

Speech, silence and personality: the case of Aeneas and Dido¹

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This paper will focus on Virgil's use of language and of silence in the characterisation of Aeneas and Dido—and this will include both verbal and body-language. I have limited myself to a close examination of a single episode, the meeting between Aeneas and Dido in Book 4, in the belief that it is only by close scrutiny of the text that we can make progress in our understanding of Roman cultural systems, which we cannot assume to be identical with our own. It is my aim to suggest that if we attempt to read this episode from a more 'Roman' perspective than is usually attempted it makes a difference to our reactions to the characters.

Accordingly, I shall first subject the confrontation between Aeneas and Dido to close scrutiny and then I shall suggest ways in which ancient views of taciturnity and of personality may illuminate this famous text.

Everyone has a view on Aeneas and Dido and their relationship. There cannot be many who refuse sympathy or compassion to Dido. Aeneas, on the other hand, has had a bad press during the past hundred years or longer: he is typically described as 'cold' and 'stiff' or worse still, a cad and a bounder, and he was styled a wimp in seventeenth century France.² We should ask if these views are justified and to what extent they are the product of the post-Romantic sensibility. What chance is there of rehabilitating Aeneas? The first step in trying to read these texts from a Roman perspective involves shedding the post-Romantic sensibility that intrudes and invites us to take Dido's part—and thereby to condemn Aeneas. I shall suggest, then, that if we read this episode on Roman terms there are more grounds for sympathy with Aeneas than

usually perceived. Now in feminist or even in human terms this might seem hard on Dido—so I should make it clear that I do not think that rehabilitating Aeneas necessarily involves a diminution of sympathy for Dido.³ But I do think there is more to be said about Aeneas than has so far been said. And in this I shall be building upon Denis Feeney's excellent article, 'The Taciturnity of Aeneas',⁴ and trying to go further.

We all know that literary characterisation is achieved through actions and words—and much has been written on the words that Virgil puts into his characters' mouths. Notable is Hightet with his book on this subject, *The Speeches in Vergil's Aeneid*.⁵ According to Hightet's figures, apart from his narrative of the sack of Troy in Books 2 and 3, Aeneas has 345 lines in Books 1–6 and 182 in Books 7–12: a significant diminution in the second part of the poem, a point which will have further significance later. Next is Evander with 249 lines, mostly in Book 8. Then come three characters evenly weighted in terms of lines: Anchises with 235 lines, Turnus with 233 lines and Dido with 231 lines. But the concentration of Dido's speeches mostly into Book 4 (nine of her thirteen speeches occur in this Book) makes her dominate the book. A significant statistic, as Mackie observes,⁶ is that in this Book she speaks more than Aeneas does in the entire second half of the poem. This offers a striking contrast between the two characters: Dido says a lot and Aeneas says a little. Too much, and too little, we might ask? And, in Book 4, the more Dido says, the less Aeneas says: the characters are complementary. This ties in with the lack of conversation in Virgil which has been noticed, notably by Heinze, in contrast with Homer, where conversation is introduced much more often and is often used to move towards resolution and reconciliation.⁷ This point has been developed by Lyne, who describes it as Virgil's '“cut-off” technique': he observes that of Virgil's many 'cut-off' scenes, the most 'cut-off' are the scenes between Aeneas and Creusa and between Aeneas and Dido.⁸ That is certainly the case. And I would add a further, complementary, observation. The 'conversation' that takes place between Aeneas and Dido is no conversation at all. The two of them are going right past one another: there is speech but there is no communication.⁹ The words that are spoken only serve to drive the characters further apart. Plenty of attention has already been devoted to the speeches in this episode. So I propose in this paper to shift our focus.

What has not been scrutinised fully are Virgil's decisions about where and where not to include speeches and how to present the speech

acts that do take place, in direct or in indirect speech and with what commentary on the behaviour of the two characters before, during and after those speech acts. I shall here consider the decisions that Virgil has taken about the use of speech in this episode, from lines 265 to 449. In particular, I shall consider where there might have been a speech but isn't. In other words, I want us to hear the eloquence of silence.¹⁰

The silences and speeches of *Aeneid* 4

When Mercury arrives and aggressively delivers Jupiter's message (*inuadit*, 265–76), Aeneas is struck dumb with terror (*at uero Aeneas aspectu obmutuit amens*, | *arrectaeque horrore comae et uox faucibus haesit*, 279–80). Significantly, Virgil provides no monologue of indecision here: Aeneas' reaction is instant: he wants to get away (*ardet abire fuga dulcisque relinquere terras*, | *attonitus tanto monitu imperioque deorum*, 281–2). His only hesitation is over how to handle the situation (283–4):

*heu quid agat? quo nunc reginam ambire furentem
audeat adfatu? quae prima exordia sumat?*

It is not a matter of what he is to do but what to *say*: hence *quo adfatu* and *quae exordia*. Virgil's use of *oratio obliqua* here is highly significant: it keeps Aeneas at one remove from us. So Virgil provides a classic depiction of internal conflict (*diuisio*, 285–6),¹¹ which is rapidly resolved by decision (287, *alternanti* resolves into *sententia*) and action (288, *uocat*), action which, interestingly, consists of vocalisation. Aeneas may not know what to say to his lover, but he does know what to say to his captains. Virgil underlines the effectiveness of his words to the captains, his man-to-men discourse, by the iteration of their reaction in 294–5: *imperio* and *iussa* (itself marked by the powerful alliteration *iussa facessunt*) do the same job, with *ocius* and *laeti* providing a complementary gloss of their speed and eagerness. All of this exchange between Aeneas and his leading men is expressed in indirect speech, with his indirect commands to them and his statement of his plan of action for himself (289–94); Virgil reserves direct speech for his portrayal of Dido's passionate reproach (305–30).

