

Wed or Unwed? Ambiguity in *Aeneid* 4

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INTRODUCTION¹

The story is famous. In *Aeneid* 4 Virgil tells us how Dido and Aeneas ride out to hunt and are overtaken by a violent storm. They are separated from their entourage and arrive at the same cave for shelter. There something happened which Virgil immediately tells us in his own voice was the beginning of catastrophe for Dido. Virgil describes the event in language appropriate to a marriage, but other features are disquieting, and Aeneas later denies that he has been married. What are we to suppose did happen, and how does it fit into Virgil's representation of the changing relationship between Dido and Aeneas?

Despite studies by successive scholars over the years², there is still no agreement on whether Aeneas and Dido should be regarded as married or not. The aim of this paper is to review Virgil's narrative and show how he has made a definitive answer impossible and then to show how he uses this ambiguity and to suggest his possible reasons for creating it.

A: OPENING SCENES

Virgil begins by establishing the motivation behind Dido's subsequent expectations and behaviour towards Aeneas. There is no doubt that she is powerfully attracted to him; the question is whether her aim is seduction or lawful marriage. The book opens the day after the feast at which Aeneas told Dido his story³. Although Virgil does not mention it here, we should remember that, the previous night, Cupid had "inoculated" Dido with a slow-kindling love for Aeneas, "*paulatim abolere Sychaeum / incipit*" "she begins to wipe Sychaeus gradually out of <Dido's> mind"(1.720f.). Now, Dido's mind is full of Aeneas but, after enthusing over him, she immediately states in the strongest terms, reinforced by a dreadful oath, that she will not marry again but remain true to Sychaeus; she then bursts into tears. Anna, her sister, then persuades away her difficulties about remarriage to such a husband as Aeneas. Dido turns to *divinatio*, in the traditional Roman form, to satisfy herself that the gods are not opposed to this course. *Divinatio*, however, does not help her to find a way forward; she roams distractedly

around the city, she seeks out Aeneas' company, but takes matters no further, she abandons her work as ruler. This scene ends with Dido in a state of frustration.

Clues in the context indicate clearly that the question in Dido's mind is marriage. Before the feast, Venus had deliberately chosen the way for Cupid to slip through Dido's emotional defences; it was by disguising himself as the child Ascanius⁴. Anna's arguments are all drawn from the traditional benefits of marriage, set out, for example in Catullus 61.61-75, the legitimate consummation of love (*Veneris...praemia* (l.33), cf. Catullus 61.61-64⁵, the expectation of legitimate children to continue the family (*dulcis natos* (l.33), cf. Catullus 61. 66-69 and the continued protection of the city (*nec venit in mentem quorum consederis arvis?* (l.39), cf. Catullus 61.71-74.

Dido expresses her own feelings in her first speech (ll.9-29), which brings out with great skill the conflict between her strong attraction to Aeneas and her abiding feeling of commitment to her much-loved dead husband, Sychaeus. The question is whether the *culpa* mentioned in l.19 and its correlative *pudor* in l.27 refer to remarriage or an ordinary *affaire*. The natural interpretation is that Dido means remarriage, as suggested by her final oath (ll. 24-27) to remain faithful to Sychaeus, and by her mention (l.15), which would not otherwise be relevant, of her irrevocable rejection of remarriage⁶. If so, however, why should Dido call remarriage a *culpa*, when remarriage was clearly perfectly normal for Roman widows?

Fidelity in widowhood was a recognised ideal in Rome, even if the importance of the concept of *univiratus* should not be exaggerated⁷. Dido, however, wears the ideal with a difference; she shows little concern with the "status of *univira*" or with the opinion of others⁸; for her it is a matter of *fides*, good faith, of her obligation to the dead Sychaeus. Her final words on the subject will be

"non servata fides cineri promissa Sychaeo." (l. 552)

"I have not kept the faith I promised to Sychaeus' ashes."

When she confronts Aeneas (ll.305-30, discussed further below), she will rest her appeal, in the last resort, not on their love or their marriage but on *fides*.

Whatever the importance of *univiratus*, the word *culpa* is a surprising way of referring to an admired member of the opposite sex to whom one is strongly attracted. Virgil has devised a situation, however, where the first acknowledgement of a strong attraction is followed directly by a no less strong, principled, renunciation. The words *pudor* and *culpa*, which Virgil has given to Dido, serve both to highlight her feeling of lapsing from her own principles and to put the action which she is contemplating in a disreputable light.

This section is completed by two more scenes, spread over an unspecified length of time. Once persuaded by her sister that fidelity to Sychaeus need not require her to shut her mind to possible marriage with Aeneas, Dido seeks the *pax deorum* for her intended course of action by *divinatio* in the correct Roman fashion⁹. Virgil does not tell us what the outcome of repeated sacrifices was or, indeed, what she had in mind; instead, by ominous, if opaque, comments on the inefficacy of divination, he sheds a sinister light on the proceedings. The lovesick Dido then is shown abandoning her duties to seek out Aeneas' company. She does not, however, take matters further. So far from attempting seduction or anything like a *furtivus amor*, she does not even attempt to flirt¹⁰.

As so often in this book, Aeneas' state of mind is not reported. The only hint may be Anna's suggestion that Dido contrive reasons for him not to hurry his departure (ll. 51-53). If Virgil means us to put weight on this, we might infer that Aeneas is still intent on the "*fatalia arva*" of Italy.

B: JUNO AND VENUS

Dido is now blocked, and the scene shifts. Juno appears. She knows of Venus' stratagem of engaging Dido's affections with Aeneas and has a compromise to propose. She will call up a storm to disrupt the next day's hunt and bring the two together in a cave, where she will herself bind them in wedlock. The Trojans will then settle in Carthage. Venus, who has already been told by Jupiter that this is not the destined outcome, does not commit herself to the plan but sends Juno off to obtain Jupiter's consent to the scheme. Juno departs full of purpose.

There is much irony in this. Juno is overconfident and does not stop to consult Jupiter, who might have warned her that Aeneas' destiny was unchangeable. She also assumes with a show of formal courtesy - "*tua si mihi certa voluntas*" "if I can be sure of your support"(l. 125) - that Venus has said what she wanted to hear and takes Aeneas' heart for granted. There is, however, no hint that these misapprehensions affect her ability to carry through her plan.

C: DID THE ROMANS RECOGNISE MARRIAGE BY MERE CONSENT?

Before examining Virgil's narrative of the "marriage" itself, we need to consider an aspect of the Roman law of marriage. A sophisticated

explanation of what passed between Dido and Aeneas depends upon the idea of a "consensual" marriage. According to the most precise formulation of this idea, in Rome a marriage where the wife did not pass into the husband's possession (*manus*) and so did not become a member of his family (a "free marriage"; the term is modern) required no formalities, only the consent of both parties, not necessarily even before witnesses¹¹. Others add the suggestion that "what started as a liaison might develop into a binding marriage after a transitional period"¹². On this view, alone in the cave, without witnesses, both parties were carried away. Aeneas said more than he meant or than was discreet; Dido heard what she wanted to hear - words of marriage - and deceived herself as to Aeneas' intentions. The subsequent explanations were bound to be painful and were made more so by Dido's passionate temperament.

Now, it is clear that marriages without *manus* were regarded as legitimate at Rome by the time of the Laws of the Twelve Tables and that, by the late Republic, most marriages seem to have been contracted on these terms¹³. However, legitimate marriage was so important to families and to the state (cf, for example, Catullus 61.66-74) that it would be surprising if there were not checks against individual impulsiveness, fortune-hunting, exploitation and other abuses. Were marriages without *manus* really quite so informal that, leaving aside Juno's intervention, an exchange of promises between Aeneas and Dido without witnesses in the cave could be recognised by Roman readers as a possible legitimate marriage created by mutual consent?

