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WE ARE VERY SIMILAR, YET WE ARE VERY DIFFERENT: J.R.R Tolkien's Éowyn of Rohan's Virgilian Origins and Her Search for Meaning

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Abstract

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Abstract: Through the years, many characters in *The Lord of the Rings* have been analysed in different ways. Éowyn is no exception. Her character has often been associated with the shield-maidens and Valkyries existing in Nordic Germanic and Anglo-Saxon literatures. This essay, however, breaks with this tradition. Instead, the focus of this research lies on Éowyn's classical origins found in Virgil's Dido of Carthage from his epic poem *The Aeneid*. By employing Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* and Georg Lukács' *The Theory of the Novel*, I will interpret Éowyn as a novelistic character in possession of psychological depth, searching for meaning. The results of this comparison show that Éowyn has her origins in Dido, but she liberates herself from Carthage's queen partly because she is different from her own Rohirric society and partly because she is a highly psychological character who reaches self-recognitions several times during the events of the War of the Ring. Although inspired by Dido in origin, the fact that Éowyn has her roots in Classical literature enables the reader successively to distinguish her novelistic nature during the course of events in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Keywords: Éowyn, Tolkien, Dido, Virgil, Aragorn, Aeneas, fate, epic society, psychology, self-recognition

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Introduction

Éowyn, King Théoden's niece and the only princess of his household that we are introduced to in Rohan, asks one interesting question in *The Return of the King* shortly before Aragorn leaves to the Path of the Dead: "Am I not of the House of Éorl, a shield-maiden" (RK 783). She is of course a descendent of Éorl. In fact, she is politically trained, as her uncle entrusts her with Rohan's safety when he left to do battle at Helm's Deep.¹ Éowyn also is a skilful swords-woman, which she proves when defeating the Witch-King of Angmar.² She is indeed a worthy representative of Éorl's House. However, is she necessarily a shield-maiden? Can one only find her origins in Anglo-Saxon or Germanic myths? From blogs to academic researches, a quick search on the internet shows that Éowyn is often associated with shield-maidens or Valkyries. Scholar Charles Moorman insists that "the greatest single influence upon Tolkien's work is the eddas and sagas of the North" (212), and Tolkien scholar Tom Shippey believes that Middle Earth as a whole is strictly influenced by Germanic traditions, particularly in relation to "pride ... and sadness" (155). According to Leslie Donovan, "Not only is Éowyn related to Old Norse and Old English battle maidens in training and leadership within her culture; she also resembles Valkyries in her psychological configuration" (245). The conclusions concerning her Anglo-Saxon and Nordic Germanic origins are partly based on the fact that Tolkien, a professor of Anglo-Saxon, was highly passionate about his academic subject (Moreno, *Amatory Motifs* 73). With these details in mind, it seems almost impossible that Éowyn's character can have any other source than Nordic Germanic or Anglo-Saxon. After all, with so much written about her in this particular field, how can she be anything else?

¹ Helm's Deep is a fortress in Rohan.

² Sauron's strongest nazgûl and the commander of the nine wraiths

Nevertheless, before we debate any further about Éowyn origins, let us gather some information about her identity. A good question to ask here is “who is this Rohirric woman”? Éowyn is related to Éorl, making her noble by birth. She begins her tale as Théoden’s nurse. She also is directly related to both heirs of her forefather’s kingdom, Théodred and Éomer. Additionally, Éowyn is the woman who defeats the Witch-King during the Battle of the Pelennor Fields. Finally, she decides to become a healer. In other words, Éowyn is a woman with many identities.

Evidently, Éowyn has many identities. She can be a healer, a nurse and a hero, Anglo-Saxon or Nordic-Germanic, whereof the last two options have received much scholarly attention. Although it is possible to believe that Éowyn originates from Northern literature, such a conclusion offers an incomplete picture of her character. Her origin can be found in another source. This essay will investigate a perspective that has not often been associated with Éowyn, namely the classical origins of her character. The purpose is to show that Éowyn is influenced by Virgil’s Dido of Carthage. She eventually breaks free from Dido, becoming the full character of Éowyn. This occurs because she is a novelistic character in possession of volition and psychological depth, seeking to give her life meaning during the events of the war.

Since this essay discusses Éowyn’s classical origins, it is worth mentioning that Tolkien was linguistically gifted and began to learn Greek and Latin at a young age. Having studied these two languages at King Edward’s School in Birmingham, he reached a proficient level, being able to read, translate, speak and write without any difficulties (Moreno, *Amatory Motifs* 73). As a result of his Latin and Greek skills, Tolkien was given an Open Classical Exhibition by Exeter College, Oxford University (73). Tolkien also was particularly familiar with *The Aeneid*. Capable of reciting innumerable lines from *The Aeneid* by heart, Tolkien had “an intimate and thorough command of [Virgil’s epic]” (Moreno, *Star Imagery* 50) to the

extent that “[he] [did] not [need to] ... locate the passage[s] (50). His knowledge of the classics is reflected in *The Lord of the Rings*, with the elvish languages being a hybrid of Latin and Welsh (Carpenter 290). Even the language of Mordor is heavily based on Latin (307). It is, therefore, impossible to neglect the fact that “Tolkien’s Classical education was far from being sketchy or superficial and it would be surprising if none of it were ever apparent in his subsequent writings” (Moreno, *Amatory Motifs* 73). Although Tolkien eventually studied Anglo-Saxon, becoming a professor in the subject,

he never truly left Greek and Latin literature behind. As time passed, without abandoning his love of Old English, Gothic and Old Norse, he returned to the Classical languages. Throughout his letters he continued to dispel notions that his only sources of inspiration were Northern ones and to make assurances about the influence of Classical literature on his work. (73)

Tolkien must indeed be regarded as a Latinist and not only a professor of Anglo-Saxon. Consequently, I shall return to the questions I initially asked: “does Éowyn merely have her origins in Anglo-Saxon or Nordic mythology; is she only a shield-maiden?” In view of the information above, I believe that such an assumption indeed is an oversimplification of Éowyn’s character.

To analyse Éowyn’s Classical origins more effectively, the following research questions are posed:

- How are the major events of Dido’s life embedded into Éowyn’s life regarding similarities and differences?
- How does Éowyn assume command over her life and potentially over Rohan?
- How does Éowyn’s journey affect *The Lord of the Rings* in the scenes that she appears?

This essay will employ certain concepts from Ian Watt’s *The Rise of the Novel* and certain concepts from Georg Lukács’ *The Theory of the Novel*, both of which will be explained in the

theory section. Chapter I will not use either theories. Instead, this section uses close reading to discern a potential pattern when comparing Éowyn's and Dido's lives. The selected events depend on the general tale of Aragorn and Aeneas when they attempt to fulfil their tasks in Middle-Earth and Rome, respectively. Chapter II focuses on the results from the previous chapter. Watt's and Lukács' theories as well as close reading will be applied in this section. The chapters will be followed by a conclusion, but before any analysis is conducted, let us see what others have written about Tolkien's Éowyn.

Previous Research

As Dido of Carthage is a major part of this research, let us begin with a work that discusses *The Aeneid* as source for Éowyn's character. Estibaliz Sanmartín Garcia argues in her essay, "La Eneida en el Señor de Los Anillos: El Papel de sus Heroínas Dido y Éowyn," that Tolkien was influenced by Virgil's epic poem. Sanmartín says that both Dido and Éowyn begin as depressed individuals, who are lonely and mentally exhausted from governing Carthage and taking care of Théoden, respectively (6-7). Concerning their attributes, both are defined as virtuous (11). For Dido, this quality becomes evident when she rescues her people from Pygmalion's tyranny and when she saves the Trojans from Juno's deadly tempest.³ For Éowyn, her kindness is demonstrated when she nurses her frail uncle (11). Aragorn and Aeneas eventually forsake the royal women for duty, but when doing that, they also define what kind of characters Éowyn and Dido become (8). According to Sanmartín, both develop into archetypal characters after the abandonment (18); nevertheless, whereas Dido is an archetypal ruler who destroys her city (18), Éowyn evolves into an archetypal warrior who

³ Pygmalion is Dido's elder brother.

defends her kinsmen regardless of the outcome (18). Thus, we are presented with two characters that are similar until the scene when Éowyn goes to war.