Virgil marks this significant point in the action and the break in the former unanimity of the two lovers with the punctuating phrase *at regina*¹² and with the invitation to see authorial sympathy aligned with

Dido here in his intervention *quis fallere possit amantem?* (296). The role of Fama here in reporting the news of the preparations for the departure of the Trojans' fleet motivates the simile in which Dido is compared to a Bacchant. Significantly, this simile (301–3) has her responding like a Bacchant responds to *sounds*. It is the effect of *audito...Baccho* and *clamore* which drives (*compellat*, 304) her into speech (*uocibus*) first (*ultro*)—a paradox. That is, Aeneas' actions (and his indirect commands and his indirectness generally, in not approaching her honestly and honourably) speak *as if* they were words even though they are *not*. She hears his actions as words and she is forced to take the initiative in terms of speaking.

Dido's direct speech follows, a passionate speech of reproach (305–30). At 331 the single word *dixerat* marks the end of Dido's articulation. The complete syntactic break from what follows, that is, not only the new sentence after the full stop but also the imperfect tenses after the pluperfect tense, is symbolic. With *ille* Virgil switches the focus back to Aeneas, who is utterly separate from his ex-lover.

Dido's speech creates a conflict in Aeneas, not a conflict about whether or not to leave but about whether to give expression to the pain he feels (331–2). This is another moment where Virgil could have supplied Aeneas with an articulation of his inner conflict in an agonised monologue. But he refrains. Aeneas, reinforced by Jupiter (*Iovis monitis*, 331), holds his gaze steady and suppresses his love or pity (whatever *curam*, 332, denotes). What is the significance of this steady gaze? Virgil is not very explicit here. Is it a steady gaze at Dido or a steady gaze at the ground? In my view, it suits Virgil's construction of the episode best if Aeneas is looking steadily *away* from Dido—at the ground or at some distant object—as a means of gaining and maintaining self-control.¹³ Both the indicative verbs (*tenebat*, *premebat*) denote his self-control, his *constantia*, through continuity. That is, the imperfect tenses (unless they are felt to have a conative force) emphasise Aeneas' continuing effort to suppress his emotional reaction. And in this effort Aeneas has Jupiter's help.

Silence follows (*tandem*), then 'a few words' (*pauca*) (333). This silence could be construed as agony, as Aeneas fighting for self-control or for the right words, but because he does not articulate his feelings, we cannot be certain how to fill in the gap. His speech is introduced by Virgil as 'a few words', *pauca* (333), although it is actually longer (333–61) than Dido's and is also Aeneas' longest speech in the entire poem

(apart from his narrative of the sack of Troy)! Virgil clearly presents it as more self-controlled than Dido's, a point which is underlined by the repetition of *pauca* from narrative introduction (333) by Aeneas at 337: *pro re pauca loquar*.¹⁴ This striking fact—that Aeneas' speech is longer than Dido's but is introduced to us as short—is a reflection of the different attitudes towards speech acts by men and women in antiquity. Classically, the ideal woman was not only not heard but hardly even seen either. A text like the so-called *Laudatio Turiae* emphasises this point by presenting an exception, where the woman speaks and acts publicly to protect the interests of her husband and family and receives a fulsome enumeration of praise. The norm was very much the opposite.

Aeneas' speech (333–61) emphasises his lack of freedom in the course of his life, as he makes the arguments he has to make, about patriotism (*hic amor, haec patria est*, 347), about his obligations of *pietas* towards his father, his son and his gods. Only in the penultimate line does he admit to his disturbance (360)—or at least his potential disturbance, should Dido continue to inflame her and his passions by continuing in the same vein as before: *desine meque tuis incendere teque querelis*. The speech closes with (as we have it) one of Virgil's half-lines, in which Aeneas claims that he is acting 'not of free will', *Italiam non sponte sequor* (361): he is not responsible. The half-line here seems so appropriate as an expression of the inarticulacy brought about by deep emotion, perhaps balancing the *tandem* with which the speech was introduced. But we do, of course, have to leave open the possibility that Virgil would have returned to this speech and added a few more lines. Feeney argues that elsewhere in Virgil the present participle *dicens* means 'even as X spoke' and that Dido therefore interrupts Aeneas here (*dicentem*, 362).¹⁵

Virgil draws a marked contrast to Aeneas' obedience to the gods in Dido's reaction to Aeneas' words (362–4). Her body language reveals her hostility and her distress: she is turned away, with her eyes roving all over the place, a clear physical sign of her distraction, and her 'silent eyes' pass all over him; and when she finally speaks, she is 'inflamed' (*accensa*) in contrast with Aeneas' suppression of emotion. Virgil is drawing a stark contrast between his two characters here as they are under pressure from their emotions and he does it in part through body language and particularly the language of looking. Whereas Aeneas at 331–2 kept his gaze steady (wherever that gaze was directed), Dido here looks at him over her shoulder (*auersa tuetur*) while rolling her eyes

around in constant motion (*uoluens oculos*) and looks him up and down with ‘silent’ eyes (*pererrat luminibus tacitis*). ‘Silent’ her eyes may be, but they speak volumes—of disbelief and anguish and reproach.