The legal analysis underlying such an interpretation is set out in P.E. Corbett's book *The Roman Law of Marriage*. He argues that the wedding ceremonies were "in great part legally indifferent; the validity of the marriage did not, except to a limited extent in *confarreatio*, depend on their observance" (p.68). His argument continues that "the original Roman marriage always involved *manus* over the wife, while the marriage without *manus*, the so-called "free marriage", was a comparatively late development" (*ibid.*, p. 68). Originally therefore, "the formalities which resulted in *manus*... from the legal point of view, constituted the main, if not the sole, essential formal element of valid marriage" (*ibid.*, p. 91). However, "free marriage" without any *manus* - creating ceremony was clearly recognised as legitimate at least by the time of the Laws of the Twelve Tables (451-50 BC), since they provided for at least one circumstance in which *manus* was created by prescription (*usus*)¹⁴. In law, therefore, the parties could enter into a "free marriage" without the formalities required for the creation of *manus* or any others; the

only essential was their consent.

This analysis, however, is open to serious objections. There is good evidence that marriage was one thing, *manus* another and that they were brought into being by different procedures, not necessarily at the same time¹⁵. The jurist Gaius speaks of a bride not subject to *manus* as “continuing married” (“*si nupta perseverabat*” 1.111) in the interval before her husband acquired *manus* by prescription. This clearly implies that the marriage was valid before there was any question of *manus* - whose creation might be, and in Cicero’s time usually was, put off indefinitely. Corbett’s answer (*ibid.*, pp. 87-88), that Gaius’ language cannot be relied on and that “*nupta*” can elsewhere be used of “purported wife” does not convince, especially since he accepts that “a free marriage” would not have been acceptable to the women’s families unless it had been a settled and respectable status from the outset (*ibid.*, pp. 89-90). By Virgil’s time, indeed, legitimate marriage depended so little on *manus* that a wife might enter into the *manus* of a long-standing and loving husband, not to mark any change in their affections or mutual confidence, but as a legal tactic. Gaius even explains how *coemptio* (mock sale) might be used to create a kind of trustee for a wife by transferring her into the *manus* of someone other than her husband¹⁶. Absence of *manus*-creating ceremonies does not therefore imply anything about the formal acts required to create a valid marriage.

Further, even if *manus* was not in question, there clearly were binding requirements for a valid marriage other than mutual consent. Puberty, *conubium* (satisfying the conditions for the civil law to recognise their marriage, especially on grounds of citizenship¹⁷), if either party was still subject to *patria potestas* (the legal authority of the head of the family), the consent of the *pater familias* in question, and *affectio maritalis* (living together as husband and wife should) were all required for a valid marriage, as well as the consent of the parties. There was also at least one legal requirement of procedure; unlike a man, a woman could not be married *in absentia*¹⁸. These requirements make it an oversimplification to speak as if a valid marriage could normally have been a private matter between the parties alone. Marriage was also expected to be a matter of public knowledge. The *deductio*, the formal delivery of the bride to her husband’s house, traditionally in a torch-lit procession followed by more ceremonies on her arrival, served the purpose of making the marriage public. It may not have been a legal requirement but was recognised as the legal starting point for a marriage¹⁹. We shall see that the special importance of *deductio* may help to understand Aeneas’ last speech to Dido.

Against all this, there is no positive evidence for a purely “consensual marriage”. There is no direct evidence for it and there is no reference in the *Digest* or elsewhere to practical points of law rising from it²⁰. Ulpian’s maxim that “Consent not consummation makes the wedding” (“*Nuptias non concubitus sed consensus facit*”: *Dig.*50.17.30) does not say that consent is the only requirement. Nor does it imply it since the principle makes good sense used, as Ulpian and others used it, to decide the exact point when a marriage (celebrated with *deductio* and, presumably, all other formalities) comes into being²¹. There is therefore no reason to think that a marriage entered into by a single unwitnessed act of the two parties was a regular thing in Roman law. In reading Virgil, however, what matters is not legal concepts but what he could expect his readers to recognise as a valid marriage and how he would expect them to interpret both the events in the cave and the contradiction between Aeneas’ and Dido’s accounts of the position. There is no reason to think that the possibility of private, informal, “consensual” marriages was so recognised in Rome that Virgil could rely on his readers using it to interpret a crucial moment in his story.²²

D: BACK TO THE NARRATIVE; THE “MARRIAGE IN THE CAVE”

Events now proceed exactly as Juno had described her plans to Venus; the coincidences in language underline that hers is the directing hand. Dido and Aeneas ride out to hunt. The party is scattered by a

sudden storm. They take refuge in the same cave. (The words at 165f. “*speluncam...eandem/deveniunt*” imply that their meeting was not consciously planned.) There, a series of supernatural events occurs corresponding to some of the leading elements of the marriage ritual and the heaven (*aether*) itself is a party. Virgil implies, but does not state, that the two became lovers²³. All this is described in a rush of graphic historic presents with a minimum of connectives. The narrative does not attain this pace again until the Trojans’ headlong departure at lines 579-82. This syntax is not designed for a complete and structured description of events. Highlights only are required. Non-essential details - and possible questions - can be brushed over in the interests of speed.

The question is whether we are to think of Dido and Aeneas as legitimately married. We have seen that Virgil cannot have intended to suggest that they were married by mere mutual consent or some exchange of vows, since no such “marriage” was recognised as legitimate in Roman law. If, therefore, they were married, it was by the actions of Juno and the other divinities involved with her, and those actions are to be seen as an effective marriage, not as a symbolic reflection of their lovemaking, or some sort of celestial backdrop.

Virgil had a model for this scene in Apollonius Rhodius’ description of the emergency marriage of Jason and Medea on the island of Phaeacia (*Argonautica* 4.1110 - 1222). The similarities are striking: Hera helps to stage-manage the affair; there is no notice of the wedding; families are not represented; no rites or vows are reported; the marriage is consummated in a cave (in this case with the Golden Fleece serving as the bedcover); nymphs sing the wedding song outside. At the end of it all there seems to be no doubt that Jason and Medea have contracted a valid marriage. The differences, however, are just as important. Apart from the chorus of nymphs, all the actors in Apollonius’ scene are human. The intention of the parties to marry has been clearly stated beforehand; indeed, Jason has reinforced his promise to marry Medea with an oath. Hera immediately spreads a true report of Medea’s marriage (Ap. Rhod. 4.1183-84) and publicity is provided by an immediate procession into town with crowds of spectators. For Dido and Aeneas, news is spread by Fama, who mixes truth and untruth, and Virgil does not tell us the circumstances of their return to Carthage or how they were received there. The overall emotional colour is different; in Apollonius, the supernatural elements supply what is needed to make Jason and Medea’s wedding normal and joyous; any cloud on its happiness comes not from ambiguous omens, but from practical human anxiety - whether in the morning Alcinous will order Medea’s extradition to Colchis (Ap. Rhod. 4.1165-9). If, therefore, one of Virgil’s contemporary readers had called to mind the details of Apollonius’ scene, he might have been puzzled to decide what the reminiscence implied about a marriage between Aeneas and Dido.