Sanmartín is right to believe that Éowyn is an archetypal warrior during the scenes when she goes to war. Indeed, the difference between Éowyn and Dido's character surfaces once Éowyn decides to partake in battle. However, there is a fact that the author overlooks. The reasons why Éowyn becomes a combatant once Aragorn departs are not merely explained by archetypes. After the defeat of the Witch-King, Éowyn still wants to do battle. Nonetheless, she soon abandons this idea and becomes a healer. Archetypal characters are usually distinguishable and follow a pattern that is more or less predictable. Éowyn does not do this. She begins as a nurse, evolves into a warrior and ends her tale as healer. Éowyn is dynamic. For this reason, she cannot exclusively be an archetypal warrior after Aragorn departs.

Leaving Sanmartín's explication, another interpretation seeking to find roots for Éowyn's character is offered by Anna Wallace. In "A Wild Shield-Maiden of the North: Éowyn of Rohan and Old Norse Literature," she argues that Éowyn is based on three shield-maidens (and one Valkyrie) from Old Norse literature: Brynhildr of Bosa saga, Hervör of Hervara saga, Thornbjörg of Hrolfs saga and Brynhildr of Völsunga saga (23). By comparing their lives and choices with Éowyn's life and choices, the author concludes that Éowyn is a strong warrior and not, like her shield-maiden counterparts, a mad person who is simply imbued with an uncontrollable wrath and desire to fight (34). Shield-maidens furiously partook in wars only to abruptly marry the man who tamed their masculine identity because their behaviour eventually became unthinkable in the sagas (26, 27). Éowyn, however, relinquishes her shield-maiden nature after Sauron is defeated (33) and after Faramir acknowledges her efforts in combat (40-41). Wallace also deduces that the sagas' structure and *The Lord of the Rings'* structure are inverted, so Éowyn is domesticated in the beginning and liberated later in the plot (33).

As claimed by Wallace, Éowyn is the opposite of her counterparts from the sagas due to the inverse pattern. This is a correct observation. Nonetheless, there is one fact that she fails to observe. The inverse pattern occurs because Éowyn can control her life, which allows her to protect others. Such volition does not exist in the sagas. Even amongst the male characters, there is no real psychological depth. They either fight for glory because the gods are watching or they fight for honour (Groeneveld). However, the fact that Éowyn develops so vividly makes her a dynamic character. When we first encounter her, she is a nurse that pities her uncle. Éowyn soon goes to war and slays the nazgûl. Following that, she becomes a healer. Accordingly, Éowyn is amongst the few characters who actually develops psychological depth and volition. Therefore, although there is an overlap and inversion between the narratives, without psychology, these details do not fully explain Éowyn's acts and decisions in *The Lord of the Rings*.

We have so far analysed sources which attempt to find origins for Éowyn's character in the literature of the pre-modern period, whether that is Norse saga or Classical epic. Let us look at a work that does not use a source dating back to ancient times. In the article "You Have Grown Very Much: The Scouring of the Shire and the Novelistic Aspect of The Lord of the Rings," Nicholas Birns discusses the novelistic aspect of this chapter. In Tolkien's trilogy, characters such as Aragorn and Théoden are kings by birth unlike the simple hobbits. However, having once been a gardener, Sam becomes the mayor of the Shire. According to Birns, this exemplifies social mobility in the trilogy where the simpler classes are now closer to the elite classes in society (88). Nonetheless, it is not only social mobility that Birns discusses. He also focusses on the notion of forgiveness, represented particularly well by Frodo and Lobelia (95-96).⁴ She originally is antagonistic, but whatever this relative does is nothing compared to the ravages of Sauron's war. Being the Ring-bearer, Frodo knows this.

⁴ Lobelia, who is resentful of Frodo Baggins and Bilbo Baggins throughout nearly the entire narrative, is their relative.

Indeed, the fact that Lobelia does receive forgiveness, particularly from Frodo, attests to the moral growth of the hobbit (98). Moral growth is, again, a novelistic attribute, as Birns explains (98). In addition to social mobility and forgiveness, the article discusses repentance. Saruman, Lobelia and the hobbits exemplify these ideas. Having once been a powerful Istari and one of the five wizards sent to Middle-Earth to help defeat Sauron, Saruman's fall allows Lobelia to emerge as a character capable of repentance and the hobbits as characters capable of forgiveness and moral growth (92, 95).⁵ Finally, the hobbits experience a reversal of fortune when their statuses are elevated. Saruman is also subject to this phenomenon. He originally is a wise character with a powerful position in society (88). By the end of the trilogy, the wizard is but a fraction of his former self, both socially and morally (88, 91). In summary, the author makes the claim that *The Lord of the Rings* becomes much more novelistic in the chapter the Scouring of the Shire (82).

While it is true that the hobbits grow during the trilogy and the chapter the Scouring of the Shire, there are other characters who display novelistic attributes throughout Tolkien's composition. Boromir is a good example. Although he falls for temptation and attempts to take the one ring, the steward's son regrets what he does: "I tried to take the ring from Frodo ... I am sorry. I have paid" (TT 414).⁶ Boromir is a character who can easily be interpreted as selfish, but it is important to observe that the ring only manages to corrupt him because he wishes to protect his kinsmen. In other words, it is not personal glory but Gondor's salvation that Boromir seeks. His character flaw, resulting in a reversal of fortune, is indeed a novelistic attribute. Éowyn is another example. She suffers much during the war, but decides to become a healer in the end of the trilogy, preferring peace over bitterness and glory. In short, there are other characters exhibiting novelistic traits earlier in the plot and not only the hobbits and

⁵ The members of the Istari are Gandalf, Saruman, Radagast and the Blue Wizards. They were sent to Middle-Earth to help against Sauron.

⁶ Denethor's son, Faramir's brother and the future Steward of Gondor

Saruman in the chapter the Scouring of the Shire. Thus, the most novelistic part of the trilogy is not necessarily found in that chapter per se.

Evidently, there is much information about Éowyn, but before discussing her Classical ancestry and novelistic nature, it is important to explain the theories that will be applied to the chapters of this essay.

Theory

As seen, many theories have been used in the reviewed works in the Previous Research section, ranging from archetypal criticism to Birns' novelistic and somewhat Marxist approach. The first theory that will be applied when analysing the chapters in this composition is Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel*. In his work, the novel is described as different from other literary forms. Older forms of literature, for example the epic, were invented to convey important notions about a specific society or to mediate stories about important historical characters who did great deeds for a particular culture. The work served as education rather than a narrative despite the presence of a plot (Sjövall & Wistrand 261-262). In contrast, the novel is different because its characters were no longer created according to traditional literary modes. Rather, they contradicted the traditions of their society, successively emerging as independent individuals (Watt 57). Thus, characters no longer represent cultural convictions.

Since characters no longer symbolise notions, it became important to convey life and experience as authentically as possible to the reader. This is achieved by creating credible characters that can be perceived as the modern understanding of a genuine human (Watt 31), focusing on their surroundings and situations: “[the novel] is distinguished from other forms of fiction by the amount of attention it habitually accords both to the individualisation of its characters and to the detailed presentation of their environment” (18). Moreover, memory and

time are interlinked, allowing characters to connect with their own identities: “[to] touch with his own continuing identity through memory of his own past thoughts and actions” (21). This provides motivation to the characters as they are aware of their past and can plan their future. Any previous negative experience or any future intentions will motivate them to act accordingly. Also, the notion of destiny changes from that of being unchangeable (which automatically makes character and everything in a plot fixed) to changeable. Characters are no longer stagnant but capable of changing compared to characters in other literary genres (22). Finally, emotions are important, as they make characters come to life (266). These traits, which influence what choices the characters make, form psychological individuals who are realistic and convey the truth of what it is they are perceiving (31-32). Hence, the characters in a novel and their lives are very similar to humans from the real world (or are at least supposed to be), and plots must now be regarded as the stories of characters and how they develop throughout the course of events in the narrative.