She delivers her bitter speech (365–87), which culminates in an expression of general hostility and a curse and breaks off at that point, as Virgil conveys explicitly (*medium dictis sermonem abrumpit*, 388). As she rushes away on the point of collapse, Virgil focuses on eyes again, this time to say that Dido removes herself from Aeneas’ eyes: *se...ex oculis auertit* (389). This implies that he is now looking at her and that she finds his gaze too much to bear. This in turn raises the question of whether he has been looking at her all along. The evidence suggests not. At 365–7, the start of her speech, Dido addresses him directly, in the second person. But at 369 she shifts into the third person, which implies that he is not meeting her attention, that he is not looking at her. When she says at 369, *num...ingemuit? num lumina flexit?*, I suggest that she must mean ‘towards me’, which suggests he has been avoiding eye contact with her.

Corroboration of this reading is, I believe, provided by the meeting between Aeneas and Dido in the Underworld in Book 6, lines 467–76. There, Aeneas delivers his speech of apology and regret. Her reaction is to pay him back for his reception of her words in Book 4: that is why she utters not a word and that is why she keeps her eyes fixed on the ground and turns away (*solo fixos oculos auersa tenet*, 469) and, though he is evidently weeping (*lacrimas*, 468 confirmed at 476), she remains as impassive as she has accused him of being at 4.365–7. So by the end of their exchanges, Aeneas is, finally, looking at her.

Dido’s exit and collapse in Book 4 leaves Aeneas at 390–1 in fear and hesitation (*metu cunctantem*), unable to find the right words (*parantem dicere*), but not in conflict about what course of action to take. That is already settled. This is yet another place where Virgil could have provided direct speech for Aeneas to articulate his fears and to make several false starts at consoling her. But, again, he refrains.

Virgil now proceeds to narrate Aeneas’ response—his feelings and his decision what to do (393–6)—, rather than giving him direct speech:

*at pius Aeneas, quamquam lenire dolentem
solando cupit et dictis auertere curas,
multa gemens magnoque animum labefactus amore*

iussa tamen diuum exsequitur classemque reuisit.

The paragraphing device *at pius Aeneas* (393) marks a pause from what has gone before. Besides this decision for narrative over dramatisation, I find it significant that all Aeneas' emotions are expressed in subordinate clauses, *quamquam...cupit* and *gemens...labefactus*, while his decision for action is expressed in indicative verbs, *exsequitur* and *reuisit*. Grammatical subordination seems to match the suppression of desire by sense of duty.¹⁶

Virgil deftly uses Aeneas' departure to rejoin his men as a way to shift the focus on to the Trojans' preparation for departure (397 ff.), complete with the simile of the ants, the prime point of which is to emphasise the bustling activity going on (402–7). But the ant simile allows him deftly to view the scene from Dido's perspective (*ante oculos*, 411) from her high citadel (410, *arce ex summa*) and that in turn allows another authorial intervention which conveys his compassion for her suffering (*sensus* and *gemitus*), culminating in his apostrophe, *improbe Amor* (412). The next three lines mark her complete self-abasement (*supplex*, 414) in her decision to repeat her pleas to Aeneas, not this time in person, but through her sister Anna. The word *precando* (413) actually introduces Dido's speech to Anna (416–36), in which Virgil uses direct speech to provide in indirect speech the questions Dido wants Anna to put to Aeneas (428–9). Heinze observes that Dido's message is heard at the point of despatch rather than at the point of delivery (i.e. to Aeneas' ears).¹⁷ And he rightly argues that this conveys graphically Dido's state of mind: her need for immediate action and the desperation she feels lest she leave any stone unturned. We do not need to hear Anna delivering the message to Aeneas. It is enough to do what Virgil does, to tell us that Anna delivers the message again and again: *fertque refertque soror* (438).

And here we reach the crux of *lacrimae uoluuntur inanes* (449). Aeneas resists the words which Anna conveys to him: he is unmoved and, even more explicitly, Virgil says that he does not hear (*audit*, 439) these pleas. The divine agency of Aeneas' resistance is doubly emphasised in the following line, in the verbs *obstant* and *obstruit*. There can be no doubt of his *constantia* here; the adjective describing his ears as *placidus* underlines that. Virgil conveys the same message even more graphically when he gives us the memorable image of Aeneas as the oak

tree, buffeted by Anna's pleas but standing firm. The interpretation of the last line, 'His mind stands steadfast, the tears fall in vain' (*mens immota manet, lacrimae uoluuntur inanes*, 449), is much debated. Whose tears are they? They are easily Anna's. But they could be Aeneas' too, as Augustine, Servius, Pöschl and now Lyne have thought.¹⁸ This is perfectly possible, even likely, especially given the abundance of Aeneas' tears earlier in the *Aeneid*. But it is more important still that Virgil doesn't specify. If they are Aeneas', this is his acknowledgement of his feelings (whether of love, pity, grief)—but the commands of Jupiter to fulfil his destiny trump those feelings.

