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INTRODUCTION

THE First Book of the *Aeneid*, unlike some of the books, has no single dominant subject. With subtle *oeconomia*, through many changes of tempo and tone and style, it prepares the reader for the great issues of the epic: the processes of Fate, the conflicting wills of the high gods, the responsibilities and the hardships of *pietas*, the impact of human passion, the imperial destiny of Rome. It moves swiftly and with mounting tension to an emotive climax, in which the presence of Dido is felt to have crucial significance. There is a confused and confusing tradition that it was not the original opening book in Virgil's plan, but followed what is now the third book.¹ This might be true, in view of what we know to have been Virgil's method of composition: 'Aeneida . . . partuculatim componere instituit, prout liberet quidque, et nihil in ordinem arripiens' (Donatus, *vita* 23). But the poet must have quickly seen how much power his epic would gain from an opening in its present form, which has resulted in a superbly satisfying prelude.

The exordium vigorously sets out the purpose of the poem. Virgil will tell of an exile from Troy, famed for his *pietas*, whose destiny was to found in Italy a race from which Rome would one day arise. But this Trojan would endure much tribulation through the enmity of Iuno, the protectress of Carthage, a rich and warlike city, confronting Italy across the sea: for (so she had heard) Carthage was fated to be destroyed by an imperial people of Trojan stock. So, at the outset, Virgil has linked the living history of Rome with the distant myth of Troy.² In *tantae molis*

¹ Donatus, *vita* 42; Servius, *praef.* p. 4 (ed. Harv.): see R. D. Williams, *Aeneid* 3 (Oxford, 1962), pp. 2 f.; M. M. Crump, *The Growth of the Aeneid* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1920), pp. 108 ff.

² For the legends of Aeneas and his wanderings see Nettleship, in

erat Romanam condere gentem (33) there is more than the immediate allusion to the Trojan task: to Virgil's contemporaries the crisis of the Punic Wars was still no remote memory, with its challenge which had taxed Rome's strength to the full before her power could be firmly set by victory.

Neither Livy (I. 1 ff.) nor Dionysius (*Ant. Rom.* I. 46 ff.) mentions that Aeneas came to Carthage in his wanderings, and we do not know when or where such a legend arose. It is probable, but not established by firm evidence, that Naevius referred to it in his *Bellum Punicum*. We know that his first book contained an episode in which the Trojans were storm-bound (so that a landing at Carthage might have followed), as well as a scene in which Venus pleaded for them with Iuppiter, who comforted her with promises.¹ Virgil must have taken note of these passages; but when Macrobius states 'totus hic locus a Naevio sumptus est', he employs a formula which it would be absurd to accept literally:² what Virgil found in Naevius he certainly transformed into his own mould, with his characteristically creative technique. We know also that Naevius (as would be natural in the context of the early history of Carthage) named both Dido and her sister Anna.³ But in the extant fragments there is no clear proof that he described any meeting between Dido and Aeneas, although many scholars hold that there is such an allusion in fr. 23 (Morel) 'blande et docte percontat, Aenea quo pacto / Troiam urbem liquerit'—this is necessarily a surmise only, and many reject

vol. ii of Conington's *Virgil*, fourth edition (1884), pp. xlv ff.; A. S. Pease, *Aeneid* 4 (Harvard, 1935), pp. 14 f.; R. M. Ogilvie, *Livy* 1-5 (Oxford, 1965), pp. 33 ff.

¹ DServius on 198 (see on 198 ff.); Macrobius, *Sat.* 6. 2. 31 (see on 229).

² We need only remember Servius' statement on *Aen.* 4 (init.), 'Apollonius Argonautica scripsit et in tertio inducit amantem Medeam; inde totus hic liber translatus est'; and cf. note on 140.

³ DServius on 4. 9 'cuius filiae fuerint Anna et Dido Naevius dicit'.

it.⁴ The first definite connection of Aeneas with Carthage is a curious statement attributed to Varro, that Anna killed herself on a pyre for love of Aeneas;² this might, of course, have been derived from Naevius. But whatever Naevius did write, it is certain that he would not have introduced a love-affair as an integral and crucial part of his narrative: such an emotional incursion into epic belongs to a far more sophisticated age, influenced by Hellenistic poetry and interests.