We must look at Virgil’s description more closely. Some, but not all, of the central features of a traditional Roman wedding can be made out, but transformed by the participation of supernatural rather than human actors. There is a *pronuba*, a female of standing still married to her first husband, to join the parties’ hands and tie the knot, but it is Juno; who after all could be more suitable than the goddess of marriage?²⁴ Omens are sought, but not by a human *auspex*, but by Earth, the first bride, who will then give the signal for proceedings to begin²⁵. There are witnesses, but they are not human kin present on the spot, but Earth and the Heaven, who are omnipresent. There are lights and song, but they come from lightning flashes and the cries of nymphs, who are gathered not outside the chamber but on the surrounding hills²⁶. In none of these cases, except Juno, does Virgil use language which highlights the functional equivalence with Roman wedding ceremonial. Equally, he does not mention some central features of a traditional wedding; no traditional dress for the bride, no family presence (though both Aeneas and Dido were heads of their houses), no traditional responses like “*ubi tu Caius, ego Caia*” or

other rituals, no wedding settlements. These omissions could be put down as selection in the interests of rapidity of narrative; that of *deductio*, the public reception of the bride at her husband's home would be more significant, but Virgil switches the narrative away before that point is reached²⁷. At the same time, he does not say whether the intervention of Juno, the goddess of marriage, makes good any departures from normal human ritual. Throughout, what we are told falls just short of enabling us to say with confidence that this marriage, however extraordinary, was - or was not - valid²⁸.

The omens and emotional colouring do not make matters clearer. Virgil tells us that the Earth gave a sign - *signum* - as *auspex*, but not whether it was some sort of verbal or manual signal for proceedings to begin or an actual portent and, if a portent, auspicious or inauspicious (Servius' assumption that it must have been an earthquake is arbitrary).²⁹ Lightning and thunder may be auspicious or inauspicious, depending on type and direction, which are not specified. The ambiguity is most marked in Virgil's use of the word "*ulularunt*" to describe the nymphs' song (l. 168). This word can denote a shrill sound, wails of mourning or howls, but also battle cries or shouts of triumph or ritual cries³⁰. It would not, therefore have been out of the question for Virgil to have used it to refer to a wedding song. It would have been a bold use, however, and, without a specific reference to the content of the song, I doubt whether a Roman hearer would have put associations with screech owls (*ululae*) and other uncanny or ill-omened sounds out of his mind³¹. As in the description of what might or might not have been wedding ritual, the possibilities are left open; we are left unable to say with confidence that the omens were favourable or not. By way of contrast, in *Heroides* 2.115-20, Ovid's lavish colours in the wedding of Phyllis to Demophon - in a story which he makes more than a little reminiscent of that of Dido and Aeneas - leave no doubt that the occasion was disastrously inauspicious; all are meant literally.

After the studied ambiguity of the narrative Virgil now intervenes in his own voice to emphasise the importance of the events:

*"ille dies primus leti primusque malorum
causa fuit; neque enim specie famave movetur
nec iam furtivum Dido meditatur amorem:
coniugium vocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam."* (ll.169-72)

"This day was the beginning of her death, the first cause of all her sufferings.
From now on Dido gave no thought to appearance or her good name and no
longer kept her love as a secret in her own heart, but called it marriage,
using the word to cover her guilt." (D.A. West's translation)

These lines have been taken as Virgil's definitive statement, resolving any uncertainty and justifying Aeneas' subsequent denial that he had entered into a marriage with Dido. They have been the basis of inferences that Dido was at fault and knew that she was not married to Aeneas. Before we accept that interpretation, however, we need to understand what the lines say. These lines are anything but straightforward. The problems boil down to three:

- i What was the "*furtivus amor*" and when did it enter into Dido's intentions? When she first discussed Aeneas with Anna, there was no indication that she had anything in mind but marriage. It can hardly refer to the proceedings in the cave, since the separate arrivals of Dido and Aeneas seem to rule out a planned seduction, and thereafter Dido had no doubt that she was married. Gordon Williams has suggested that it is the unexpressed passion, which found its outlet in Dido's obsessive behaviour in the days before the hunt (ll. 74-90)³². Maybe so, but it is hard to believe that Virgil's audience would have heard these words without some reminiscence of their normal sense of concealed *affaire*, or that Virgil did not deliberately implant this suggestion, so contrary to his

previous picture of a Dido intent on honourable marriage.

- ii Do the words “*vocat*” and “*nomine*” in line 172 necessarily imply misrepresentation or self-deception on Dido’s part? West’s translation quoted above, like the great majority of commentators, takes the words to mean that Dido calls herself married when she is not “to cover her fault” (“...*hoc praetexit nomine culpam*”). However, “*nomen*” means “word” as well as “name”, and, as R.P.H. Green pointed out in 1986³³, “*vocat*” means declaring something by its right name (compare *Aen.* 7.264 and 11.105) as well as giving it a name which may be deceptive. The sense might then be something like ‘She speaks of “marriage”’, but, even if the word does not misrepresent the facts, she still uses it to disguise some *culpa*, whether from others or from herself. When the lines are taken in isolation, neither interpretation can be excluded - this ambiguity can hardly be accidental³⁴.
- iii Is this *culpa* which Dido “cloaks” the same as the *furtivus amor* in the preceding line, or is it the same as in line 19, remarriage as a breach of loyalty to the dead Sychaeus? Monti has strongly argued that *furtivus amor* is meant, on the ground that it would be illogical for Dido to use talk of marriage to “disguise” a “*culpa*” which essentially consists of the breach of loyalty to Sychaeus involved in remarriage. However, it is simpler and more natural to take “*culpa*” here to have the same reference as in line 19, and, after the events in the cave Dido believes herself to have been married; she says nothing to suggest that she thought that she had been involved in some “*furtivus amor*”.³⁵ Further, any remarriage is, by its nature, both the joyous start of a new love and the abandonment of an old one. Dido has so far regarded remarriage as blameworthy; now she uses her new marriage to blind herself to her breach of previous commitment to Sychaeus. This is consistent with her behaviour for the rest of her life: so long as Aeneas stays, no more is heard of Sychaeus. (F. H. Bradley’s aphorism that “a man may find when he is in love that his principles were in reality different feelings” is to the point here.)

Although, therefore, these lines might be taken for Virgil’s authoritative summation of the events which have just passed, they do not resolve any of the reader’s uncertainties or reduce suspense. Instead, their ambiguous language if anything makes it harder to say whether what happened was a valid marriage or not by putting Dido’s own belief in doubt and insinuates doubts about her motives not apparently justified by the main stream of the narrative. We cannot say that Aeneas and Dido are “obviously” married - or not married - or that Virgil has made his meaning clear³⁶. On the contrary, ambiguity is part of the fabric of this story, and a Roman reader, remembering the fixed point in Dido’s story, that she killed herself on a pyre, might well have been puzzled and approached the subsequent story with curiosity whetted.

D: BACK IN CARTHAGE

The scene now shifts abruptly. Fama enters; Dido and Aeneas are back in Carthage, although the reader is not told how long has elapsed or whether the circumstances of their return, even if it was not a formal *deductio*, effectively proclaimed them man and wife as happened to Jason and Medea. Fama then spreads the story that Dido has condescended to match with one Aeneas, who has come from Troy; they are now spending the winter wrapped up in one another, abandoning their responsibilities (ll 191-94). These reports are described as indiscriminately true and false (“*pariter facta atque infecta*”), although examination shows that each of Fama’s statements is tendentious and twisted rather than some true and others false. It comes as no surprise, then, that Fama’s story does not remove doubts about the marriage. Further, even if it is true that “Dido has matched with one Aeneas”, these words fall just short of saying that they are man and wife³⁷.

The focus moves on to Aeneas. He is no longer preoccupied with his voyage. He has “gone native” and wears the dress of a very high officer at a Hellenistic court; his purple uniform cloak and his jasper-hilted dress sword are presents from the Queen, and he is shown acting as her active and efficient

deputy³⁸. So far as this goes, the report that he and Dido are husband and wife might or might not be true; Virgil does not take us further at this stage, nor does omniscient Jupiter mention marriage when he instructs Mercury to tell Aeneas to resume his voyage to Italy. If, however, Virgil had provided at this stage the information, which he withholds until after the final parting, that Aeneas had moved his kit into Dido's bedroom and that the parting will cost him such anguish, there would have been little room for doubt that this was all proper *affectio maritalis*: Dido and Aeneas were living as man and wife.³⁹ The reader would also have been very differently prepared for their great confrontation which follows.

