Did Aeneas love Dido?

*Revised from a paper given to the Virgil Society on 26 October 2013**

The Dido and Aeneas episode in *Aeneid* 1, 4 and 6 is famous for being one of the great love stories of all time, and it has often been supposed that Virgil describes two lovers, prevented from spending their lives together by the commands of the gods and the future destiny of Rome. Thus in Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas* (1689, words by Nahum Tate) Belinda assures her sister Dido:

"Fear no danger to ensue,
The hero loves as well as you".

Shortly afterwards, Belinda's words are confirmed by Aeneas himself, who says to Dido:

"If not for mine, for empire's sake,
Some pity on your lover take;
Ah! make not, in a hopeless fire,
A hero fall, and Troy once more expire".[1]

Many people since have believed that Aeneas is as deeply in love with Dido as she is with him, or in love but less deeply, and that both of them then have to give up their hope of happiness, and in Dido's case her life, for the sake of Rome. R. G. Austin, in the

[*] This paper has benefited greatly from points made by audiences at the Universities of Keele, Durham, Glasgow, Hull, Sheffield, Nottingham and Cape Town, at University College, Dublin, where it was given as the Inaugural Lecture in 2006, at the University of Edinburgh, at the Virgil Society and at Wellington College. The late Gerry Nussbaum, the late David West and Tony Woodman kindly sent me written comments which have helped me to strengthen the argument in many places (it should not be inferred that they agreed with it). Professor West's deep and honest reflections are especially precious to me now that he is no longer with us. I have also profited from discussion with Francis Cairns, and the editor's critical eye has led to numerous improvements. Translations not attributed to others either are my own or have in some cases been adapted from Fairclough/Goold (1999-2000).

[1] Both passages quoted from Macfarren (1841) 2.

introduction to his 1955 commentary on *Aen.* 4, painted a picture of Dido and Aeneas that may be taken as a strong statement of the standard view:

> "His Dido and his Aeneas are a woman and a man in love; and long after the tragic tale has run its course, the pity of it echoes through all Aeneas' life and actions, so that it is never possible to think of him as any other but the man whom Dido had loved, and who, despite himself and despite his destiny, had loved Dido".[2]

The view that Aeneas was in love with Dido appeals to our romantic sensibilities, and is cherished by many readers of the poem. For example, B. Otis wrote in 1963: "It is clear that Aeneas was overcome by his passion for Dido and was, temporarily at least, unfaithful to his mission … The attempt of some commentators and critics to deny this (especially the reality of his passion for Dido) can hardly be sustained by the text". But these assertions were supported by no more than a reference to 4.395.[3] Similarly, K. Quinn wrote in 1968: "He [Aeneas] loves Dido, but to him that seems beside the point", adding a footnote which reads: "For Aeneas' love for Dido see 4.395 and *Latin Explorations*, p. 36".[4] But when *Latin Explorations* is consulted, one finds only another brief reference to 4.395.[5] That Aeneas was in love was more or less taken for granted by R. D. Williams in his 1972-73 commentary on the entire *Aeneid*: a large number of notes are made to hang on the statement, on 4.291, "That Aeneas was in love with Dido is made very clear by Virgil (cf. also 221, 332, and especially 395)".[6] In 1973, J. Sparrow published a lecture in which he made a forensic defence of Aeneas with respect to his treatment of Dido. Arguing that Aeneas did not betray their love, he did not consider the possibility that Aeneas was not in love at all:[7] had he accepted that as being the case, his defence would have been easier to make, and stronger, since there would have been no love for Aeneas to betray. C. J. Mackie, in a book on the character of Aeneas published in 1988, wrote in his introduction: "close reference to the narrative tells us that he [Aeneas] was in love with Dido", citing four passages, 4.221, 332, 395 and 448.[8] But the close reference to the narrative is never provided, except inasmuch as the same four passages are listed a second

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[2] Austin (1955) ix; cf. xv: "He loved Dido, and had not been strong enough to withstand the temptation that she brought". Austin's picture is criticised by Farron (1993, 113): "in fact, he [Aeneas] was remembered as the man who brutally destroyed her [Dido]". Cf. Farron, (1980) 39.

[3] Otis (1963) 266.

[4] Quinn (1968) 143.

[5] Quinn (1963) 36.