Virgil's sensitive imagination and his deep dramatic instinct showed him the full possibilities that a mythical confrontation with Carthage would have for an epic of imperial Rome. He boldly changed tradition, in order to connect the legendary founder of the Roman race with the foundress of Carthage,³ and to make the Carthage-theme, which so arrestingly meets us at the opening of the *Aeneid*, not only a theme for the Roman State but a personal theme also for Aeneas. For the story of Dido, as Virgil found it, had no involvement with Aeneas: it was to avoid being forced to marry an African prince, Iarbas, that she killed herself upon a pyre.⁴ Virgil, aware of the legend recorded by Varro, aware too of whatever treatment Naevius had given to Dido and Anna, saw what could be done and what must be done with such material: not Anna but Dido must be made to love Aeneas; Dido must perish, not to escape marriage with Iarbas, but to end her shame at being abandoned by Aeneas in obedience to his destiny; and so

¹ For arguments on both sides, with bibliography, see Pease, op. cit., pp. 18 ff.; for later discussions see V. Buchheit, *Virgil über die Sendung Roms* (Heidelberg, 1963), pp. 33 ff., with F. Klingner, *Virgil* (Zürich-Stuttgart, 1967), pp. 369, 381 f.

² DServius on 4. 682, with Servius on 5. 4; cf. Heinze, *Virgils epische Technik*, p. 115 n. 1; Buchheit, op. cit., p. 40 n. 129; Klingner, op. cit., p. 382.

³ For the chronological difficulties involved see Pease, op. cit., pp. 58 f.

⁴ Timaeus, *FGH* 566 F 82; DServius on 1. 340; Justin 18. 4-6: see on 341 ff.

eternal enmity should come between the Carthaginian and the Roman peoples. The tale of Dido, in the form which has stirred the human heart to pity for nearly two thousand years, was Virgil's own creation in a moment of intense poetic vision. This is implicit in a comment of Macrobius (*Sat.* 5. 17. 5), comparing Virgil's treatment of Dido with the Medea of Apollonius: 'quod ita elegantius auctore digessit, ut fabula lasciuientis Didonis, quam falsam nouit uniuersitas, per tot tamen saecula speciem ueritatis obtineat et ita pro uero per ora omnium uolitet ut pictores fictioresque . . . hac materia uel maxime in effigiandis simulacris tamquam unico argumento decoris utantur.'¹ And an anonymous epigram in the Planudean appendix to the Greek Anthology (*Anth. Pal.* 16. 151)² specifically names Virgil as the inventor of Dido's story in the form that we know:

ἀρχέτυπον Διδούης ἐρικυδέος, ᾧ ξένη, λεύσσεις,
εἰκόνα θεσπεσίῳ κάλλει λαμπομένην.
τοίῃ καὶ γένομην, ἀλλ' οὐ νόον, οἷον ἀκούεις,
ἔσχον, ἐπ' εὐφήμοις δόξαν ἐνεγκαμένη.
οὐδὲ γὰρ Αἰνείαν ποτ' ἐσέδρακον; οὐδὲ χρόνοισι
Τροίης περθομένης ἤλυθον ἐς Λιβύην·
ἀλλὰ βίας φεύγουσα Ἰαρβαίων ὑμεναίων
πῆξα κατὰ κραδίης φάσγανον ἀμφίτομον.
Πιερίδες, τί μοι ἀγνὸν ἐφωπλίσασθε Μάρωνα;
οἶα καθ' ἡμετέρης ψεύσατο σωφροσύνης.

¹ Cf. St. Augustine, *Conf.* 1. 13. 22 'non clament aduersus me uenditores grammaticae uel emptores, quia, si proponam eis interrogans utrum uerum sit quod Aenean aliquando Karthaginem uenisse poeta dicit, indoctiores nescire se respondebunt, doctiores autem etiam negabunt uerum esse'; for some other references see Pease, op. cit., p. 65 n. 497.