E: THE CONFRONTATION (IL 296-396)

Dido now confronts Aeneas when he has made plans to leave Carthage but has not yet found an easy opening to tell her. The ways in which Virgil treats the issue of marriage in the course of the resulting pyrotechnic exchange is of great interest. Dido does not rest her case on the fact - if it was a fact - of marriage as such. Instead, she begins her plea with *fides*-related words, (*perfide* (l.305), *data dextera* (ll.307, 314) and references to the help and hospitality which she gave to Aeneas and his storm-tossed men, generalising her argument with an appeal to *fides* - of which fidelity in marriage is a species. She then appeals to their love and marriage, but immediately abandons them, first for pity and finally for another *fides*-related concept "guest", *hospes* (l. 323)⁴⁰. Similarly, when she last sums up her obligations to Sychaeus, she does not refer to marriage vows but to the faith which she promised to him (l.552). Good Faith is a powerful argument for a Roman audience and Aeneas will make only a lame answer⁴¹. She then expressly gives up the argument even before Aeneas announces that he does not regard himself as her husband. Why should she throw away what might have been thought her strongest argument? (Ovid's conventionally-minded heroines would dwell on the details of their marriage vows.) Dramatically, one might imagine her reacting to something in Aeneas' body-language⁴², but logically and rhetorically the question remains. Since Virgil for the rest of the book reinforces the point by working in clear reminiscences of Alcestis, the archetypal devoted wife, Dido's silence here is surely not to be taken as a tacit admission that there never was any marriage⁴³.

Aeneas' response is also perplexing. He says baldly that he never entered into a marriage, specifically that he never "held up the wedding torch"(ll.338-39). Now, in a Roman wedding, the husband carried a torch on returning to his own home to welcome his bride, while she is brought in the formal *deductio*. Aeneas therefore denies that the proper rituals have been performed and, in consequence, that Dido is his wife⁴⁴. We should not underestimate the dramatic impact of this statement. Whatever Virgil had prepared us to hear, it was not this. Virgil simply leaves it unexplained, just as he does not explain how Aeneas saw his position in the days after the hunt, or, indeed what he thought had happened in the cave. At the same time he leaves Juno's position equally unexplained. She announced her intention to join Aeneas and Dido in a "*stabile coniugium*" (l.126); the word for word match between her words and the description of Dido's and Aeneas' arrivals at the cave creates the strongest impression of her agency but the intended result is not achieved. Since the essential characteristic of the Olympians was power, this is extremely surprising. An Immortal could always be thwarted by a superior force or by fate, or, most dramatically, their action could succeed but prove disastrous for those it was meant to help; for one of their actions just to peter out ineffectually is extraordinary⁴⁵. At the end of this scene, then, it is, if anything, harder than before to understand whether or not Virgil wants to represent Aeneas and Dido as married. The way in which this ambiguity contributes to the architecture of the scene and of Aeneas' speech in particular will be further discussed below.

Two details in these speeches indicate the care with which they have been composed. First, Aeneas' denial that he has taken part in a *deductio* (l.339). Now *deductio* was a vital part of the Roman wedding,

the public declaration that a wedding had taken place; we have also seen that the narrative breaks off after the events in the cave and no *deductio* is described; Aeneas and Dido may, like Jason and Medea have returned to Carthage with equal publicity but less formality. Is Aeneas using the word “*deductio*” as a synecdoche for the whole wedding ceremony to say that there was no wedding and no marriage? Or is he using the lack of one, albeit important, part of normal wedding ritual to deny what he and Dido accepted at the time? The question is unanswerable. Second, in her reply, Dido develops the stock themes of faithlessness and ingratitude (ll.373-75) but unlike her prototypes, Apollonius’ Medea and Catullus’ Ariadne, does not mention the oaths broken by her betrayer⁴⁶. Now we have seen that Medea’s cave marriage was preceded by solemn oaths by Jason that he would make her his wife when they returned to Greece; these oaths helped to establish the genuineness of the marriage. Retaining the reference to oaths, in a context so clearly indebted to Apollonius, would have implied the reality of Dido’s marriage; instead they are suppressed.

F: THE REST OF THE BOOK

As far as the specific question of marriage or non-marriage goes, the rest of the Book confirms themes already established rather than shedding new light. The focus is all on Dido; Aeneas is shown entirely focused on the voyage to Italy and the prompt departure commanded by Jupiter. Now that the die is cast, Virgil brings out Aeneas’ real feeling for Dido, but his speech has made it clear that his real passion is for the refounding of Troy, his home. As Dido is carried away fainting, Virgil describes Aeneas, for the first time in the book, as “*pius*”, “faithful” (l. 393). This epithet has been claimed as Virgil’s considered judgement on Aeneas’ conduct⁴⁷; it may be so, but he also calls Dido’s death “undeserved” (l.696), and neither expression can be taken as a judgement on the rights and wrongs of the two parties⁴⁸.

Dido is now shown swinging violently between extremes. In despair at Aeneas’ announcement of his departure and his unshaken resolve to sail for Italy (ll. 450-53), her mind turns to suicide and her thoughts focus on Sychaeus (ll.457-63). First she hears his voice from his cenotaph, and it then blends into progressively more dreadful dreams in which, first, Aeneas has become her enemy, then her people have abandoned her, then she is surrounded by spirits of vengeance from the tragic stage. In increasingly wild moods she alternates between planning suicide and thoughts of revenge on Aeneas. Once she has resolved on suicide, the mood changes, and after final imprecations against Aeneas, pathos creeps in, and Virgil introduces reminiscences of Alcestis, the ideal wife - but the sentiment is directed to the bed which she shared with Aeneas. All this confirms the transformation in Dido’s affections since the opening of the Book, but sheds no light on whether we should think of Dido as married to Aeneas or not.

Her last reference to Sychaeus (ll.550-52) clearly reflects her feelings at the opening of the book:

*“non licuit thalami expertem sine crimine vitam
degere more ferae, talis nec tangere curas.”*

“I was not allowed to live my life without marriage,
in innocence like a wild creature, and be untouched
by such anguish as this.” (D.A.West’s translation)

If the words “*more ferae*” were not there, the wish would be exactly the same wish as in ll.15-19:

*“si mihi non animo fixum immotumque sederet
ne cui me vinclo vellem sociare iugali,
postquam primus amor deceptam morte fefellit ;
si non pertaesum thalami taedaeque fuisset,*

huic uni forsā potui succumbere culpaē."

"If my mind had not been set and immovably fixed against joining any man in the bonds of marriage ever since death cheated me of my first love, if I were not so utterly opposed to the marriage torch and bed, this is the one temptation to which I could possibly have succumbed." (D.A. West's translation)

Her regret is not to have been able to live a chaste life without remarriage. The new thought "*more ferae*" "as wild beasts do", which has no counterpart in her opening speech, makes the whole train of thought hard to understand, largely because it is hard to see what picture Virgil meant to conjure up. Dido has shown no interest whatever in a life of animal promiscuity, and the sudden appearance of the notion at this stage would make nonsense of the end of the speech. All that said, it can be doubted whether a Roman reader hearing the words "*more ferae*" and "*thalami experts*" would have quite rid his mind of the ideas of animal promiscuity and of open couplings in Lucretius' account of primitive man⁴⁹. If so, we have the same gratuitous suggestion of the sexually disreputable as in the use of the word "*culpa*" as in line 19.