Characters in novels, according to Watt, are similar to non-fiction humans. However, in order for them to become as genuinely human as possible, novelistic characters must control their lives and distinguish themselves from the notion of metaphysics by liberating themselves from it. This idea is a part of Georg Lukács’ work *The Theory of the Novel*. In his writings, Lukács explains that the world of the epic functions differently from the world of the novel. People in pre-modern societies were not necessarily content with their lives and everything fate allotted them. Suffering has always existed, a fact frequently depicted in epic plots. For example, Odysseus is kept from his people and kingdom for years. Hector dies when facing Achilles in single combat, his body desecrated by the Greeks in front of his people and king. However, immanence frequently predetermined everything and individuals had an absolute trust in fate (61). In order to understand the society which gave rise to the epic, let us imagine that the world portrayed in the epic has a centre circumvented with circles. Inside the centre,

one finds the element of imminence, manifested as fate (although that is usually portrayed as divinity in epics). Animate or inanimate objects are found on the circles, circulating around the centre where immanence is found. Although this picture resembles a solar system, it illustrates how transcendent meaning works in epic societies. Like the sun can create life on earth and have power over it, the centre in the epic has power over the objects encircling it, determining everything that exists in its world. The gods seem to act as fate; however, they do not govern all that exists in the epic. Instead, it is fate that chiefly determines the path, lives and destiny of animate or inanimate creatures, therein including the deities (33, 61). Thus, volition and psychology do not properly exist in the epic because of the element of fate and the metaphysical structure.

The manner in which inanimate or animate objects are affected is through predetermination. It is perhaps easiest to comprehend this idea by imagining that fate has answered and premeditated very profound questions in life – who, what, when, where, how, why and which (40, 47, 60). Consequently, whatever an epic character chooses to do is not properly based on his or her own volition or conviction but on fate. Odysseus does not only partake in the Trojan War because he decides to do so but also because fate wants him to fight. Free will exists to a certain extent, but characters are executing that which is already predetermined. Inanimate objects are also affected by fate; for example, an ocean does not only have a storm due to scientific reasons but also because fate has decided when a particular ocean is supposed to create a powerful tempest, why it is supposed to create it and where it is supposed to occur in the world. Therefore, epic characters (and all objects in an epic) follow a script that fate has developed for them.

The novelistic character does not function in the same way as the epic character. The novelistic character does not have fate as an element that determines his or her life (39). In the absence of a higher order that predetermines characters' lives, their existence will have no

presupposed meaning as fate and the metaphysical structure do not exist in novels. In other words, there is no premeditated script to follow; instead, characters are trying to make their existence meaningful by giving themselves a purpose in life, by determining and answering the profound questions of life singlehandedly (61). Novelistic characters are in a constant search for meaning in a society that lacks existential significance (61). Additionally, when ascertaining the answers to the profound questions of their existence, characters also obtain self-recognition, being finally able to define who they truly are:

the inner form of the novel has been understood as the process of the problematic individual journeying towards himself ... the content of the novel is the story of the soul that goes to find itself, that seeks adventures in order to be proved and tested by them, and, by proving itself, find its own essence. (80, 89)

Until self-recognition is realised, characters in novels will constantly be searching for it, making them problematic in nature. Consequently, as the novelistic character is not a part of a metaphysical whole, their search for a purpose in life replaces epic totality (59).

When attempting to explore and search for the answer to the profound questions (which were previously predominantly answered by fate in the epic structure), novelistic characters create events that manifest themselves as adventures. These occurrences constitute the content of the narrative, making the protagonist or antagonist the contriver of the events in the novel: “the novel tells the story of the adventure of interiority” (89). It is, therefore, important to regard “the outward form of the novel ... [as auto-biographical, manifesting] the life of the problematic individual” (77-78). Whereas the epic had a premeditated script for characters to follow, the novelistic characters create the script, thus, the narrative in the instances in which they are involved.

Chapter I: The Interrelationship between Dido’s Life and Éowyn’s Life

It is perhaps unusual to relate Dido and Éowyn. The former is a queen who establishes a kingdom only to fall madly in love with Aeneas due to Cupid's and Venus' interference.⁷ Éowyn begins her tale as Théoden's caretaker. Gríma, the current counsellor of Théoden's court, has betrayed his king by putting a curse on him (Unfinished Tales 277). This betrayal forces Éowyn to nurse her uncle, who used to be a strong king. Eventually, Éowyn and Dido encounter Aragorn and Aeneas. Both suffer abundantly when these two male characters attempt to establish Rome and save Gondor, respectively. Two questions to ask now is how do Éowyn's tale and Dido's tale relate to one another? How similar are they? With these details in mind, let us analyse Éowyn and Dido through the events of Aragorn's and Aeneas' lives.

The Aeneid begins after the defeat of Troy.⁸ Aeneas and his men embark on a search for another kingdom, for there is a prophecy predicting that he will found the Roman Empire: "Arms and a man I sing, the first from Troy, / A fated exile to Lavinian shores / In Italy" (*Aeneid*.I.1-3). Having sailed the seas for many years and survived many threats, the Trojans are "kept from Italy" (I.29) by Juno. The goddess becomes angry when Aeneas approaches Carthage. She fears a prophecy about the African kingdom: "she had heard that one day Troy's descendants / Would pull her Tyrian towers to the ground. / The fates ordained it" (I.19-29, 22). Juno attempts to prevent the prophecy from happening, ordering Aeolus to conjure a storm to kill the kin she despises: "Goad your winds into fury, swamp the ships / Or scatter them, strew the bodies on to the water (I.69-70).⁹ The result is catastrophic, but the Tyrians rescue the survivors from the tempest and Dido welcomes them to remain in Carthage: "This town I found is yours too. / To me, you will be equal to my own" (I.573-574). Considering the defeat and the perils the Trojans have suffered, Dido's hospitality and

⁷ Cupid is Aeneas' brother in *the Aeneid*, and both are Venus' sons.

⁸ A war between the Trojans and the Greeks constituting the main event in Homer's *The Illiad*

⁹ Aeolus holds power over the element of wind. He appears in *Aeneid*, Book I.

kindness enables them to rest and seek refuge. Consequently, Carthage is a place of recuperation for Aeneas and his men.

Initially, Aragorn does not have an easier life compared to Aeneas. He too experiences difficulties when attempting to help his unofficial kingdom, Middle-Earth, and the fellowship during the war. The balrog claims Gandalf's life.¹⁰ Following the wizard's death, Boromir perishes due to Saruman's Uruk Hai. The fellowship breaks as soon as Frodo realises that he must complete his quest singlehandedly. Having suffered much, Aragorn eventually reaches Rohan together with Gimli and Legolas. Hoping to find friends since they have been facing many foes, Aragorn and his company instead find a king who is near madness and death. However, Gandalf, who now has been resurrected, manages to free Théoden from the curse brought by Gríma: "Now Théoden son of Thengel, will you hearken to me?' ... 'Do you ask for help?' ... I bid you come out before your doors and look abroad. Too long have you sat in shadows and trusted to twisted tales and crooked promptings'" (TT 514). Indeed, Théoden recovers and invites the company to a banquet as a token of his friendship. Like Carthage, Rohan is a place where Aragorn's company can temporarily rest after their perilous journey to Mordor.

So far, Rohan and Carthage constitute places where Aragorn and Aeneas can regain their strengths. Contrary to Aragorn, who initially encounters a king near madness and enters a kingdom where danger still exists due to Saruman, Aeneas becomes astonished when witnessing how Dido is treated and how she governs her Libyan realm:

Some Tyrians feverishly laid out long walls
Or rolled rocks in to raise the citadel; ...
Laws, offices, a sacred senate formed ...
Through her people, planning, urging on her kingdom.
Beneath the vault, before the goddess' doors,
She sat on her high throne, hemmed in by soldier,
Made laws, gave judgments, and assigned the work

¹⁰ A demon who answers to Morgoth, Sauron's master

In fair proportions or by drawing lots. (*Aeneid*.I.423-424, 426, 504-508)

Dido initially is a powerful and equitable figure. Considering her achievements, she demonstrates *pietas* and *virtus*, attributes that the men in the Roman Empire desired to associate themselves with. *Pietas* refers to loyalty (Bernstein 277), duty (Williams 156) and filial piety (Fears 864). *Virtus* should be understood as courage, manliness, kindness and fairness (McDonnell 128, 141, 257). Accordingly, she is a *dux femina*, a female leader, who displays masculine traits according to the Romans (Hartsoe 4).