The remainder of the book focuses almost exclusively on Dido. She has speech after speech after speech. I do not propose to analyse these here. But it is enough to indicate that Dido is characterised more than anything else by speaking. She dominates the book more and more. And she is justifiably seen as tragic heroine, recalling Euripides' or Apollonius's Medea.¹⁹ She is like a tragic character—and it is entirely appropriate that she ultimately commits suicide.

But what of Aeneas? He is characterised by his taciturnity, a characteristic of his throughout the work which is well analysed in Feeney's excellent article (although the author has since admitted to me that he thinks he was a bit hard on Aeneas!). But in any case, Virgil contributes to this impression of Aeneas by the gaps that he leaves in his portrayal of Aeneas: he leaves a great deal unspecified about Aeneas' thoughts and emotions in the narrative sections. It is this, of course, that has left the field open for differing interpretations of Aeneas' personality at different times and in different places—interpretations which probably speak more eloquently about their authors than about Virgil.

Ancient views of taciturnity

For modern readers, at any rate, Virgil's tendency to portray Aeneas' character almost by omission, by silence, seems like an invitation to the reader to construct what they like in the voids. The question has to be whether we tend to construct different things in those gaps from a Roman audience. Do we place different values on silence and words? At this point, it is illuminating to look at ancient literary criticism of Homer. 'Longinus' says that Ajax's silence in the *Odyssey* (11.543–67) is 'grand and more sublime than any speech' (*On the Sublime*, 9.2). Similarly, Plutarch makes it clear at *Moralia* 28F that taciturnity, or at least not

saying too much too explicitly, is commendable. He contrasts the favourable characterisation of Achilles and of Diomedes with the portrayal of lower characters such as Thersites and Sthenelus, who fail to show the appropriate self-restraint in their words. This is of course an example of *decorum*, of saying the right thing and not saying too much, which can be substantiated from other works of literary criticism, for example, where Dionysius of Halicarnassus praises Lysias for just this appropriate use of words.²⁰ Aligned with Lyne's insistence that Aeneas' taciturnity is a definite element of characterisation, we can see something significant here. Aeneas' penchant for silence could certainly be Virgil's choice of how to characterise a leader who is burdened by the responsibilities on his shoulders and who keeps somewhat aloof from all his companions. It could also be that his restraint in speaking is seen as appropriate in a member of the elite—like Achilles in the Plutarch above—where garrulity would mark Aeneas as behaving like someone of lower origins.

Ancient theories of personality

Now this matter can be further illuminated by reference to the most extended discussion of personality in Latin ethical writing known to me: Cicero's four-*persona* theory in *De Officiis* 1. Bringing this material to bear on Virgil's creation of the personalities of Aeneas and Dido will underline possible and indeed likely Roman ways of reacting to Aeneas and Dido. To do this, we need to take a step backwards first and consider the issue of what constitutes 'personality'. In the modern sense, it is the idea of individual uniqueness. It is important to distinguish personality from personhood, that is, not what it is to be a person with rationality and moral responsibility, but what it is to be an individual.²¹ This modern formulation has some correspondence with Greco-Roman ideas, although the conformity of Roman society and literature, with its abundance of types and roles presented as models, means that 'personality' has a somewhat different framework in Roman thought.

What means to understanding personality—their own and others'—did the Romans have? A good place to start is terminology. There is no single word corresponding to 'personality' in Latin, but, rather, a nexus of terms. Central is (1) *mores*, which Quintilian uses as a translation for the Greek word ἦθος (*I.O.* 6.2.8). According to some, *mores* are innate, given by fate at birth, while in other texts, there seems to be an

assumption that *mores* can be learned and that education can instil or at the least affect *mores*. This picture is amplified by consideration of two other terms which occur frequently in relevant texts: (2) *natura*, denoting ‘innate character’, which according to some ancient thought was already disposed in certain directions, most obviously in Stoic thought with its ideas of predetermination and fatalism, as emerges especially strongly in the arena of astrology (e.g. Manilius); it seems likely that ancient ideas about physiognomy belong in the same category; (3) *persona* (equivalent of the Greek πρόσωπον), the ‘mask’ or the ‘role’ in life adopted, where the dramatic metaphor suggests that this comes from outside. The interplay of these three terms and ideas is crucial: it points to some of the central problems in this area concerning the origin, development and mutability or otherwise of ‘personality’.