G: CONCLUSIONS

The text does not say, therefore, or enable us to say with confidence, whether Aeneas and Dido were married or not. There is no incontrovertible statement that a marriage did, or did not, take place and many things that seem to point to a marriage are left incomplete, while the hints telling against a marriage are less than explicit. Virgil has used a whole range of techniques to this end. (a) In the opening scene, the idea of marriage is an essential part of setting the scene; it is touched on in Dido's first words that she is resolved against remarriage; thereafter, it is implicit in references to ideas traditionally associated with marriage. In the closing scenes, references to wifely behaviour, patterned on Alcestis, are woven into the story and add pathos to Dido's actions and to her relations with Aeneas, but they cannot confirm that a marriage took place. (b) In the opening scenes, we also meet the use of innuendo, the introduction of words with a vague flavour of the disreputable, which are not justified by anything said in the context. (c) Scenes are also often cut short before the decisive moment which would reveal their meaning, for example Juno's planning of the marriage and, indeed the scene in the cave itself. (d) Sometimes information is delayed to a point where its connotations change; the information that Aeneas has moved his kit into Dido's bedroom contributes to the pathos of her suicide in ll.495-96, but if it had come before the confrontation with Dido, we might have judged their relationship, and Aeneas' denial of a marriage, differently. Again, an account of Aeneas' return to Carthage with Dido, showing whether or not it amounted to a public acknowledgement of their relationship, and of the Carthaginians' reaction, might well have affected the reader differently from Fama's report after the event. (e) Sometimes the connotations of language are ambiguous (practically every term used in describing the supernatural actions around the cave, the references to "*culpa*" in l. 19 and l. 173), sometimes the statements themselves are equivocal (I have argued above that ll.171-72 and ll.338-39 are ambiguous). (f) Above all, the strongest indications that there was no marriage, ll.172-73 (Virgil's authorial intervention at the end of the events in the cave), and the innuendoes in l. 19. ("*culpa*" - fault) and l.550 "*more ferae*" are at variance with the narrative as a whole. So is Aeneas' disclaimer of marriage.

Can these repeated ambiguities be resolved? The simplest way would be to privilege one side of the evidence, usually that supporting Aeneas' good faith⁵⁰. However, it is not clear why this evidence

deserves special treatment, especially if misunderstandings resulting from an informal “consensual marriage” cannot be invoked. First, Aeneas’ denial that he entered into a marriage (ll.338-39) is unexplained and requires the assumption - itself not without difficulty, as argued above - that Juno’s activities at the cave were ineffectual. Second, Virgil’s statement (ll. 171-72) that Dido “used the word marriage to cloak her lapse”, is itself ambiguous and is blurred by a reference to “furtive love”, ungrounded in the rest of the narrative. Third, key passages describing Dido’s motivation (ll. 18-19, 551-52) are made suspect by language implying, apparently at variance with the rest of the narrative, sexual impropriety. None of these objections is clear-cut; everything is open to alternative explanations. The passages called upon to show Dido’s innocence and her wifely behaviour also fall short of proving the reality of her marriage.

Another favoured way of resolving ambiguities has been to reconstruct the characters’ psychologies and motivations so as to fill the gaps and uncertainties in Virgil’s text. Two lines of approach have been specially favoured: self-deception by Dido and an emotionally inarticulate Aeneas. Self-deception by Dido might have fitted the context of a supposed informal “consensual marriage”, where nothing more than an unwitnessed exchange of declarations was required, but this explanation does not stand up to examination. It is far less plausible, but not out of the question, that Dido might have deceived herself about a supernatural marriage conducted by goddesses, but a stronger indication of what was afoot would be required than anything Virgil provides. However, Dido’s own words give the best reason against thinking that she had deceived herself about the fact of marriage. In the tragic manner, she dies with her eyes opened to the cause of her destruction. In l. 552 her analysis of how she went wrong ends with the cry that she has broken the faith she promised to Sychaeus’ ashes and in ll. 657-8 it is the coming of the Trojan fleet that has destroyed her good fortune; nothing is said about a misunderstanding over Aeneas’ intentions. The great scene in Hades confirms this: what matters to Dido is her relationship with Sychaeus, and Aeneas is still the author of her catastrophe; details about marriage or non-marriage would be a distraction. As suggested above, however, I believe that Dido did indeed deceive herself - into thinking that the word “marriage” would reconcile her love for Aeneas with what she felt she owed to Sychaeus⁵¹. There is less to say about Aeneas’ supposed emotional inarticulateness or reserve⁵². It may help to understand why his reply to Dido’s accusations at ll. 333-61 does not express his love for Dido and strikes a tone which many have found unsympathetic; it cannot explain what he thought had happened. In short, nothing that Virgil makes Dido or Aeneas say or do helps us to reconcile their different understandings of whatever happened in the cave.

A final possibility is that this uncertainty is unintentional but results from misjudgement, or perhaps Virgil’s famously unsystematic methods of composition, and would have been put right if only he had lived to make his final revision of the *Aeneid*⁵³. The ambiguity is so deep-rooted, however, finds so many different forms and is so concentrated around the question of the reality of Aeneas’ marriage as to suggest that this is not the random distribution of errors but a structural element in Virgil’s plot. Further, accepting that the ambiguity is deliberate sheds light on two important questions, the composition of Aeneas’ reply to Dido and the wider significance of the Carthaginian episode in the *Aeneid* as a whole.

Aeneas’ reply to Dido’s accusation has not pleased critics⁵⁴. It has been seen as cold, terse and defensive, an unworthy reply to the generosity and love of a woman like Dido. More recently, however, Feeney has offered a subtle and sympathetic presentation of Aeneas reasserting the value of rational discourse in the face of Dido’s emotionalism as well as the strength of his commitments to his city and his family; Horsfall has spoken of Aeneas’ winning the argument, Highet has suggested that the speech

may be deliberately unsuccessful⁵⁵. These defences substantially underestimate Virgil's skill.

Choosing the tone for Aeneas' reply must have been a formidably difficult task for Virgil. Dido was clearly meant to be the dominating character in the Book, and the reply must not thrust her out of the spotlight; the facts also meant that no reconciliation was possible (That Dido would die on a pyre, that Aeneas would bring the Trojans to Italy, that the Punic Wars would be a fight to the death, are fixed points in all his sources.). Virgil chose, as Feeney says, to portray Aeneas as a man "faced with uncompromising attack by a wife or lover". The tone he selected for his reply, however, is one which, in equivalent circumstances today, would be guaranteed to produce a violent outburst⁵⁶. His opening acknowledgement of what she has done for him falls far short of his ringing words in Book I (ll.597-605) and by ancient standards is a barely minimal return for kindness and help; her charges are met with flat denial and a hint that she is exaggerating; the tone suggests an authoritarian Roman husband. The only facts which interest Aeneas are his facts; the rationality which interests him is his rationality. The speech only comes alive when he speaks of his mission and Troy. It is perhaps redeemed from being as unsympathetic as Jason's corresponding speech in Euripides' *Medea* by the introduction of one of the very few passages where Virgil gives Aeneas an emotion not directly related to the situation before him. It is wrong to say that "Aeneas wins the argument" over the facts of marriage. There is no argument; Dido's accusations are not answered but bluntly contradicted without argument or evidence; Dido's denunciation then sweeps away further pursuit of truth or fact. I believe this to be Virgil's intention; similarly, Dido's collapse, leaving Aeneas "hesitating in fear and pulling himself together to say many things" is not only a fine emotional climax and a good way of moving the narrative forward, but also a brilliant device to avoid further discussion of the facts and the reality of the marriage⁵⁷.