By contrast to Dido, Éowyn does not begin as a glorious leader. She does, however, take care of her king. This is the first detail one learns of Éowyn. Besides that, Éowyn is an important figure in Rohan's court as "she ... appears promptly in all the gatherings of men" (Croft, Palumbo & Sullivan III 243). Moreover, she is a highly skilled swordswoman and a military leader by birth. Being a direct descendent of Éorl, Éowyn surpasses any military commander in Rohan except Théoden, Théodred and Éomer: "she is ... the third or fourth most powerful military leader in her country even before the Battle of Pelennor Fields" (Maddox 8-9). In other words, we are presented with a respected character who is perfectly capable of fighting for her kingdom, but she chooses to nurse her frail uncle. Éowyn is demonstrating *virtus* and *pietas*. She prefers Théoden over her own personal glory as a military leader of Éorl's House. Again, since *virtus* and *pietas* were relevant ideas to the male population in Rome, Éowyn also displays characteristics that the Romans wished to associate with men. Aragorn, like Aeneas, encounters a *dux femina*.

Returning to Dido's tale, in spite of her dutiful nature, she changes shortly after encountering Aeneas. It is plausible that Dido's banquet is a way for her to establish a permanent political alliance between her kinsmen and the Trojans (Sanmartin 10). However, the feast brings nothing but misfortune to her: "Unlucky Dido spoke of various things, / Drawing the night out, deep in love already" (*Aeneid*.I.748-749). Her development here is

affected by the gods. Venus encourages her son Cupid to afflict Dido with passionate love to protect her son Aeneas. The gods are creating a character who goes from being a powerful leader to a hopeless woman who is madly and irrationally in love. Thus, her personality changes, quickly embedding powerful traits of eroticism whilst her former self is forever lost.

Dido's infatuation with Aeneas has serious repercussions to Carthage. She abandons her leadership for lust. The kingdom no longer develops: "the towers she started do not rise. The young men / No longer drill or build defending ramparts / Or ports. The work stalls, halfway done" (IV.85-87). Dido's affections impede her from attending to her duties as queen.

Moreover, many dislike her behaviour, as Dido herself is aware: "The Libyan clans and Nomad rulers hate me; / So do the Tyrians, because of you" (IV.320-321). Dido begins as a powerful *dux femina*, displaying attributes that the Romans wished to associate themselves with. Nevertheless, due to divine interventions, which hinder her from thinking rationally, she loses these qualities. Therefore, Dido is drifting further and further away from the powerful *dux femina* she initially was.

Not unlike Dido, Éowyn attends a banquet. During the feast, she is "waiting upon the king" (TT 521). Moments later, she carries a cup of wine, offering it to Théoden. Éowyn is initiating a toast to her uncle's health, "*Ferthu Théoden Hal*" (522), showing gratitude that her lord has recovered considering how he has been afflicted with Gríma's curse for six years. Éowyn is hitherto still demonstrating *pietas* and *virtus* to her liege. However, what happens to her now? In a similar fashion to Dido, once Éowyn offers Aragorn the cup, she changes:

As she stood before Aragorn she paused suddenly and looked upon him,
and her eyes were shining. And he looked down on her fair face and smiled;
but as he took up the cup, his hand met hers, and he knew that she trembled
at the touch. 'Hail Aragorn son of Arathorn!' she said. 'Hail Lady of Rohan!'
he answered, but his face was now troubled and he did not smile. (522-523)

According to Thomas Honegger, "[She is] no longer ... the female head of the royal household but also a young attractive maiden, as Aragorn has noticed a short while before ...

What is more, she is obviously falling in love with him ... The asexual ... world in *The Lord of the Rings* suffers the intrusion of an ever so slight element of eroticism” (7). Consequently, one finds that the previously dutiful Éowyn is suddenly and almost instantaneously displaying affections. Her personality too changes, quickly embedding traits of eroticism, but in a much more controlled manner than Dido.

Éowyn’s fascination with Aragorn continues even after the battle of Helm’s Deep: “No mightier men had she seen than the Dunedain and the fair sons of Elrond; but on Aragorn most of all her eyes rested” (RK 783). Undoubtedly, she is also proud of her kinsmen’s effort during the battle: “she heard of all that has passed since Théoden rode away, concerning which hasty tidings had yet reached her; and when she heard of the battle at Helm’s Deep and the slaughter of their foes, and of the charge of Théoden and his knights, then her eyes shone” (783). Éowyn is temporarily in charge of Rohan’s political government as well as Rohan’s military defence. As we can grasp, in a similar fashion to Dido, she is partially neglecting her duties in Rohan by enjoying Aragorn’s presence, strength and beauty. The difference between both female characters, however, is that Éowyn does not completely neglect her duties. Accordingly, their affections for the male characters are a mixture of similarities and differences.

Leaving the banquets that the royal ladies attend, it is now time to return to the final moments of Dido’s tale. As soon as the Trojans wish to leave, the prophecy that Juno fears begins. Aeneas explains to Dido that he is compelled to leave Carthage, for “From Jove himself a heavenly emissary / brought [him] orders ... / Italy is against [his] will” (*Aeneid*.IV. 356-357, 361). However, she is slowly driven mad to the extent where she sees omens of misfortune and hears Sychaeus’ voice: “Her gifts on incense-burning alters rotted, / Horrible to describe: wine turned to black / And filthy gore the second she poured it” (IV.453-455). Soon, Dido contemplates suicide. When witnessing Aeneas and the Trojans embarking to

Italy, she actually takes her life. In so doing, the Libyan kingdom falls, which Anna (Dido's and Pygmalion's sister) clearly says: "You killed yourself and me, your city's people, /And the Phoenician lords" (IV.682-683). Thus, the prophecy of Carthage's downfall is fulfilled.

Dido's suicide brings destruction to the kingdom; nevertheless, she refuses to die before having revenge. Although initially a glorious leader, she is, only moments before her death, conducting various rituals associated with Hecate. Originally a goddess of protection (mostly to homes and families), Hecate gradually emerged as an evil deity related with demons and witches (D'Este & Rankine 67). This is important, for during the ritual, Dido curses Aeneas:

And now my last plea, gushing with my blood:
Tyrians, hound with hatred for all time
The race he founds. My ashes call from you
This service. Let there be no pacts of friendship.
Out of my grave let an avenger rise,
With fire and iron for Dardanian settlers –
Now – someday – when the power is there to strike.
Our shores will clash, weapons and seas collide.
My course is war for Trojans and their children. (*Aeneid*.IV.621-629)

Dido's words are clear – war and revenge. She is ignoring the Phoenicians' future prosperity and freedom, evolving into a selfish character (Sanmartín 18), who deems her people into an endless war with the Trojans. She also fulfils the prophecy of eternal war between the Phoenicians and the future Romans: "one day Troy's descendants / Would pull [Juno's] towers to the ground ... / The fates ordained it" (*Aeneid*.I.19-20, 22). Despite the fact that she begins as a powerful *dux femina*, Dido successively evolves into a pseudo-witch, bringing death and desolation to her future people through her curse and suicide.

Dido suffers relentlessly, but she is not the only one who is tormented once the male character departs. Before Aragorn leaves, Éowyn implores him not to forsake her kingdom. Instead, she desires to see him ride to war with Éomer, taking with him Gimli and Legolas because they "are men of renown and prowess, whom [he] should not take into the shadows, but should lead to war" (RK 783). However, her pleadings do not help her. Aragorn, like

Aeneas, is bound to his task. He must leave to summon the Army of the Dead, for “only so can [he] see any hope of doing [his] part in the war against Sauron” (784) and protect Gondor and Middle-Earth. Before he departs, she is crying: “Then it seemed to Gimli and Legolas who were nearby that she wept” (785). Unlike Dido’s Carthage, there is no prophecy predicting Rohan’s downfall at the hand of Aragorn or the men of Gondor. However, his journey to the Path of the Dead symbolises a direct abandonment of Rohan in their time of greatest need. Aragorn, a highly skilful warrior due to his ancestry, is needed in Rohan.¹¹ Thus, when leaving, Éowyn expects her kingdom to fall, which explains her reaction as soon as they depart: “When they were lost to view, she turned, stumbling as one that is blind, and went back to her lodging” (785).