² For a Latin version, once attributed to Ausonius, see F. Munari, *Epigrammata Bobiensia* (Rome, 1955), ii, p. 103; W. Speyer, *Epigrammata Bobiensia* (Leipzig, Teubner, 1963), p. 55. This poem was freely translated by Sir W. Raleigh in his *History of the World* (1614), with an interwoven passage from Dido's speech upon her pyre (4. 655 ff.); for an imitation by Wyatt see K. Muir, *Unpublished Poems by Sir Thomas Wyatt and His Circle* (Liverpool U.P., 1960), p. 29.

It is obvious that the introduction of Dido may be thought of as a counterpart to the role of Calypso in the *Odyssey*. The parallel is evident, but it is superficial. For Calypso, the immortal, brings only an irksome entanglement to Odysseus, which leaves no mark upon him other than his grief at the delay to his homecoming, and we may reasonably suppose that she soon dried her tears when she had let him go:¹ Dido, the mortal, brings a deep and searing experience to Aeneas, and their tragic involvement with each other has bitter consequences for future generations of Romans. This is Virgil's way with Homer; what in Homer is episodic or incidental becomes integral in Virgil, and the distinction between oral and literary epic is clearly shown. This book especially, which contains many passages with a Homeric background,² shows how beneath apparent resemblances there is a wholly different treatment and purpose. In language alone, where it was once customary to speak of Virgil as 'copying' Homer, some tone or detail is usually discernible that removes such a passage far from its Homeric precursor.³ In subject-matter, this book offers some striking examples; these are discussed in the Commentary, but a few illustrations may be given here. The storm that overwhelmed Odysseus after his escape from Calypso's island (*Od.* 5. 291 ff.) is just another of the many calamities that he endured: the storm that shatters Aeneas' ships (81 ff.) is fateful both for him and for Dido. The mist with which Athena conceals Odysseus on his way to Alcinous' palace (*Od.* 7. 14 ff.) serves an immediate and limited purpose only: Virgil sees in the device (411, 516) a means for giving Aeneas time to watch and think and draw comfort from Dido's presence before she can see him, while his dramatic appearance on the parting of the mist deepens Dido's first impression of the man who has been a hero to her since her girlhood. Odysseus introduces himself to Alcinous (*Od.*

¹ Cf. Klingner, op. cit., p. 409.

² See G. N. Knauer, *Die Aeneis und Homer* (Göttingen, 1964), pp. 148 ff.

³ See, for example, on 198 ff., 498 ff., 589 ff.

9. 19 f.) with conscious pride, and with a desire to show the king with what manner of man he has to deal: Aeneas' self-introduction to the disguised Venus (378 ff.) is a sad protest and a reproach to the mother whom he does not yet recognize. The disguise-device itself can be paralleled from *Od.* 7. 19 ff. (Odysseus encountering Athena); but Virgil uses it to develop his plot and action, by making Venus recount Dido's history. Similarly, where literary epic itself offered Virgil a motif, he has transformed its significance: a piece of decorative magic in Apollonius becomes a shattering psychological weapon (see on 657 ff.); and Dido's suggestion that the Trojans might, perhaps, like to settle in Carthage (572) has a depth and pathos of implication that is entirely lacking in Hypsipyle's similar invitation to Jason.¹

The action of the book ranges with unobtrusively balanced technique between the divine and the human plane. The intervention of the gods, whose decisions lie behind human action, was traditional in epic poetry;² and Virgil's gods are characterized with much subtlety. At the beginning we see Iuno, implacable, seething with jealousy and frustration, the ultimate cause of all the Trojan suffering. In a brief encounter we are shown Neptune, quick to seize a chance of outwitting her, an autocrat who gives short shrift to a jumped-up minor deity, Aeolus, temporarily suborned by Iuno for her own malevolent purposes. Venus in her plea to Iuppiter is a shrewd and spirited speaker, possessive of her son and a fierce fighter for his interests (and later seen as completely callous to any misery that she may bring to Dido). Iuppiter is all-seeing, all-caring, a calm disposer of Trojan (and Roman) destiny, yet neither able nor even prepared to prevent the many ills that Aeneas must endure

¹ Apoll. Rhod. 1. 827 ff. εἰ δὲ κεν αἴθι / ναυεάειν ἐθέλοις, καὶ τοι ἄδοι, ᾗ τ' ἂν ἔπειρα / πατρὸς ἐμείο Θόαντος ἔχουσ γέρας. An outstanding example of such transformation is Virgil's use of Apollonius' simile (4. 1479 f.) in 6. 453 f.