Accepting that Virgil has been deliberately ambiguous about the marriage also helps to explain how Aeneas' visit to Carthage fits into the *Aeneid's* picture of Rome's history. It is accepted that Virgil brought Aeneas and Dido together largely in order to provide a myth to account for the Punic Wars - at whatever violence to the received chronology for the founding of Carthage. Feuds between communities are known in epic, and their causes are straightforward: woman-theft (but Virgil would hardly have wanted to make Aeneas repeat Paris' exploits⁵⁸), outrage to a woman, perhaps, accidental killing of an especially honoured or valued person, a piratical raid or some piece of treachery. A myth explaining the Punic Wars, however, needed something dramatic enough to retain its motivating force for more than five hundred years. Further, although, if the myth motivated Carthaginian aggression in the Punic Wars, the Carthaginians might logically have been expected to have been the injured party, Virgil wanted to protect Aeneas' good name. He therefore sought to create a story in which Dido would passionately resent Aeneas' departure, but Aeneas' honour would be intact. Since marriage, not an *affaire*, however passionate, would carry the required emotional charge, while Aeneas could not be shown simply abandoning a lawfully wedded wife, Virgil had to invent circumstances in which Dido could maintain and Aeneas could deny that they were married. The result is a tour-de-force of invention.

The same concern for Aeneas' good name can be seen in the care taken in Book 1 (ll.526-29) to make it clear that the Trojans are not pirates (only the intemperate Iarbas uses the word later); the conventionally minded Livy, however, makes no bones about it (Book 1.i.5.). Again, in Book 6, Virgil's list of heroes is strikingly uncontroversial; Augustus, however, was prepared to display statues of both Marius and Sulla among the "*Summi Viri*" in the Forum Augusti⁵⁹. The outbreak of the war with the Latins in Book 7 offers another parallel. The incident which triggered the war with the Latins was arguably nobody's fault really, just an unfortunate brawl over the accidental killing of a pet stag. All the excuses are there; the hounds got out of hand; Ascanius was excited at the prospect of a kill and could

not have known that the stag was a pet; the tragedy was that Galaesus, the leading man on the spot, was killed before he could calm everyone down. Above all, neither Aeneas nor Latinus was responsible. (7.482-539). The tradition of Dido's death on the pyre may well have seemed to offer a colourful and melodramatic story centred on a single female character, which could be shaped so that Aeneas' reputation could be largely unstained in order to support the Augustan myth. This, I believe, is what Virgil intended and his strategy was the ambiguity in which the central events and the chief characters' motives are wrapped.

This ambiguity is not just a craftsman's device to contrive a subtle plot. It also allows Virgil to express his sympathy for both sides in conflict or tension. This tendency is found throughout the *Aeneid*, never more strongly than in Book 4. He has therefore produced what is essentially a melodrama in which both protagonists retain the reader's sympathy and neither is condemned. The disadvantage, however, is the impossibility of extracting from the text an unambiguous account of the motives and intentions of the chief characters or of their understanding of their actions. (The actions of the third actor, Juno, are also impossible to work out). The difficulty is greatest with Aeneas. While Dido believed herself to have entered a valid marriage and the hints at the marriage's reality largely explain what Dido thought she was doing, we have no such explanation for Aeneas. His denial of the marriage comes out of the blue without explanation, to the lasting difficulty of readers. The basic cause of this difficulty and of the doubts on the reality of Dido and Aeneas' marriage is that Virgil has chosen to keep his reader's sympathies evenly balanced between Dido and Aeneas by creating ambiguity which ramifies through the whole book. We cannot know whether there might have been another way of shaping the story which would have kept our sympathies in equilibrium and still made the intentions and actions of all the characters clear; it would certainly have had to have been radically different from what Virgil has left us.

Logical perfection of a plot, however, is not the whole story. Eminent authors have admitted that they have got round such problems as best they could⁶⁰. This paper has tried to show the enormous expenditure of craftsmanship and detailed care that Virgil used to develop his scheme. The result was a narrative which carries readers past all obstacles in an epic which is still alive.

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NOTES

- ¹ This paper is a revised version of a paper read to the Virgil Society on 23 November 2002. I am grateful to the Society for the honour of its invitation to read a paper and to the members then present for helpful suggestions. I am grateful to Jasper Griffin for helpful suggestions and comments and owe a great deal to Jonathan Foster for stimulus, encouragement and discussion as this paper took shape.
- ² A list of those works which I have consulted is at the end of the paper. It does not pretend to be a comprehensive bibliography.
- ³ This is the natural inference from the way in which Dido opens with praise of Aeneas' story of his exploits (ll.13-14), while the reference to morning naturally picks up reference to the night when Aeneas' narrative began (2.8-9). There is therefore no time for the pursuit of Dido by Aeneas suggested by Lyne, *Further Voices in Virgil's Aeneid* (Oxford, 1987), pp.194-96.
- ⁴ Pointed out by Williams (1968), p. 376. It is inconceivable that a Roman lady should be shown wanting to bear a child but not to marry the father.
- ⁵ The comparison with Catullus disposes of Moles' contention ((1986), p.155) that these words show an "extreme sensuality" in Dido.
- ⁶ Servius, *ad loc.* takes it in this sense and is followed by (e.g.) Pease (1935), on l.19, Quinn (1963), p.44, Rudd (1976), p.152, Monti (1981), pp.106-7, note 29 to Chapter 4) and Horsfall (2000), pp.126-27. Moles (1986), p.154 argues that *culpa* means here "sexual misconduct". To do this, he takes "*huic uni culpa*" (l. 15) to imply a succession of previous suitors, each one a "*culpa*" and then ascribes the distaste for marriage (l.18, "*pertaesum thalami*") which led her to resist them to a special "Syphaeus Factor" needed to resist Aeneas' attractions. I am not convinced; to treat mere contact with a possible suitor as "*culpa*" seems an extreme standard, and the only reason which Virgil gives for Dido to close her mind to the idea of remarriage is commitment to Syphaeus.
- ⁷ See Rudd (1976), pp.154-59, Monti (1981), pp.53-55 and Treggiari (1991), p.235, as against Williams (1968), pp.377-78. However, Virgil needed only to make fidelity in widowhood a credible ideal, and Williams has shown that such an ideal would have been plausible. After two decades of Civil War and the proscriptions there must have been all too many widows in Rome, and the issue of their remarriage must have been a real one.
- ⁸ ll. 322-323 below, but she nowhere sounds the note struck by Cornelia in Propertius (4.35-36), and, when the time comes for her to die, her claim to fame is not faithful widowhood, but the foundation of a great city.
- ⁹ There is no implication that Dido thought that her intended course of action was wrong. *Pax et venia deorum* ("the good will and good leave of the Gods") was the normal term for the advance confirmation of divine approval of an intended action which the Romans routinely sought, see Heinze (1928/1993), p.100 and note 23 on p.111 with the passages there quoted.
- ¹⁰ Nausicaa's exchanges with Odysseus show what might be compatible with the dignity of epic.
- ¹¹ See Corbett (1930). Note that his "free marriage" is simply one without *manus*, not one which depends only on the mere consent of the parties.
- ¹² The formulation comes from Williams (1968), p.382. See also Quinn (1963), pp.38-39, who seems to have been the first to apply this theory about Roman marriage to the interpretation of *Aeneid* 4, and E.L. Harrison (1989), pp.14-15.
- ¹³ See Corbett (1930), pp. 90-91.
- ¹⁴ See Aulus Gellius, 3.2.12-3, who quotes "Mucius'" report that the Twelve tables provided for the bride to come into her husband's *manus* by prescription (*usus*), if she did not sleep three or more nights outside the marital home in any one calendar year.
- ¹⁵ As argued by Volaterra (1940), supported by Jolowicz and Nicholas (1972), p. 115 with notes 5 and 6.
- ¹⁶ For a *coemptio* between a husband and wife whose children were already grown up see "*Laudatio Turiae*" l.13-17; for the *coemptio fiducia causa* (a fictitious transfer of a wife into the *manus* of someone other than her husband, who then acted as her *tutor*), see Gaius 1.114-23.
- ¹⁷ For fuller explanations, see Corbett (1930), pp.24-53. Horsfall (2000), p.128 argues that Aeneas and Dido cannot have been married, since there cannot have been *conubium* between them. But was there *conubium* between the Trojans and the Latins, and, if not, how could Aeneas have married Lavinia? In that case, the political context was given by Aeneas' defeat of Latinus, not by any retrojection of later relations between Rome and the Latins. We should remember, however, that Roman readers might well have been surprised by the possibility of a marriage between the ancestor of the Romans and the founding queen of Carthage. Green (1986), p. 416-17 suggests that use of the word *conubium* of a marriage to a Carthaginian would have contributed a reader's sense of unease that all would turn out well.
- ¹⁸ On the qualifications for marriage, see Justinian, *Inst.* 1.10.1. For prohibition of a woman's being married in *absentia* see *Dig.* 23.2.5 (Pomponius) and Paulus *Sent.* 2.19.8. (But both Volaterra (1940) pp. 47-8 and A. Watson, *The Law of Persons in the Later Roman*