Éowyn suffers because Aragorn has left, but as we can distinguish, she, in contrast to Dido, does not curse him or his kindred. Nor does she forsake her kinsmen. Instead, Éowyn goes to war. In the battlefield, despite the threat of excruciating pain, Éowyn defies as well as defeats the immortal and powerful Witch-King of Angmar:

Begone, foul dwimmerlaik, lord of carrion! Leave the dead in peace! A cold voice answered: `come not between the Nazgûl and his prey. Or he will take thee in thy return. He will bear thee away to the houses of lamentation, beyond all darkness, where thy flesh shall be devoured, and thy shrivelled mind be left naked to the lidless eye.´. A sword rang as it was drawn. `Do what you will; but I will hinder it, if I may.´ (841)

Unlike Dido, who destroys her kingdom and ruins the Phoenicians’ future (Sanmartín 18), Éowyn’s victory enables her to assume the status of a hero.

Éowyn’s victory against the nazgûl allows her to emerge as a hero. Nevertheless, she is not the only hero in the narrative. After Sauron is destroyed, Aragorn returns to Gondor to receive his crown, fulfilling the prophecy made about him: “The crownless again shall be

¹¹ Aragorn is a Dúnedain; these people are the Númenoreans who did not defy the divine order in Tolkien’s mythology by travelling to Valinor to gain immortality. Aragorn is also a direct descendant of Elros, Elrond’s brother, so elvish blood runs in his veins.

king” (FR 222). He marries Arwen and reunites Arnor and Gondor, bringing peace to Middle-Earth (although not singlehandedly). Like Aragorn, Aeneas conquers his enemies in Italy, weds Lavinia (Latinus’ daughter) and becomes the first official king of Italy, uniting the minor Italian kingdoms under one crown.¹² Consequently, Aeneas has fulfilled the prophecy made about Rome.

We now know that Aragorn and Aeneas have become rulers of powerful kingdoms as they have fulfilled their destinies. Having ascertained what is known in this chapter, I shall return to the questions asked in the beginning of chapter I: “how do Éowyn’s tale and Dido’s tale relate to one another, and how similar are they?” Clearly, the royal women are important, for they initially offer a place of recuperation for the male characters. If Aeneas had not been saved from the tempest by Dido, he would not have reached Italy; hence, he would not have fulfilled the prophecy of Rome’s foundation. Comparably, if Éowyn had not attended to her frail uncle, he would have died. Aragorn and his friends prove their worth in the eyes of Rohan once they help Théoden recover. The company would neither have found a place of shelter nor would they have found friends amidst so many foes if the king had succumbed to death. The quest Aragorn undertakes depends to a certain degree on Théoden and Rohan, making Éowyn’s efforts necessary for the success of his task and for the fulfilment of the prophecy concerning Gondor’s king. Moreover, they are similar. Éowyn’s and Dido’s lives and the way they act when Aragorn and Aeneas arrive follow a certain pattern. They act similarly only to become dissimilar during each scene. This pattern will be analysed and expounded in chapter II.

Chapter II: The Difference between Dido and Éowyn – a Novelistic and Psychological Character Seeking Meaning

¹² Appearing in Book VII, Latinus is king of an Italic tribe known as the Latins.

Chapter I showed that Éowyn and Dido are similar only to eventually become different. There are two reasons explaining why Éowyn successively becomes dissimilar from Dido. Firstly, she liberates herself from her Rohirric society. Secondly, despite the fact that Éowyn has her roots in Dido, she successively liberates herself from her counterpart. Let us begin the analysis in Rohan shortly prior to Aragorn's arrival in Edoras to gain a clearer understanding of what is happening to Éowyn.¹³

At the moment in the novel, the situation in Théoden's kingdom is gloomy in many ways. Théodred is deceased and Éomer is apprehended because

the chief obstacles to an easy conquest of Rohan by Saruman were Théodred and Éomer ... devoted to the king ... they did all that they could to thwart the influence over [Théoden] that Gríma gained when the king's health began to fail ... Gríma therefore tried to play them one against the other in the mind of Théoden, representing Éomer as ever eager to increase his own authority and to act without consulting the king or his heir. (Unfinished Tales 270)

The three most powerful men in Rohan, two of whom are direct heirs to the throne, are or have been eliminated from the political centre stage, enabling the court adviser and Saruman to make their advances in the kingdom. The riders are well aware that Gríma is a traitor, referring to him as 'Wormtongue' – "all save you name [him] the Wormtongue" (TT 516) – rather than using his full name.¹⁴ Nevertheless, they do not attempt to stop him. Éowyn is the only one who successfully protests against the situation in Rohan. Ultimately, she is not affected by the curse Gríma spreads in the kingdom:

Gandalf's words, spoken once Wormtongue has been banished, seem to suggest that she has been rescued: 'Éowyn is safe now' (3.6.504). Nevertheless, reading between the lines, we recognize that this seemingly fragile ... figure ... has demonstrated greater power than Théoden in resisting the spells of Wormtongue, Saruman's emissary. Wormtongue has successfully cast a spell on Théoden, but he has been unable to overpower Éowyn's will as her pitying glance¹⁵ towards the king

¹³ The capital of Rohan

¹⁴ This name is translated as 'snake' in Old English (Clark Hall 427).

¹⁵ "she looked on the king with cool pity in her eyes" (TT 515).

suggests. (Croft &Palumbo 243)

Therefore, as a descendent of Éorl and a Rohirrim, she stands as the only one who has been able to resist the mayhem created by Rohan's foes, avoiding madness, detention and even death.

Éowyn's strong will to resist the current situation in her homeland enables her to nurse Théoden. Although she cannot break the curse that has been put on him, she can prolong his life by caring for him. Her caretaking is mainly done by helping him accomplish basic things such as walking: "Slowly Théoden left his chair ... The woman hastened to the king's side, taking his arm, and with faltering steps the old man came down from the dais and paced softly through the hall" (TT 515). She manages to thwart both Gríma's and Saruman's advances by keeping Théoden alive. A king who still lives serves as a symbol of strength and a glimpse of hope to his subjects, making Éowyn's caretaking vital for the kingdom. Also, it is a direct protest against the counsellor's reign of terror. Thus, although she acts without the use of a sword, Éowyn is attempting to aid her fellowmen by saving their king.

Éowyn's actions help her protect the king, but they also distinguish her from the Rohirrim. Like in an epic, Rohan, particularly the Riders, neither questions the current state despite awareness of Gríma's treachery nor acts against the mayhem. With that said, the Rohirrim are not pleased with the situation, especially after Gríma convinces Théoden to imprison Éomer (509, 516). However, the Riders accept the situation, being epic in their configuration: "the separation between man and world, between I and you cannot disturb [the epic's] homogeneity" (Lukács 31). Fate has already predetermined everything for them, therein including their passivity and their actions (47, 60). By contrast, Éowyn, in her attempt to help Théoden and her people, does not accept what is happening in her forefather's kingdom. Her behaviour questions the state, making Éowyn a character who is not only trying to bring order in Edoras but also a character who is no longer a part of the metaphysical

structure that many in Rohan's society belong to. As a result, Éowyn is breaking with the tradition of her compatriots, becoming individualistic:

The concept of individualism ... posits a whole society mainly governed by the idea of every individual's intrinsic independence both from other individuals and from that multifarious allegiance to past modes of thought and action denoted by the word 'tradition' – a force that is always social, not individual. (Watt 57)

Fundamentally, Éowyn is rebellious, refusing to act only when receiving direct orders from the king himself. Thus, Éowyn becomes a modern figure in a society that operates in a similar fashion to the principles found in feudalism.