This tension appears in Cicero’s four-*persona* theory in *De Officiis* 1 (deriving presumably more or less closely from the Stoic Panaetius), where he says that human beings are invested (*indutos*) with four *personae*, which he proceeds to describe. The first *persona* is the universal one of the human self and the second *persona* is that of the individual with particular skills and capacities (and so perhaps most immediately relevant to the idea of personality):

*intellegendum etiam est duabus quasi nos a natura indutos esse personis; quarum una communis est ex eo, quod omnes participes sumus rationis praestantiaque eius, qua antecellimus bestiis, a qua omne honestum decorumque trahitur, et ex qua ratio inveniendi officii exquiritur, altera autem, quae proprie singulis est tributa. ut enim in corporibus magnae dissimilitudines sunt (alios uidemus uelocitate ad cursum, alios uiribus ad luctandum ualere, itemque in formis aliis dignitatem inesse, aliis uenustatem), sic in animis existunt maiores etiam uarietates.*²² Cicero *De Officiis* 1.107

The third *persona* is that which arises from circumstances, such as holding military or political power or being wealthy or poor and the fourth is the *persona* which consists of our individual choice of role in life, that is, how we choose to react to circumstances:

ac duabus iis personis quas supra dixi tertia adiungitur,

*quam casus aliqui aut tempus imponit; quarta etiam, quam nobismet ipsi iudicio nostro accommodamus. nam regna, imperia, nobilitas, honores, diuitiae, opes eaque quae sunt his contraria in casu sita temporibus gubernantur; ipsi autem gerere quam personam uelimus, a nostra uoluntate proficiscitur. itaque se alii ad philosophiam, alii ad ius ciuile, alii ad eloquentiam applicant, ipsarumque uirtutum in alia alius mauult excellere.*²³

Cicero *De Officiis* 1.115

We need to put this alongside the Roman penchant for conformism to a certain limited range of types through a highly ideological ‘education’ in the widest sense: the formal Roman education system of the male elite, the use of *exempla* within and beyond that education system, and the very real presence of ancestors for that elite, in the form, for example, of the *imagines* in the aristocrat’s atrium. With all that in mind, Cicero appears to be trying to find an accommodation of individuality within that conformism (and, of course, doing this within an idealised or idealising framework). The solution lies in making the correct choice from a range. This is the point of the analogy with acting which is perhaps implicit in the choice of the word *persona* anyway but which is spelled out explicitly at 1.114, where Cicero concludes his analogy between actors and the rest of us by saying, *ergo histrio hoc uidebit in scaena, non uidebit sapiens uir in uita?* (‘Shall an actor have regard to this in choosing his role upon the stage and a wise man fail to do so in selecting his part in life?’).

Aeneas and Dido and Cicero’s four *personae*

After examining Cicero’s theoretical pronouncements on personality comes the moment to apply this theory to our literary personalities. I shall consider Cicero’s four *personae* in sequence. *The first persona.* Both are human beings, though Dido does at the height of her distress describe Aeneas as sub-human, 365–7, which is one of Virgil’s tactics in marking the gulf between them by that point. *The second persona.* Both are stunningly attractive, resourceful, capable, loyal and honourable people. *The third persona.* Both are the leaders of their displaced peoples seeking to refound their ancestral state. *The fourth persona.* And (initially at least) how they choose to handle the situation in which they find themselves is very similar, with courage and energy, two prime regal

qualities in Roman thought.

Judged on this template, Aeneas and Dido are mirror-images. And that recognition is one of the points of mutual attraction between the two which leads them to become lovers and partners. But at that point they both neglect their public roles (the third *persona*) and let their private feelings have priority. That is, in Cicero's terms, they choose a different course for the fourth *persona*, one which neglects the characteristic virtues of the leader and substitutes a lifestyle based on the gratification of personal pleasures. Although they do not yet see it, both are involved in a conflict between their private wishes and their public roles. Their relationship results in a stagnation which is beneficial neither for Dido's present-day Carthage (since the building work on the city ceases) nor for Aeneas' future Rome, and hence it has to end (whence Jupiter's intervention). From that point, the behaviour of the two leaders-become-lovers diverges most markedly. Aeneas reactivates his leadership qualities of energy and claims back his positive fourth *persona* which is so appropriate to his third *persona*, his position as leader and proto-founder. Not so Dido. She never retrieves her earlier leadership qualities or her public role: it is highly significant that she is never seen in public again. Instead, she remains a private individual, specifically, a widow who has broken her vow, until her suicide. Cicero's theory of personality helps to mark the striking similarities and the even more striking divergences between Aeneas and Dido and suggests that this aspect, at least, of the relationship might have been comprehensible in such terms to the Romans (as well as to us). But we can go further still in our application of Cicero.

Propriety and self-consistency

The central idea behind Cicero's discussion of the four-*persona* theory is that of propriety or appropriateness, *decorum*. That is how he introduces the topic at 1.107 (see above) and he returns to the notion of *decorum* several times in the discussion. A central facet of *decorum* is evidently self-consistency, which Cicero expresses in terms of *aequabilitas* (1.111) and *constantia* (1.120).

Since consistency is central for real live Romans, it seems likely that this notion is relevant to literary personalities too. We have to look no further than Horace's so-called *Ars Poetica* to find support for this view. At lines 153–79 Horace insists that the dramatic author must observe

the principle of consistency or appropriateness (*decor*) in his depiction of the four stages of life, the *puer, iuuenis, aetas animusque uirilis* and the *senex*. The crucial lines are these: *aetatis cuiusque notandi sunt tibi mores, | mobilibusque decor naturis dandus et annis* (156–7). This, of course, is not a new idea. The emphasis on types, whether regarded as originating innately or through inculcation or a combination of the two, emerges in the persistence of character sketches in Greco-Roman literature and is at least as old as Semonides' portrayal of nine types of woman and in the Hellenistic period takes the form of the character portraits (*ethologiae*) of Aristotle and Theophrastus, which persisted into the framework of the Roman education system.