Republic, pp. 26-7, doubt whether the prohibition was absolute in Republican times.)

- ¹⁹ For *deductio* as the normal reference point for the start of a marriage see Berger, *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Roman Law*, s.n.. Corbett's argument ((1930), p. 92) that "*deductio* is nothing more than placing the woman at the disposal of the man, and she may have been brought into his house for purposes of concubinage" is captious; *deductio* served as the public declaration of a marriage, and there were enough traditional wedding ceremonies to fix the event and its character in the memories of witnesses. But *deductio*, however traditional, was never a legal requirement, see Just. *Cod.* 5.4.22 and Scaevola's warning against concentrating on the timing of the *deductio* or the signature of the wedding contract instead of the moment when the parties made manifest their agreement to marry (Dig.24.1.66).
- ²⁰ No credence can be placed in Servius' reference (on *Georgic* 1.31) to "*usus*" as one of the three forms of marriage. His text follows Gaius' statement (I.110-15) on the three ways in which *manus* can be created so closely that he must have drawn on him directly. What Servius has to say on *coemptio* is so garbled as to discredit his statement on marriage by *usus* - a year's cohabitation without any legal formalities. This looks like an attempt to remodel the way in which *manus* could be acquired by *usus* into a form of marriage.
- ²¹ Specifically applied by Ulpian (Dig. 35.1.5) to the question of when the condition attached to a legacy that a woman should marry within the family was fulfilled, whether when she was formally received into her husband's house or when the marriage was consummated, by Scaevola (Dig. 24.1.66) - what happens if the wedding contract is signed before *deductio*, or if the bride is installed (*deducta*) in her husband's suburban *horti* three days before the marriage but then lives apart from him till the actual marriage) and Paulus (Dig. 23.2.7) - dowry may be legally due to a virgin if the marriage has not been consummated.
- ²² Note that, at ll.338-9, in defending himself Aeneas places at least as much emphasis on the absence of torches and other ceremonial as on consent or anything which he did or did not say. This is consistent with Tib.Claudius Donatus' unwillingness to recognise the events in the cave as a wedding - see note 27 below.
- ²³ Only Sparrow (1973, p. 8 n.3) denies this. He regards what happened in the cave as a mere betrothal because no formal religious rites had been celebrated.
- ²⁴ In all the examples given in TLL, "*pronuba*" is used literally, not in some wider meaning like "favouring marriage". It is not recorded as a cult name of Juno (see J.B. Carter, *De deorum romanorum cognominibus*, Diss. Halle, 1898.)
- ²⁵ For Tellus (Earth) as the first wife, see Henry (1879), p. 645 on ll. 166-68. For the role of the *auspex*, see Cic. *Div.* I. 28, Varro *ap.* Servius *ad Aen.* 4. 45. Servius Auctus (on l. 166) says that Earth was invoked when auspices were taken for a marriage; this is obviously relevant; it is a pity he did not tell us more.
- ²⁶ Although Servius (on l.167) assumes that all lightning was inauspicious, Seneca, *Nat. Quaest.*2.39ff makes it clear that the experts interpreted some cases as auspicious and some as inauspicious.
- ²⁷ Tib. Claudius Donatus (on l.339) does not recognise the supernatural activities in ll. 166-68 as constituting a marriage. He lists what was missing: witnesses, traditional ceremonies, marriage contract, torches (he does not specifically mention *deductio*.) Servius does comment on any deficiencies. For other lists of essential features of a proper wedding, compare Tacitus, *Ann.* XI. 27. 1 and XV. 37. 9.
- ²⁸ In general, those scholars who see Dido's tragedy in a misunderstanding of an informal "consensual marriage" insist that what passed in and around the cave cannot have constituted a valid marriage, see note 11 above. E.L. Harrison (1988, pp.14-15) and Monti (1981, pp.45-48) emphasize that Aeneas and Dido were, to all appearances, man and wife on their return to Carthage and the weight which this would have carried with Roman observers in the case of subsequent dispute about the reality of their marriage. Another line of interpretation is to regard the wedding as "symbolic"; so Quinn (1963, p. 38 n3) and Monti (1981, p.3); Williams (1968, pp. 379-80) seems to lean in this direction. I do not believe that the supernatural "wedding" should be seen as symbolic; there was nothing else which might have been a marriage and nothing else for it to symbolise. Similarly Green (1986) believes that the supernatural actions were as real as the storm, but also accepts that there was some exchange between Dido and Aeneas which led to the misunderstanding as to whether they were married or not.
- ²⁹ There is no need to assume, with Servius (*ad loc.*), that the only sign which Earth could produce was an earthquake.
- ³⁰ Servius (on l.168) regards *ulularunt* as ambiguous, applicable to cries of both exultation and lamentation; he quotes Lucan 6.261 for a cry of exultation. For other examples of exultation, see Caesar, *BG* 5.37.3 (*ululatus*), Statius, *Theb.* 9.177, *Silv.* 3.1.173. It is interesting that the Greek counterpart, *ololuge*, is used according to LSJ "mostly in good sense, sometimes even opposed to a wailing cry".
- ³¹ Scholars' opinions are divided. Henry (1879), p.645 on ll.166-68, Conington (commentary on ll.166-68), Heinze (1928/1993), p. 101, Mackail (commentary on ll.166-68) all regard the supernatural signs as favourable. Pease (1935), *ad. loc.* acknowledges the possibility of seeing them as either favourable or unfavourable, but inclines to the unfavourable "given the outcome". Austin (1955), on l.166 regards the wedding as "ritually correct" "as one would expect from Virgil", but supernatural and uncanny; on l. 307 and ll. 331-61, however, he regards Dido as self-deceived about the validity of the marriage. Horsfall (2000), p.128 speaks of a "ghastly parody" of the omens appropriate to a wedding. The quality of the omens does not determine the validity of a marriage; it might be valid but ill-omened. Green (1986), pp. 411-17 regards the marriage as real but "shrouded in ambiguity".
- ³² See Williams (1968), pp.379-80. Green (1986), pp.411ff. takes the words in the sense of secret *affaire*.
- ³³ So Green (1986), pp.411-5.
- ³⁴ For Dido's belief that she is married, see Williams (1968), p.374; he accordingly denies misrepresentation in l. 172. Green (1986), pp.411-15 takes "*vocare*" as a statement in good faith, without misrepresentation or self-deception. Other commentators all take "*vocare*", without discussion, to imply some misrepresentation.
- ³⁵ Lines 314ff., 324, 431, 495-6 are the strongest examples; Williams (1968), p.381 has a fuller list.
- ³⁶ Williams and Green (cited in the previous notes) take "*culpa*" to be the disloyalty to Sychaeus involved in remarriage, similarly Pease (1935) on ll.71-72. Monti (1981), pp. 106-7 (n.29 to his chapter 4) argues that sexual impropriety is the only sense of *culpa* which could be "cloaked" by calling it marriage; I believe that this argument overlooks the double nature of remarriage. Moles (1986), p. 156, and Horsfall (2000), pp 127-28, see strong moral condemnation by Virgil of sexual impropriety. Quinn (1963) and Rudd (1976)

do not address the question. “Plainly enough” not married - Feeney (1983), p. 168.