² See W. A. Camps, *An Introduction to Virgil's Aeneid* (Oxford, 1969), ch. 5; and cf. G. Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (Oxford, 1968), p. 376.

before Iuno can be placated and the decrees of Fate fulfilled. His reply to Venus (257 ff.) is a skilful instrument on Virgil's part for an exposition of the purpose of the *Aeneid*—the imperial mission of Rome, expressed in a noble prophecy so devised that it still leaves room for Anchises' pageant of Romans in the sixth book, and rising to a culmination in the foreshadowing of an Augustan age of peace. Virgil's gods are serious beings, deeply concerned (one way or the other) with the fortunes of the Trojans as the forebears of Rome; they are not frivolous or frail or amusing, as Homer's gods often are: in this first book the reader sees plainly how Virgil conceived them, and so may conjecture their part in the books to come.

By an ingenious piece of technique, the background to Aeneas' exile from Troy is shown in the painted murals on Iuno's temple at Carthage, which depict in summary form the swaying fortunes of the Trojan War. The sight of these paintings is a turning-point for Aeneas. On his first appearance (92) he is frightened and bewildered, a man who cannot comprehend why he could not have been allowed to die at Troy like other foremost leaders. When he returns from reconnoitring after his ships have made land, he comforts his men in a brave speech that conceals his own sad apprehensions. His dejection and frustrated despair are again apparent in his words to the 'Tyrian girl'. Yet at that moment his divine mother is showing him the way to a means of hope, and on her instruction he comes to the grove where Iuno's temple is being built: *hoc primum in luco noua res oblata timorem leniit* (450 f.)—the sight of the murals, so unexpected, so filled with sad memories, yet tells him that he has reached a land where sorrow is understood and honour has its due.¹ From that moment, though still anxious, he is

¹ See on 461 f.; Klingner (op. cit., p. 399) interestingly compares Cic. *de rep.* 1. 29 (of Plato, stranded by a storm on an unknown shore) 'quem . . . timentibus ceteris . . . animaduertisse dicunt in arena geometricas formas quasdam esse descriptas; quas ut uidisset, exclamauisse ut bono essent animo; uidere enim se hominum uestigia; quae uidelicet ille . . . ex doctrinae indicibus interpretabatur'.

resilient. His speech of gratitude to Dido shows a new confidence; he still speaks of the sufferings of the Trojans, but he can now look beyond personal preoccupations, and recognizes that others have overcome calamity and gained greatness through trouble. He responds with warmth and sincerity to the manifestations of Dido's *pietas*: he has suddenly grown in stature. Happiness has come to him, through Dido.

Virgil shaped the book to lead to Dido, planning it to make Aeneas' fortunes seen as affected by hers, and hers in turn as involved with his. The first mention of her (299), like the first mention of Aeneas, is deceptively casual: when Iuppiter has unequivocally told Venus that Aeneas shall reach his promised land in spite of Iuno's opposition, he at once sends Mercury to Carthage to ensure safety for the Trojans, *ne fati nescia Dido finibus arceret*: her significance for Aeneas is already within Iuppiter's planning control. Venus then deliberately contrives a meeting with her son ('media sese tulit obuia silua', 314), and with apparent objectiveness tells him Dido's past history and present circumstances; she purposely (401) sends him forward to an encounter with Dido. The scenes that follow are designed to draw him towards her with increasing interest, and as he stands before the temple he already feels that she is in some way the moving spirit behind the unexpected evidences of humanity in a strange land: he stands there *reginam operiens* (454). When at last she comes, every impression strengthens his new feeling of comfort; hidden from her, he sees her busy and businesslike, a maker of laws and dispenser of justice; he hears her speech to Ilioneus, ending with the wish that she could see him. When she does see him, Venus has made him young and beautiful; and Dido in her turn is thrilled and awed. Yet Venus is still anxious for her son's safety, nagged by distrust of Punic faith and by fear of Iuno's guile. She plots with Cupid to fire Dido with love. Dido is now helpless; her emotions have quickly passed beyond her own control. Her love will do what Venus