Personality in literature: simple personalities

If we are looking for consistency in literary personalities, we shall certainly find it in what I shall call simple personalities. Here are some brief examples. (1) Many of the minor characters in historiography, such as the early kings of Rome in Livy. The author provides a label, tells an anecdote and reports some *res gestae* and produces the type of the pious king (or whatever). This simple personality is informed by contemporary ideas of piety for Livy and his audience, ideas which derive from the body of tradition, and his narrative in turn re-inscribes those values, which makes it a wonderful closed circle. Such simple personalities, in fact, seem to represent the literary form of the *exempla* which constituted so much of Roman education. (2) The portrayal of an angry personality in Juvenal's early satires. Although there are subtleties (and perhaps minor developments in his attitude) through the first six satires, what we have here is essentially a self-consistent angry man, who is always unreasonable and always over the top. (3) Epic abounds in simple personalities. Take for example the character of Cato in Lucan's *Civil War*. Although he is in some ways a major character in the poem, one of the three protagonists between whom Lucan divides up the characteristics of Virgil's Aeneas, Cato never takes off as a character. He always acts from hard-line Stoic principles, even when remarrying his wife Marcia. He never appears to be troubled by the circumstances in which he is placed and so merits my label of a simple and self-consistent personality. (4) It is well-known that comedy deals in types, for example, the tyrannical father, the ineffectual love-lorn young man, the mercenary pimp and the wily slave. Obviously within that generalisation

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certain (sometimes significant) variations are permitted, but usually only variations of degree (for example, Plautus' Pseudolus fears he is being out-Pseudolus-ed by another slave). The chief puzzle with such one-dimensional characters of comedy lies in the sudden *volte face* with which the plays sometimes end. Some of the plays use a change of character, usually rather sudden and not very well motivated, at the close. This might consist of a tyrannical father changing into an acquiescent or indulgent father (Plautus' Theopropides in *Mostellaria* or Terence's Demea in *Adelphoe*) or a misanthrope transforming into a genial elderly gentleman (Menander's Knemon in the *Dyskolos* is the classic case, echoed in the father Euclio in Plautus' *Aulularia*).

Personality in literature: complex personalities

So much for what I have called 'simple personalities'. But does this label apply to Aeneas and Dido too? They seem to be portrayed in a more complex way than these rather one-dimensional personalities above. But at the same time, I believe that the criterion of consistency remains central. Thus, Dido is consistently the great queen—until she discovers that Aeneas is preparing to leave. Then, she is consistently a tragic figure, because she is a private figure in a public role, right until her death, which is her only means of regaining some control over her destiny. Aeneas is consistently the great leader—until he falls in love with Dido. He returns to his former *persona* when Jupiter's warning is delivered: that is when he steps out of his private *persona* and regains his public *persona*. And part of that *persona* is his taciturnity, which is consistent throughout the poem. In fact, as mentioned above, he becomes increasingly silent towards the end of the poem. Significantly, it is Dido who makes him his most talkative: it is at her request that he narrates the sack of Troy and his subsequent wanderings for two whole books—and that is against the grain. So consistency appears to be relevant in the case of more complex personalities too.

To talk about consistency does not mean that there is no conflict. Authors regularly use conflict within complex characters. Yet (and here lies a potential paradox) when we see a personality under pressure and at the same time manifesting different tendencies in reaction to that pressure, where do we find any sense of the consistency of that personality? Dido is just such. Once she knows Aeneas is preparing to leave, she is in conflict and she remains conflicted, consistently conflicted, until

that conflict is resolved. And in this plot, this narrative, that resolution can only be supplied by her death, her suicide. That is what makes her a classic tragic heroine.

But this scenario does not apply to Aeneas, because once the pressure is applied he resumes his former *persona* as leader. Once he receives Jupiter's orders, he resolves the conflict between private and public which he has allowed himself to slide into; he chooses between his love for Dido and his love for his future *patria* and he does not waver from that. Any internal conflict he may be experiencing is not made explicit. And that is why he never seems like a tragic hero. Not that this makes him the paragon of Stoic virtue that he has sometimes been seen as (in some rehabilitations) either, although perhaps he is on one of the lower rungs of the ladder of the *proficiens*. This is in part because of the way in which Virgil chooses to present his moments of inner conflict: he is in control (*just*, with Jupiter's help). To demonstrate this, we should think back to our first impression of Aeneas, in Book 1. Aeneas' first words in the poem dissemble his true feelings as he puts on a brave face. He gives an impression of self-control (*Aen.* 1.197–207), which Virgil makes clear in the gloss which follows the speech (208–9):

*talia uoce refert curisque ingentibus aeger
spem uultu simulat, premit altum corde dolorem.*

The way in which *spem uultu* and *corde dolorem* frame line 209 present graphically the fine balance between Aeneas' conflicting emotions in which his self-control just wins out.