- ³⁷ Compare Pease (1935), p.222 (on l.190) who recognises that there is some truth in all Fama’s statements, which ought not therefore to be accepted blindly as evidence against Dido. He even concludes that “if only “luxus” and “turpi cupidine captos (surrendered to foul lust)” are to be classed as slanders, the prevalent view of relations between Dido and Aeneas needs revision”. Similarly Austin (1955), p.194. However, it is too simple to try to isolate false elements in Fama’s report and treat the residue as true; every statement is, in a different degree, coloured or biased.
- ³⁸ For gifts of purple dress cloaks by Hellenistic kings to high officers, see E. Bickerman, *Institutions des Séleucides*, (Paris 1938), p.42. For Aeneas’ kit in Dido’s bedroom, see D.R. Bradley, “Swords at Carthage”, *Class. Phil.*, 53, 1958, pp 234-36. Dido’s reference to giving Aeneas the sceptre (l. 597) would be a clear reference to making Aeneas king and so to marriage (a king would carry his sceptre when sitting in judgement, not when inspecting building works), but, given her highly overwrought state when she spoke them, these words cannot be pressed.
- ³⁹ See E.L. Harrison (1989), pp.14-15 and Monti (1981), pp.45-48.
- ⁴⁰ I agree with Monti’s (1981, pp.3-8) interpretation of the references to *dextera* in this passage as the symbol of *fides*. In a Roman marriage the parties’ hands were joined (*iunctae*) by the *pronuba*, not given to one another by the parties.
- ⁴¹ For the way in which Dido gives most space to help and hospitality, see Monti (1981), pp.3-8; for the need to return *beneficia*, not just to acknowledge them, see M. Griffin, “*De Beneficiis* and Roman Society” *JRS* 93, 2003, pp. 92-112.
- ⁴² Other cases of action before speech has ended: Dido stabs herself on the words “*sic, sic*” in l. 660; Aeneas stabs Turnus on the words “*hoc vulnere*”, 12. 948.
- ⁴³ Reminiscences of Alcestis: ll. 650-51, kissing bed (Cf. Eur. *Alc.*175-84, also reminiscent of Deianeira, the betrayed wife, Soph. *Trach.* 913-24), and ll. 698-705 (cutting lock of hair to consecrate dying woman to Death, cf. Eur. *Alc.* 74-6). Green (1986), pp. 414-6, points out that Dido never speaks of herself as still married or of Aeneas as her husband after the confrontation. However her references to “*coniugium antiquum quod prodidit*” (l. 431) and to promises (ll.373, 421, 542, 597) also show that she does not doubt that she was married, and, presumably, believes that she has now been repudiated. See Williams (1968), pp.380-84.
- ⁴⁴ The words “*facem praetendi*” should be taken literally; *praetendere* does not seem to be used to mean “make a delusive promise of something” before Frontinus and Pliny (see OLD.). Examples from Virgil’s time use it either in a literal meaning or to mean “allege as an excuse”. The groom seems to have helped to light the torches to be carried before his bride in the *deductio*, see Calp.Flacc.*Decl.*46 (cited by Treggiari). For torches carried before the bridegroom as he made his way home to receive his bride, see *Octavia*. 570-71 and Henry (1879), p.707. In general, see Treggiari (1991), p.166.
- ⁴⁵ For the power of the gods to do things “easily” see Hesiod *Op.*5 with West’s commentary.
- ⁴⁶ Noted by Monti (1981), p. 39.
- ⁴⁷ Moles (1986), p.157 and Horsfall (2000), p.126 put decisive weight on the word *pius* here.
- ⁴⁸ For arguments that Dido’s death should be regarded as undeserved, see above all, Williams (1968), pp.380-83.
- ⁴⁹ For convincing arguments that the life which Dido regrets is a chaste one, so that “*more ferae*” must somehow imply natural innocence see Austin (1955) on ll. 550-51 and Williams (1968), pp. 380-81. (On the other side, Quinn (1963), p.56 makes Dido regret “free love”). It is less easy to see why Virgil chose the beasts as exemplars of a chaste life and whether the choice was meant to have special resonances for a Roman reader. Parallels for the idea of wild beasts as exemplars of the virtues can be found in Philemon (Fr.2 Kock) and Menander (*Theophroroumene*, fr. 1 Koerte); Ovid also expressly calls the life of the primitive Arcadians “*vita feris similis*”- “like that of the beasts” (*Fasti* 2.289-92). A.O. Lovejoy and G.Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity*, Baltimore, 1935 (Repr. 1997), Chapter 13, “The Superiority of the Animals” pp.389-420, have collected other passages on the alleged superiority of life among the beasts. In most of them the point is not so much the natural virtue of animals but the extreme nastiness of allegedly civilised humans. Virgil, however, may have wanted not to sketch a philosophical position but to combine ambiguity and a hint of animal promiscuity in a brief suggestive phrase.
- ⁵⁰ Quinn (1963), p.47, Feeney (1983), pp.172-6, Moles (1986), p.157, and Horsfall (2000), p.128, as well as earlier commentators, all seem inclined to accept Aeneas’ statements because they are his.
- ⁵¹ In theory, Dido might not have recognised the real root of her calamity and have died with her self-deception unbroken, but self-deception not recognised by the subject seems to me a comic, not a tragic, effect. Compare G.B. Conti on Petronius’ *Encolpius* (Conti, *The Hidden Author*, Berkeley, 1996).
- ⁵² Feeney (1983), esp. pp.166-76, and Braund (1998) point out the way in which Aeneas and Dido are arguing past each other and that Aeneas has “reverted to his former persona as leader”.
- ⁵³ Feeney (1983), p.176, thinks that Virgil would have improved Aeneas’ speech in his final revision.
- ⁵⁴ Pease (1935), pp.45f., and Austin (1955), p.105, conveniently assemble references for such unfavourable verdicts.
- ⁵⁵ Feeney (1983), pp.169-76, Highet (1972), pp.72ff.
- ⁵⁶ It will be seen that I largely follow Feeney’s analysis of the speech itself but believe that Virgil principally decided to write it in that particular way as part of the mechanism of his plot, rather than to exemplify theories on human communication.
- ⁵⁷ We should not imagine that, when Virgil says that Aeneas wanted to console Dido and remove her distress with loving words (ll.393-94), he necessarily had any idea of what those words might have been, or of how they would have fitted with the tone of what he had just given Aeneas to say.
- ⁵⁸ The accusations by Iarbas (4.215) and Turnus (7.321) serve to underline the difference between Aeneas and Paris.
- ⁵⁹ For the names - so far as they are preserved - of the *Summi Viri* commemorated by Augustus in the Forum Augusti, see *Inscr. Ital.*XIII.3 (Elogia), 1-60 and 61-68.
- ⁶⁰ Compare Goethe’s self-exculpation to Napoleon, who had censured him for some implausibility in plot, (quoted by R.D. Dawe, *Sophocles, Oedipus Rex*, Cambridge, 1982, p.22), and Henry James, quoted by Anthony Powell, *Journals 1990-92*, p. 112.