Éowyn is not the only one attempting to aid her people. Nor is she the only who can be understood as a modern individual operating in a society that needs to receive directions from a king to actually execute something. Dido demonstrates the same attitude as Éowyn when she helps her kinsmen escape Pygmalion. She does not receive any instructions from a king to evacuate her followers, yet she acts. Moreover, Dido's protection is extended into Carthage, where she offers the Tyrians a new life full of joy, peace and prosperity. Nevertheless, what Dido accomplishes is not because she should be understood as a strong woman capable of controlling her life. If one returns to the time before the narrative actually begins, Dido originally is a young girl who is married off to Sychaeus: "and she, poor thing, adored him. / Her father gave her ... to him / In marriage" (*Aeneid*.I.344-346). Dido is young. She is given in matrimony when she is emotionally weak. Accordingly, Dido is a stereotypically feminine woman, hardly possessing any of the more managerial capacities she later displays as queen once Sychaeus is murdered:

When Dido becomes a *dux femina*, she takes on, as Perret notes, a distinctly masculine task. The unfortunate murder of Sychaeus compels her to give up her wifely, feminine life; she flees Tyre and endures exile. But now a new dimension of her nature emerges. No longer the naïve girl who languishes over Sychaeus' disappearance, Dido becomes in her own right a *regina* who founds and governs

a city.¹⁶ When Aeneas first sees her, she is engaged in political actions more usual for a man than for a woman. (West 318)

Her former life compared to her new one is inconsistent. As is widely known, women were predominantly illiterate in ancient societies. Although one can assume that Dido is literate as she soon governs a kingdom, it was rare for women in pre-modern societies to receive political training. The transformation Dido undergoes should be understood as a result of *deus ex machina* rather than a personal development.¹⁷ She simply needs to develop. If not, Aeneas cannot arrive in Dido's Carthage and the narrative cannot either commence or progress. After all, Dido would not have been there to save Aeneas from Juno's tempest. Nor would the Trojans have had a place to recover from the dangers they have previously faced.

Despite the fact that Dido is necessary only to develop the events of *The Aeneid*, Éowyn is not. She is Dido insofar as she attempts to protect her people when escaping Tyre with her followers. However, what happens afterwards is a different story. Éowyn willingly acts the way she does as there is no proper unity between her and the world in Rohan. Instead, Éowyn is independent of her society, implementing her ideas due to her own free will. Her psychology "[is manifested] indirectly, by revealing [her] personality through [her] actions" (Watt 107). Dido's life and development, though, are heavily determined by the gods and fate. Hence, Éowyn's silent protests against Saruman and Gríma indicate that, although she is Dido up to a certain degree, she eventually liberates herself from her Classical origins.

We have now seen that Éowyn is Dido, but in a way which uses the link to pivot towards novelistic individualism. She is also a modern figure in a society that does not question the existing disorder of their kingdom. Éowyn is different from the Rohirrim not only because she questions the current chaos in Rohan but also because she manages to make

¹⁶ The Latin word *regina* signifies 'queen' (Vilborg 85).

¹⁷ *Deus ex machina* carries the meaning of 'a god out of a machine', referring to deities that were presented in Roman or Greek epics to offer an explanation as to why a difficult or illogical situation developed the way it did (Encyclopaedia Britannica).

her existence meaningful in a Lukácsian sense. It will soon be evident how she is accomplishing this task, but let us briefly return to Lukács' theory. According to him, by giving themselves a purpose in life, novelistic characters determine and answer the profound questions of their beings singlehandedly (61). He explains that characters in the novel obtain self-recognition once the answers to the profound questions of life are ascertained. In other words, they are finally able to define who they are: "the inner form of the novel has been understood as the process of the problematic individual journeying towards himself" (80). Consequently, novelistic characters begin in a state of 'I am' because they are depicted in a society that has already predetermined what they do and who they are meant to be (due to the strong influence of fate), but they develop into 'who can I be' figures as they progress from a socially determined state to an autonomous one. In this case, Éowyn is a Rohirric, but she sees an opportunity to become 'a power behind the throne figure, eventually reaching self-recognition by defining herself as the 'metaphorical queen' of Rohan. Éowyn re-defines the court, deciding who should be there and why. She begins her self-allotted task with Théoden himself.

During the feast that the king, the Riders and Aragorn's company attend, Éowyn carries a cup of wine. She proposes a toast to her uncle, clearly relieved that he has recovered. Let us pay attention to the salutation she gives because it reflects two ideas that she wishes to accomplish with the king. Firstly, Éowyn wishes her king to be saluted. Everyone needs to understand that he, after having been mentally destabilised, is now well and must be obeyed: "*Ferthu Théoden Hal*" (Donovan 247). In a way, she is almost allowing Théoden to emerge as a hero who manages to recover from the curse he has been afflicted by. Secondly, Éowyn is telling the king that he is well, reminding him of who he is. The words she says when holding the cup (*Ferthu Théoden Hal*) carry the meaning of "go Théoden you are whole and healed" (247). She is encouraging the king to comprehend who he is – a strong king from a line of

strong kings who have achieved glory through their honour and dignity. As a result of her acts, Éowyn is strengthening her own position, affirming her power as a descendent of Éorl and as a direct descendent of Théoden himself.

Once the king receives the accolade Éowyn wishes him to get, she re-arranges the court by re-defining its members. Presenting him with the same cup of wine that she uses to praise Théoden, Éowyn smiles and says, “Hail Aragorn, son of Arathorn” (TT 523). This act carries two significances that must be considered. Firstly, the cup of wine is not offered to any true Rider of Rohan such as the marshals Hama or Gamling. Instead, it is Aragorn who drinks from the cup. He receives acknowledgement immediately after the king himself, making him the second most important figure in Meduseld during the banquet.¹⁸ Secondly, wine represents three ideas that are relevant in this context: an oath of brotherhood, passion and the continuity of life (Ferber 229). Éowyn willingly chooses Aragorn as a champion who can fight for her people and regain the honour of her House that has until now been lost. When he drinks from the cup that Éowyn ceremonially offers him, he is symbolically accepting her task – to fight for Rohan’s honour and, to a certain extent, to pledge himself to her. This is why “his face was now troubled and he did not smile” (TT 523). Fundamentally, Aragorn is a part of the company that save Théoden’s life. Since the honour of a kingdom is personified by its ruler, Rohan’s honour is regained thanks to the efforts of Aragorn.

Éowyn is not merely attempting to ensure that Aragorn stays or that the king understands who he is. Gimli and Legolas are two other figures who she wishes to prevent from leaving Rohan, valuing them for two reasons. Her king recovers only when all four come to Edoras. As Éowyn lives in Rohan, she witnesses the recovery that Théoden makes. Gimli and Legolas are a part of the company that defeat the enemies that would have the king “[walk] on all four like a beast” (519). Additionally, she values them as warriors, which she

¹⁸ The golden hall of Théoden

says during her discussion with Aragorn prior to his journey to the Path of the Dead: “for here are people of prowess that you should not take into the shadows but lead to war” (RK, 784). Éowyn, having witnessed the helplessness of her kinsmen as they could not aid Théoden during Gríma’s reign of terror, comprehends that Legolas and Gimli must remain. Strong knights equal a strong kingdom, which equals a strong ‘metaphorical queen’ (which Éowyn essentially becomes when orchestrating all these events). Thus, Éowyn is politically reforming her court, reinforcing the army and assuming command over Rohan despite the presence of Théoden and Éomer.

When Éowyn re-arranges the court and emerges as a ‘metaphorical queen’, she displays a greater intelligence than any Rider of Rohan because she exerts her will over each and every male authority of Rohirric blood, claiming power in a society that is patriarchal. Undeniably, the Rohirrim do not say that women are weak. Nor do they explicitly say that women should be confined to the spheres of their homes. After all, when Théoden is absent, it is always Éowyn who officially governs Rohan. However, there is no official female Rider or politician in the kingdom. In fact, the only Rohirric woman who exists in the plot is Éowyn, who begins her tale as a nurse despite being a highly skilled warrior and trained politician. From a feministic point of view, Éowyn manages to claim power in a society that is patriarchal. Consequently, when attempting to make her life meaningful and define who she is, Éowyn not only becomes a ‘metaphorical queen’ but also a symbol of feminism.