Finally, the preceding discussion may in turn illuminate one of the most vexed passages in the entire poem: its very close. Here Virgil initially portrays Aeneas as being remarkably like Dido in conflict. Aeneas has Turnus at his mercy and is in doubt what to do with him. Here he is described as *huc illuc uoluens oculos* (12.939), exactly the same expression as Virgil uses of Dido at 4.363, which takes us back to questions of eyes and gaze again. This is evidently a sign of great conflict and agitation. But the agitation is counterbalanced by the control which Aeneas exercises at this very moment. He restrains his sword-hand, *dextram repressit*, surely a sign of a man in control. And as he hesitates (*cunctantem*, 940) and begins his change of mind towards clemency (*iam iamque magis, flectere coeperat*, 940–1), Virgil could have given Aeneas

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a monologue of agony and decision here. But instead, a sudden sight intervenes (*cum apparuit*, 941), followed by a full gaze (*oculis...hausit*, 945–6), which seems to intensify the emotions indirectly evoked: the chief emotion here is *dolor*, which is hard to translate, but can comprise grief and resentment and anger and hatred. The length of Aeneas' gaze is important: it suggests that the following action, though one of passionate anger (*furiis accensus*, 946), is an act which is accepted by Aeneas and not one to which he blindly succumbs. The only direct speech here is in lines 947–9, a speech marked with signs of anger but which nonetheless gives the justification for the action which follows:

*'tunc hinc spoliis indute meorum
eripiare mihi? Pallas te hoc uulnere, Pallas
immolat et poenam scelerato ex sanguine sumit.'*

The pronouns and verbs distribute the responsibility clearly away from Aeneas: *tu, spoliis indute meorum, eripiare mihi, Pallas te...immolat et poenam...sumit*. There is no first person verb.

How, then, should we interpret this final episode? As we saw in Book 4, there are gaps here, which Virgil leaves for us to fill. There is very little to go on to assess Aeneas' motives—and what there is is open to conflicting interpretations, as is evident in the huge volume of scholarship devoted to the end of the *Aeneid*. But amid the gaps—and Aeneas' own turning of the focus away from himself and on to the other players in this final scene, Turnus and Pallas (dead but very much present)—it is possible to perceive a continuation of that 'just-in-control' characteristic of Aeneas'. That is a powerful argument for seeing the end of the *Aeneid* more as a case of justified anger rather than as a succumbing to passion. That is, I read the final moment of the poem as consistent with Virgil's earlier portrayals of Aeneas.

Conclusion

Both Dido and Aeneas are complex personalities who nevertheless have the consistency of personality that Cicero requires. Once she knows Aeneas is going to leave, Dido is consistently conflicted until the conflict seems absolute—and at that point she has no alternative but to take her own life. Her suicide is the closure to her inner conflict demanded by the plot. Aeneas, so far as I can read him (and it is hard work, reading those

gaps), lapses from his public *persona* as leader when he allows his private *persona* to take priority but then reactivates his public *persona* and consistently finds ways of staying in control—though only just. But because Virgil adopts a kind of minimalist approach in depicting Aeneas' personality, a minimalist approach which goes against our modern taste and our desire for explicitness (what Feeney might have called the novelistic overlay that we like to bring to epic²⁴) but which seems to accord with ideas about *decorum* in literature current in antiquity (as we see from the discussions in critics such as Horace, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Plutarch), there are gaps which all readers will fill in for themselves. That explains the widely—and wildly—differing readings of Aeneas. I hope I have indicated that a recuperation of Roman readings of those gaps and those silences may go some way towards a rehabilitation of Aeneas which is long overdue. In particular, if I am right in arguing that to put too many words into Aeneas' mouth, which is what Plutarch's critique of Homer implies would be degrading, then Virgil's reticence about Aeneas' feelings and his corresponding portrayal of Aeneas' taciturnity seems designed to bolster Aeneas' status in Roman eyes.

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Notes

1. I started thinking about personality in literature when I was invited to deliver a paper on this topic at the Triennial meeting in Oxford in July 1995, but while preparing that paper I got sidetracked into an enquiry into Roman ideas about the origin and development of personality. The invitation from The Virgil Society was a welcome opportunity to return to some of these ideas. I am most grateful to the audiences who have heard this paper and offered their comments, including The Virgil Society (autumn 1996) and colleagues in South Africa at the Rands Afrikaans University in Johannesburg and at the University of Natal at Pietermaritzburg (early 1997). Denis Feeney offered encouragement to pursue this line of enquiry at an early stage and Adam Morton has probably now heard enough about speech and silence to last a lifetime. I am also grateful to Jonathan Foster for his editorial patience and acuity. The flaws that can be found here are all my own.

2. Page is I suppose typical in his condemnation of Aeneas: 'To an appeal which would move a stone Aeneas replies with the cold and formal rhetoric of an attorney' (T.E. Page *The Aeneid of Virgil I–VI* (London, 1894) xviii).

3. S. Farron argues that the purpose of the Dido episode is not to praise or blame Aeneas and emphasises the role of divine compulsion: *Vergil's Aeneid: A Poem of Grief and Love* (Leiden, 1993) esp. 108–24. As will become clear, I do not believe that

Virgil's text is as neutral as Farron suggests.

