships in Homer's and Vergil's poems. The concluding description of Brian's death in *Brand New Ancients* brings to mind epic's typical commemorations of heroes, while 'Dido's Lament' recalls Aeneas and Dido's final encounter in the Underworld.

Tempest's focus on Brian's last years in their poem's conclusion has the potential to reorient the evaluation of similar commemorative passages in Greco-Roman epic. In old age Brian is haunted by memory. Looking back on his young loves, Brian realizes 'at the time he forgot 'em so easy; but now there was no forgetting them' (43), and now 'his memories teased him, he was lonely, miserable, / days into weeks, all alone feeling pitiful' (45). When Brian flees Britain for Thailand and a new love, Tempest terms this location a 'fair Olympus' (46), a mytho-

¹⁶ The opera was 'written for a fashionable boarding school in Chelsea ... where it was performed in spring 1689 by "Young Gentlewomen"' (Price [1986: ix]). The indication of the performers comes from the opera's libretto (see Price [1986: 3]).

logical description that hints at Brian's ascension to a new plane of existence. Here, he shows compassion for those he has hurt. He thinks back to 'poor old Mary, poor sweet Jane, poor young Clive, / so big and strange, and poor quiet Kevin, and poor little Tommy' (47). In Brian's last moment, he declares '*I'm a man*', thinks of his paramour, and 'chuckled to himself and he quietly died' (47). Within the narrative of *Brand New Ancients*, this section directly follows Gloria's heroism, and the empathy that marked her actions likewise appears here in Brian, who finally expresses compassion for the ones he has harmed. Through first highlighting the heroism of Gloria's empathy and then revealing Brian's compassion as well, Tempest challenges the audience to entertain similar feelings toward this character. This challenge could even extend back to the evaluation of heroes in Greco-Roman epic; these passages typically privilege the commemoration of masculine honor and martial valor, and Tempest introduces the notion that empathy and compassion are values worthy of commemoration as well.

Just as Tempest's poem challenges the audience to rethink ancient epic's commemorations with a focus on empathy, Hadley's story likewise positions itself as a new perspective on the commemoration of epic characters. In Vergil's telling, Dido and Aeneas meet again in the Underworld after the queen's suicide. Journeying here to see his father in *Aeneid* 6, Aeneas spots Dido's shade wandering amongst others who died because of love. When Aeneas asks Dido to stay and speak, she listens in silent rage before returning to her erstwhile husband. Details from Hadley's story recall this Vergilian scene. Lynette catches up with Toby in an Underground station; Toby's expression upon seeing Lynette is likened to 'a flare against the underground light' (63); and, after Toby suggests they go somewhere else to talk, Lynette responds 'But it's hell up there, too' (64). The subterranean location for Lynette and Toby's encounter parallels the setting for Dido and Aeneas' meeting, while the addition of 'too' at the end of Lynette's remark underscores the similarities between the Underground and the Underworld. These connections figure 'Dido's Lament' as a response to Aeneas and Dido's meeting in the Underworld, a configuration with repercussions for the imagination of modern engagements with the *Aeneid*. The story's positioning of itself as another rendition of this moment creates a tension. Aeneas and Dido's Underworld meeting in *Aeneid* 6 was supposed to be the end to their relationship, but now Hadley's story presents itself as a new finale. Yet, just as Hadley's story may seem to take on a level of permanence, its very act of opening up Aeneas and Dido's seemingly closed story suggests that their tale may inspire more artistic responses in the future. Thus Hadley, like Tempest, finds that in epic deaths there is the possibility for new literary life.

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