Leaving the banquet where Éowyn has now managed to give her essence meaning, let us return to Dido and see what happens to her after the feast that the Trojans attend. Like Éowyn, Dido attempts to use a banquet to create political alliances with the Trojans (Sanmartín 10). However, the reception brings about her downfall. Cupid intervenes to make her infatuated with Aeneas, turning her into a person, who “raved all through the town in helpless passion” (*Aeneid*.IV.300) whilst referring to the relationship with Aeneas as “marriage, to conceal her

shame” (IV.172). Being originally a glorious leader, Dido’s development constitutes an inconsistency with her character as a protective and fair queen. This instance is yet another example of *deus ex machina*, created to develop Dido into a mad and suicidal ruler so that the plot can progress in the direction it needs. In this case, the gods Cupid and Venus are literally turning Dido into a person she essentially is not. Therefore, since immanence can strongly influence the lives of characters, she is a puppet in the hands of fate.

Whereas Dido is a puppet in the hands of fate, necessary merely to progress the events of *The Aeneid*, Éowyn is independent. Her behaviour during the gathering reveals a character who knows what she should do to fulfil her intentions, executing her plan without either violence or protests. The actions she undertakes “reveal [her] personality through [her] actions” (Watt 107). The re-organisation of Rohan’s court demonstrates that Éowyn has psychological depth. In fact, Éowyn is a shrewd character who has volition and analytical powers that help her fulfil her political intentions. Furthermore, the world Tolkien has created allows her to depart from her Classical origins because she can demonstrate her dissimilarity to Dido. An example of this fact is the banquet. The royal women offer a kind reception to their guests in an attempt to establish political alliances. Both develop sudden affections for Aragorn and Aeneas, respectively. Nonetheless, Éowyn’s political achievement during the feast is what Dido fails to succeed with. Accordingly, Éowyn is Dido up to a certain point, but she ceases to be Dido once succeeding with her political agenda, with her intellectual capacities distinguishing her as novelistic.

There is yet another scene that demonstrates Éowyn’s twofold character. Aragorn returns to Éowyn as soon as victory is obtained at Helm’s Deep. This scene occurs after she re-arranges her court and sends Aragorn with her uncle to protect him: “The king shall come again” (TT 523). Éowyn is now not only the ‘metaphorical queen’ but also the official ruler during Théoden’s absence. Éowyn gives the impression that she is enjoying Aragorn’s

prominence, strength and beauty rather than attending to her duties in Rohan: “No mightier men had she seen than the Dunedain and the fair sons of Elrond; but on Aragorn most of all her eyes rested” (RK 783). Not unlike Éowyn, Dido neglects her duties in Carthage. The progression and prosperity in her kingdom eventually stops due to her obsession with Aeneas: “The towers she started do not rise. The young men / No longer drill or build defending ramparts / Or ports. The work stalls, halfway done” (*Aeneid*.IV.85-87). Slowly, the Tyrians begin to resent her (IV.321). This similarity, however, is not the entire truth about Éowyn. Whilst Éowyn is admiring Aragorn, she – the metaphorical and current queen – is also receiving a report about the events that took place during the battle:

And when they sat at supper with her, they talked together, and she heard of all that has passed since Théoden rode away, concerning which hasty tidings had yet reached her; and when she heard of the battle at Helm’s Deep and the slaughter of their foes, and of the charge of Théoden and his knights, then her eyes shone. (RK 783)

She is showing deep admiration for her kinsmen and Théoden. Consequently, Éowyn and Dido are up to a point similar, but as soon as she starts listening to Aragorn’s report, admiring her kinsmen’s efforts and admiring the military victory, Éowyn departs from Dido, becoming the full character of Éowyn.

The good news Éowyn receives about the victory at Helm’s Deep are about to be followed by bad news, at least for her. Aragorn wishes to journey to the Path of the Dead. Éowyn immediately understands that the new kingdom she has created in Rohan will fall if he departs, so she tells him, after having “stared at him as one that is stricken” (783), that “this is madness” (783). She clearly is panicked. Fundamentally, Éowyn knows that Théoden and Rohan’s Riders have defeated their enemies in Helm’s Deep, but this reversal of fortune only occurs when Aragorn and his friends arrive in Rohan, not before. As he represents a way for honour and glory to return in a way that no other warrior in Rohan represents, for Éowyn,

Aragorn is the kingdom's most important Rider. Acting on her fear, she is diplomatically attempting to dissuade him from leaving:

this is madness ... for here are men of renown and prowess, whom you should not take into the shadows, but should lead to war, where men are needed. I beg you to remain and ride with my brother; for then all our hearts will be gladdened, and our hope be the brighter. (783)

Accordingly, Éowyn's attempts and reaction display action and thought entwined together, revealing her as a highly psychological character (Watt 107) who comprehends what is about to happen to her kingdom. She values her kin, king and House, so Aragorn cannot leave. Éowyn, a character capable of perception and reflection, is willingly attempting to prevent Aragorn from embarking on his journey.

After having displayed strength and determination, Éowyn's subsequent behaviour heavily contrasts with the actions she has hitherto demonstrated during the discussion. Éowyn cries and falls on her knees, begging Aragorn to allow her to come so that she does not lose her powerful warriors. In her mind, by attempting to accompany them, she will not lose them, as they will still be in her service. In fact, her attitude throughout the conversation she has with Aragorn obviously shows different emotions, ranging from fear (when first learning that he will leave) to aggravation (when asking him why he is leaving Rohan and the Riders) to desperation (when falling on her knees, begging him to remain) and finally to helplessness (when crying). Thus, the previously resolute and determined Éowyn is now displaying desperate emotions, moving her closer towards a novelistic character: "the protagonist's reaction to experience ... encompasses many minor shades of emotions" (266). Most importantly, it moves her further away from epic characters, who are in harmony with their societies (Lukács 31) as fate governs their acts regardless of the outcome (33, 61).

The conversation that Éowyn and Aragorn have strongly alludes to the scene in *The Aeneid* where Dido implores Aeneas to remain and "[h]ave pity on [her] tottering house and

[her]” (*Aeneid*.IV.318). However, make no mistake, there is again a difference. Dido is powerless to prevent Aeneas from leaving (who in his turn is powerless to prevent his fate). Understanding that he is going away, Dido actually contemplates his death: “A stranger comes – and goes – and mocks my power? / Why doesn’t the whole city arm and follow / On ships torn madly from their moorings” (IV.591-593). Nonetheless, Dido concludes that Aeneas should not die despite the fact that an act of retaliation would have enabled her to manifest her power, demonstrating to all that she accepts neither defeat nor betrayal. Instead, Dido commits suicide, cursing Aeneas only moments before she stabs herself. Her self-destruction marks the beginning of an endless war between the Phoenicians and the Romans. Nonetheless, Dido’s life is not relevant “because ‘the epic’s theme’ is not a personal destiny but the destiny of a community” (Lukács 65). In essence, she is compelled to accept her fate, for everything is predominantly premeditated by fate, and immanence in *The Aeneid* wants to see Rome established, not Dido happily united with Aeneas (or, for that matter, Dido and her people left in peace).

It is now evident that Dido’s world has fallen apart. Éowyn, however, does not follow such a path after Aragorn leaves. Again, she detaches herself from Carthage’s leader after having been very similar to her. Her analytical powers and her exertion of volition, both of which are traits of an independent and psychological figure (Watt 59, 107), allow Éowyn to comprehend that when her pleading fails to produce the results she desires, she is left with no other choice but to create her own meaning without the presence of her newly found knights. She achieves this by becoming a champion of her people. The new self-recognition that Éowyn reaches enables her to identify with the powerful warriors she believes Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas to be. Everything that Éowyn has been hitherto doing is an attempt to give meaning to her existence, going from a ‘who am I’ character to a ‘who can I be’ one: “the problematic individual’s journeying towards himself, the road from dull captivity within a

merely present reality - a reality that is heterogeneous in itself and meaningless to the individual - towards clear self-recognition” (Lukács 79). By becoming the champion of her own people, she defeats the Witch-King. Her victory surpasses Théoden’s and Éomer’s achievements in the battlefield. The former dies almost immediately and the latter does not manage to eliminate anyone who Sauron values. Since Éorl does not fight such a powerful enemy in the Battle of Calenardhon, Éowyn also surpasses his personal accomplishment in the battlefield.¹⁹ Consequently, having protected her people, proved her valour and emerged as a powerful hero of Rohan, Éowyn’s existence is anew meaningful.