4. D. Feeney 'The Taciturnity of Aeneas' *Classical Quarterly* 33 (1983) 204–19.
5. The figures which follow are given at G. Highet *The Speeches in Vergil's Aeneid* (Princeton, 1972) 25–6.
6. C.J. Mackie *The Characterisation of Aeneas* (Edinburgh, 1988) 11. See also pages 6–9 and the appendix on the speeches, 219–20. Mackie attributes the imbalance between Dido and Aeneas in Book 4 to Virgil's wish to focus upon Dido and his need to direct attention away from Aeneas in moments of *impietas*. As will become clear, my argument offers a different explanation for Aeneas' taciturnity.
7. R. Heinze *Virgils Epische Technik* (3rd edn, Leiden, 1915) 403–16.
8. R.O.A.M. Lyne *Further Voices in Vergil's Aeneid* (Oxford, 1989) 145–9.
9. The phenomenon of the difficulty that men and women experience in cross-gender communications in our society because of typically different patterns of speech has recently received scrutiny from socio-linguists such as Deborah Tannen. A popularising version, with ten-page bibliography, of some of her findings is available in her *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (London, 1992). Chapter Two, 'Asymmetries: Women and Men Talking at Cross-Purposes', is a good place to start.
10. Alex Garvie has kindly drawn to my attention Donald Lateiner's fascinating discussion of nonverbal communication, including body language, in the representation of the suitors in the *Odyssey*: 'The Suitors' Take: Manners and Power in Ithaka', *Colby Quarterly* 29 (1993) 173–96, see esp. 184 on gestures and postures, 189–91 on 'nonverbal leakage' and also 194 on the way that when they speak the suitors speak 'out of turn and out of place'. His article bears out the importance of interrogating ancient epics for what they may yield in terms of nonverbal communication.
11. One might even label it formulaic, since it is repeated at 8.20–1. There too Virgil refrains from providing Aeneas with a monologue of deliberation but instead offers the memorable adaptation of the simile of sunlight or moonlight flickering on the surface of a bowl of water, taken from Apollonius' depiction of Medea's psychological crisis at *Argonautica* 3.755–60.
12. Also at 1 and 504.
13. To look away might also be an acknowledgement of shame, although it has to be said that shame is a complex concept which operates differently in different cultures; see for example D.L. Cairns *Aidos: The Psychology and Ethics of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greek Literature* (Oxford, 1993). That said, it seems significant that Quintilian insists that boys learning public speaking should not have their eyes fixed on the ground, *ne deiecti in terram oculi*, *I.O.* 1.11.9. For male and female patterns in contemporary society of eye contact see Tannen (above, n. 9) 246.
14. It is curious to note the findings of socio-linguists about the perceptions as against the realities of speech length between men and women. For example, Tannen reports findings by Barbara and Gene Eakins which show that, despite prejudices that women speak too much, in university faculty meetings 'men spoke more often and, without exception, spoke for a longer time. The men's turns ranged from 10.66 to 17.07 seconds, while the women's turns ranged from 3 to 7 seconds. In other words, the women's longest turns were still shorter than the men's shortest turns' (Tannen, above n. 9, 75); cf. reports of the mean length of questions at academic conferences:

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23.1 seconds for women but 52.7 for men (Tannen, 76).

15. Feeney (above, n. 4), 210 n. 42.

16. S. Farron, in 'Pius Aeneas in Aeneid 4.393–6' *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History VI: Collection Latomus* 217 ed. C. Deroux (Brussels, 1992) 260–76, by contrast takes *pius* closely with lines 393–5 as referring to Aeneas' compassion for Dido.

17. Heinze (above, n. 7), 135.

18. Lyne (above, n. 8), 164; cf. V. Pöschl *The Art of Vergil* (tr. G. Seligson, Ann Arbor, 1962) 46 with n. 23 on Augustine and Servius.

19. Cf. P. Hardie 'Virgil and tragedy' in *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, ed. C.A. Martindale (Cambridge, 1997) 312–26.

20. Cf. the story mentioned by Feeney (above, n. 4, footnote 105) where Suetonius reports Augustus' fear of saying too much or too little, even in conversations with his wife Livia, to the extent that he wrote notes beforehand and spoke from them (Suet. *Aug.* 84.2).

21. See C. Gill 'Personhood and Personality: The Four-*Personae* Theory in Cicero, *De Officiis* I', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* ed. Julia Annas 6 (1988) 169–99.

22. 'We must realise also that we are invested by Nature with two characters, as it were: one of these is universal, arising from the fact of our being all alike endowed with reason and with that superiority which lifts us above the brute. From this all morality and propriety are derived, and upon it depends the rational method of ascertaining our duty. The other character is the one that is assigned to individuals in particular. In the matter of physical endowment there are great differences: some, we see, excel in speed for the race, others in strength for wrestling; so in point of personal appearance, some have stateliness, others comeliness.'

23. 'To the two above-mentioned characters is added a third, which some chance or circumstance imposes, and a fourth also, which we assume by our own deliberate choice. Regal powers and military commands, nobility of birth and political office, wealth and influence and their opposites depend upon chance and are therefore controlled by circumstances. But what role we ourselves may choose to sustain is decided by our own free choice. And so some turn to philosophy, others to the civil law, and still others to oratory, while in case of the virtue themselves one man prefers to excel in one, another in another.'

24. On the problems inherent in 'naturalistic' or 'realistic' reading practices see D.C. Feeney *The Gods in Epic* (Oxford, 1991) 2, 43, 175.