[6] Likewise in his book on the *Aeneid* (2009, 87-88, 92), Williams thought it was clear from 4.332, 395 and 447-49, and 6.455, that Aeneas loved Dido, and saw no need to argue the point.

[7] He believed that Aeneas did feel love for Dido—"a passion which seems to have had its origin rather than its consummation in their meeting in the cave" (Sparrow, 1973, 14).

[8] Mackie (1988) 14.

time in a later footnote: "For the love of Aeneas for Dido, see 221, 332, 395 and 448".[9] W. S. Anderson, in 1989 (in the second edition of a book first published in 1969), wrote that "Aeneas loves Dido more than any other human being", but did not attempt to justify that bold statement.[10] In the third edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, published in 1996, S. J. Harrison wrote that "he [Aeneas] is deeply affected by love for Dido (4.395, 6.455)".[11] (All the passages cited by all these scholars are discussed individually below).

The assumption that Aeneas loved Dido has only occasionally been questioned. N. W. De Witt, in an infrequently cited Chicago dissertation of 1907, devoted a chapter to the feelings of Aeneas in book 4, noting that Virgil says little about those feelings and, where he does mention them, does so in ambiguous terms. De Witt's conclusion is that the emotion that Aeneas overcomes in himself is pity, not love.[12] In 1980, S. Farron argued that the Dido and Aeneas episode is an attack on Aeneas and on Rome's treatment of Carthage.[13] Aeneas, Farron contends, is a nonchalant, uncaring character who shows no sympathy for Dido; even so, and although it undermines his argument, Farron believes that at some points in the text Virgil does represent Aeneas as loving Dido.[14] F. Cairns, in *Virgil's Augustan Epic* (1989), argued that Virgil presents Aeneas as making progress in his development as a king and as yielding to pleasure but not to love, but he does allow that Virgil attributes love to Aeneas in two places (4.395 and 6.455).[15] Generally speaking, scholars have been aware that "Did Aeneas love Dido?" is a question that can be asked, but have thought the answer "Yes" to be so self-evident that they saw little, if any, need to argue for it, beyond citing line numbers.

This paper will now consider the matter afresh by examining all the passages in which Virgil refers to Aeneas' feelings for Dido, in order to establish precisely what those feelings are and whether, in fact, Aeneas loved Dido.[16]

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[9] Mackie (1988) 83 n.2.

[10] Anderson (1989) 45.

[11] *OCD*[3] *s.v. Aeneas*.

[12] De Witt (1907) 26-37. Monti's (1981) study of the Dido episode makes no mention of De Witt's dissertation, but, like De Witt (34, 37), he rejects what he calls the "virtually universal" opinion that Aeneas faces a conflict between love and duty (43-44, 104 n.11).

[13] Farron (1980).

[14] Farron (1980) 15. Farron later abandoned his view: see Farron (1993) 70, 114.

[15] Cairns (1989) 29-57, esp. 49-53.

[16] It is of some interest that an older contemporary of Virgil's, the grammarian L. Ateius Philologus, wrote a book entitled *An amaverit Didun Aeneas* (Iulius Romanus *apud* Charis. 162.6-7 Barwick = test. 9). But this treatise was almost certainly written before the *Aeneid*. It may have been concerned with the question whether, in the pre-Virgilian tradition, Aeneas loved Dido or Anna (cf. Serv. on *Aen.* 5.4; Serv.Auct. on *Aen.* 4.682): see Horsfall (1973-74) 11.

The story of Dido and Aeneas begins in book 1. Aeneas and part of his fleet are driven by a storm to the Libyan coast. Aeneas is in a state of near-despair because he believes that the rest of his fleet has been destroyed in the storm. He goes off to explore the neighbouring countryside and happens upon his mother, Venus, who is disguised as a young huntress to prevent him from recognising her. Venus tells her son that the country is ruled by a Tyrian woman named Dido, who settled there after her beloved husband Sychaeus was murdered by her wicked brother, the tyrant Pygmalion. Dido has founded a city, Carthage, and Aeneas makes his way there, protected by a cloud with which Venus surrounds him.