Although Éowyn has managed to give meaning to her being more than once and has separated herself from her society, she still is not content when recovering in the house of healing: “At least ... there are deeds to do. But to hope? I do not know” (RK 868). Éowyn is afraid and mortified. Both emotions are derived from her time in Rohan when her House was losing its honour: “it seemed [to me] that the House of Éorl was sunk in honour less than any shepherd’s cot” (868). This is a moment of self-understanding. The mortification she feels is an underlying, psychological problem that Faramir detects when encountering her. Furthermore, Éowyn fears that her efforts will remain unacknowledged, which is why she is restless and wishes to partake anew in battle. The steward acknowledges her efforts – “For you are a lady high and valiant and have yourself won renown that shall not be forgotten” (964) – and offers her genuine love: “Once I pitied your sorrow. But now, were you sorrowless, without fear or any lack, were you the blissful Queen of Gondor, still I would love you” (964). In doing so, he transforms Éowyn: “Then the heart of Éowyn changed ... And suddenly her winter passed, and the sun shone on her” (965). Although appearing as a

¹⁹ The battle where Éorl the Young and the Mark aid Gondor. As a result, the Steward of Gondor gives the Mark the land in which they currently live, hence, establishing Rohan. The people of Éorl are now officially referred to as ‘the Rohirrim’ (Appendix 1077).

haphazard character in Éowyn's life, Faramir eases her psychological fear by acknowledging her efforts, consequently, changing her.

Previously, Éowyn has only been capable of protecting others through the use of cunning political manipulations or war, but the change she experiences significantly affects her. Faramir's love and recognition are important as they help Éowyn accept the aspects of her life that she previously resented, which is Rohan's previous loss of honour: "behold! the Shadow has departed" (965). Although 'shadow' can refer to Sauron since Rohan's and Gondor's united forces defeat Mordor merely a moment before Éowyn says this line, it does also refer to her own mental state of mind. She is now capable of accepting both the strong Éowyn and the flawed Éowyn, which is why sunlight surrounds her entire being (964). As a result, the mental healing that the steward gives her influences what she decides to become – a healer: "I will be a healer, and love all things that grow and are not barren" (965). This self-recognition enables Éowyn to heal all those who have suffered during the darkness in Middle-Earth. Ironically though, when Éowyn gives up the battlefield, she finds another way to make her life meaningful by becoming a healer, so the process of the problematic individual has not ended. The novelistic character continues to function paradoxically in this manner: "the novel is the story of the soul that goes to find itself, that seeks adventures in order to be proved and tested by them, and, by proving itself, to find its own essence" (Lukács 88). Thus, Éowyn is still trying to answer the question 'who can I be'; however, her search for meaning has merely developed in another direction, enabling her to bring meaning to her existence by becoming a healer and more pacifistic in nature.

Having become more pacifistic in nature and embraced what she deemed to be her flaws, does that signify that Éowyn is renouncing her 'metaphorical throne'? Quite the opposite – she is not. Éowyn ends her tale very much in the same way as she begins it: with a cup of wine. She offers her brother a cup of wine: "[She] came forth ... golden as the sun and

white as snow” (RK 977). Following that, she “bade those that served to fill the cups, and all there assembled rose and drank to the new king, crying: `Hail, Éomer, King of the Mark’” (977). Aragorn, Arwen, Faramir and many from Gondor are amongst the gathering. Doing this, Éowyn is essentially repeating what she did in Rohan when Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli and Gandalf came. Firstly, she inaugurates Éomer as king, encouraging everyone to salute him so that his position as king is affirmed. Secondly, she admonishes everyone to drink wine from their respective cups, hence, creating an oath of brotherhood between both kingdoms. Éowyn is once again creating the court in Rohan, holding power as a `metaphorical queen´. Therefore, she proves herself to be a shrewd character who has volition and analytical powers, characteristics that help her fulfil her political agenda through peace and through uniting the realms of Middle-Earth.

During the course of events in *The Lord of the Rings*, Éowyn manages to accomplish many things. I shall now return to the question posed in the beginning of the introduction: “is Éowyn necessarily a shield-maiden and does she merely have her origins in Anglo-Saxon or Northern sources?” As the results of this essay clearly have demonstrated, Éowyn is based on Dido. However, Éowyn successively detaches herself from her counterpart because she is a psychological individual in search of meaning. Moreover, in the lack of a metaphysical structure, the events involving Éowyn are neither premeditated nor presupposed. Rather, it is Éowyn who creates the events of *The Lord of the Rings* (during the scenes when she is either directly or indirectly involved) when trying to define who she can become in an attempt to bring meaning to her life because her adventures constitute the content of the narrative (Lukács 89). Thus, Éowyn’s actions in *The Lord of Rings* enable the reader to regard “the outward form of the novel [as] the life of the problematic individual” (77-78).

By contrast to Éowyn, Dido is still a prisoner of fate. She can neither do anything to redeem herself in the eyes of her society nor continue to live as she did prior to Aeneas’

arrival. In fact, her suicide should be regarded as yet another *deus ex machina* to simply despatch her and end her existence from the plot, providing the reader with an explanation as to why the Punic War historically began. Moreover, the first lines from Book I in this epic already tells the reader what the purpose of *The Aeneid* is – Rome’s foundation: “Arms and a man I sing, the first from Troy, / A fated exile to Lavinian shores / In Italy” (*Aeneid*.I.1-3). Again, the lives of individuals are not relevant in an epic but the entire society (Lukács 65). Dido’s misfortunes need not and cannot be resolved. Unlike Éowyn, who can ask herself the question ‘who can I be’ or ‘what can I do now’, Dido cannot because her life is heavily affected by fate. Consequently, in *The Aeneid*, only Rome is important, making the composition closer to a book expounding Rome’s history rather than an actual narrative.

Conclusion

In the introduction, Éowyn asked one question that forms the basis of this research: “Am I not of the House of Éorl, a shield-maiden?” The answer to the question she asked is no, she is not only a shield-maiden. Although extensive research has been conducted on Éowyn’s Nordic Germanic and Anglo-Saxon origins, her sources are also found in Roman literature, more specifically Virgil’s Dido of Carthage. The more the narrative progresses, the more we see that the life of Dido is diligently embedded into Éowyn’s tale. Similarities are found in the scenes when they both oppose their societies and protect their people, when they attend the banquet scene and when both neglect their duties as queen and temporary-queen (during Théoden’s absence), respectively. Their reactions when learning that Aragorn and Aeneas intend to leave encompass similarities and so does the abandonment. However, psychological depth and volition exist in Éowyn, who seeks existential meaning in a Lukácsian sense. *Deus ex machina* enables Dido to evolve but only to progress the events of *The Aeneid*. Clearly,

Éowyn's and Dido's lives are interwoven, but there are important differences. For this precise reason, Éowyn emerges as the character of Éowyn.

Finally, the purpose of this essay has been to investigate Éowyn's Classical origins and to analyse her as a novelistic character seeking to give meaning to her life. Éowyn has proven herself to be a strong and independent woman, exerting her will over every male authority and knight in Rohan. Accordingly, this essay can be useful for future research concerning Éowyn and feminism. Moreover, Tolkien has used Latin for several purposes in *The Lord of the Rings*, be it as an inspiration for a character or to develop a new language (Moreno, Amatory Motifs 73). Therefore, the influence of other Latin or Greek sources affecting characters from the trilogy or the composition per se must not be neglected in future academic writings.

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