wants, for Aeneas will be safe; but it will also do what Iuno wants, for Aeneas will be kept from Italy, and in this way it will conflict with his destiny as proclaimed and upheld by Iuppiter: an explosive situation is already in the making, though distant as yet. Of Aeneas' emotions we are told nothing explicit; it is significant that it is not he who is to be fired with love through Venus' plotting. His dilemma, in remaining at Carthage, has not yet begun. Dido's dilemma, in forsaking her dead husband's memory and bond, is already beginning. Of the final tragedy there is no hint; for at this stage the repeated epithet *infelix*, used of Dido (712, 749), implies, or need imply, no more than the suffering that love may bring. The book ends with a scene of gaiety and rejoicing and hope.

It is often held that in creating Dido Virgil meant his contemporaries to think of Cleopatra. If so, he went a strange way about it. For in this book she is fine and noble, with no weakness or fault, and Virgil draws all our sympathies to her. She is an exile, in a dangerous country, driven there by her own brother's monstrous crime against the husband whom she had married in full solemnity of ritual (345), a husband whom she had deeply loved and who had fondly cherished her.¹ It is plain that of her own will she cannot forget him or betray his trust; Cupid's first task is *paulatim abolere Sychaeum* (720). Her quality as a brave leader of men was established when she founded her city of Carthage, in full personal command of a perilous enterprise, *dux femina facti*. Her control of the city and its citizens is authoritative and just. When Ilioneus asks for help, her reply (573 f.) is impulsive and unselfish and magnificent: *urbem quam statuo, uestra est; subducite nauis; Tros Tyriusque mihi nullo discrimine agetur*. In welcoming Aeneas, she tells him *non ignara mali miseris succurrere disco* (630): words of deep humanity, a manifestation of

¹ Virgil ignores the tradition that Sychaeus was her own uncle (Justin 18. 4. 5): a repugnant detail, and alien to his conception of Dido's youthful innocence.

true *pietas*, simple, direct, humble. There is nothing here of deviousness or self-seeking or seductive wiles. Dido is a woman whose highmindedness and honour match the most exacting Roman ideal of conduct and person: a woman worthy of Aeneas.

In fact, too little account has generally been taken of this book in considering the problems implicit in Virgil's creation of Dido;¹ yet the book is responsible for much of their complexity. Before the intervention of Venus she is all goodness; in the fourth book she is so transformed by passion that those who look for faults in her will find them. Still, the sympathy that Virgil has won for her deepens continually, until grief for her end dominates all else, for the poet as well as for his readers; and that sympathy has its roots in the first book, and in the way in which Virgil has firmly founded and developed her character. Why did he take such pains to draw her so? Why did he invent that startling offer of common citizenship between Carthage and the Trojans? So improbable, so impossible; but only a cynic could regard it as a mere rhetorical artifice, designed simply to balance and highlight the terrible final curse in 4. 624 ff.: for it is a poet's vision, a deliberately chosen and serious expression of Dido's own disinterested idealism. Why did he represent Dido's words and actions in such a way that their cumulative effect accentuates the ultimate dilemma of Aeneas in his conduct towards her? Why did Aeneas himself have to aggravate that dilemma by his own solemn and moving promise to bless and honour her name for ever? It is as if Virgil planned these things to make as sharp as possible the sting of suffering for them both, to show the intensity of Aeneas' personal sacrifice in obeying the will of the gods, and the hideous cruelty of its cost to Dido, whose nobility availed her nothing. *Tantaene animis caelestibus irae?* These are some of the questions that the first book of the *Aeneid* raises.

¹ But see Bowra, *From Virgil to Milton* (London, 1945), pp. 53 f.