The reader would at this point think of the *Odyssey*, and of another hero who set out from Troy, was shipwrecked, and arrived on an unknown coast. Odysseus wandered for ten years and visited many places. Each of them presented an obstacle of a different kind, but in the end he overcame all of those obstacles and returned to his homeland. There were, for example: the lotus-eaters, who gave his men lotus to eat, making them forget their voyage and lose their desire to return home; the Cyclops Polyphemus, who imprisoned Odysseus and his men and ate some of them, until Odysseus blinded him and succeeded in escaping; the sorceress Circe, who turned Odysseus' men into pigs, and then detained him and his men on her island for a year; the Sirens, whose singing lured men to their destruction; the nymph Calypso, who fell in love with Odysseus and kept him prisoner on her island for seven years, before allowing him to sail to the land of the Phaeacians; and finally Nausicaa, the Phaeacian princess, not an obstacle as such, but an attractive unmarried girl with whom Odysseus might have chosen to remain forever. All these encounters involved either the possibility of physical harm or the risk of being detained, sometimes by a powerful or alluring female, and prevented from returning home. Aeneas, similarly, having arrived in an unfamiliar land controlled by a queen without a husband, was in danger.[17] Moreover, the place was for Roman readers one of singular ill omen: Carthage, the city which would later become Rome's deadliest enemy, and which would threaten her very existence, until being finally destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC. Dido, then, was likely to present a potentially fatal obstacle to Aeneas, and, as a hero, his task was to overcome that obstacle and escape unscathed, before proceeding on his important mission to Italy.

So Aeneas reaches Carthage, where he sees the Trojans he had supposed drowned being royally received by Dido. The cloud parts, and Dido is suddenly aware of his presence. Venus has made him beautiful in order to predispose Dido favourably to him.

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[17] Later, in the underworld, Anchises will tell Aeneas that he had been afraid that the kingdom of Libya would cause him harm (6.694).

Dido, of course, is beautiful already (1.496; 4.60). Aeneas is welcomed by her, and sends to the ships for his son Ascanius to come with gifts of friendship. It is at this point that Venus makes Dido fall in love with Aeneas: she substitutes Cupid for Ascanius, and Cupid breathes the fire of love into Dido's bones, making her forget Sychaeus. Venus does this in order to ensure that Dido and the Carthaginians do not turn against the Trojans, as, under Juno's influence, and being Carthaginians, they might easily do (among the Romans, the Carthaginians had a reputation for duplicity; cf. 1.661). But, significantly, Cupid does not cause Aeneas to fall in love.[18]

In the rest of *Aen.* 1, Dido entertains the Trojans, and makes Aeneas tell the story of the sack of Troy, which then occupies book 2, and of his wanderings between Troy and Carthage, which occupies book 3.

By the time that book 4 opens, Dido is fully in the grip of the deadly passion which will destroy her. Aeneas, on the other hand, is not in love, and is not even aware that Dido loves him: this is made clear in the simile at 69-73, in which Aeneas is likened to a Cretan shepherd who has wounded a deer with an arrow without realising it (*nescius*, 72). Dido's sister Anna, whose role in the poem is that of the counsellor who gives bad advice, encourages Dido to give in to her love: this is reprehensible in itself (*huic … culpae*, 19), but also involves breaking the vow she had made to remain loyal to Sychaeus.[19] Her breaking of her vow will trouble her later, in the speech she makes when she resolves to commit suicide (552).

At this point Virgil introduces a divine interlude in the Homeric manner. Juno has seen what Venus has done, and that Dido is in the grip of passion and is beyond caring about her reputation. Thanks to Venus, Juno has lost the opportunity of causing the Carthaginians to destroy Aeneas. She therefore plots for the alternative danger that faced him, the risk of being detained and prevented from completing his mission. Her plan is to keep Aeneas in Carthage forever by causing him to marry Dido and settle there: instead of founding Rome, Aeneas can help Dido found Carthage. Venus acquiesces in this, knowing that Juno's plan cannot succeed, since Jupiter has promised her (at 1.257-66) that Aeneas will reach Italy.

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[18] This point was picked up by Ovid in *Heroides* 7 (an imagined letter from Dido to Aeneas), written shortly after the *Aeneid* and closely dependent on it, in which Dido exclaims (31-32): *durumque amplectere fratrem, / frater Amor; castris militet ille tuis!* ("Embrace your hard-hearted brother, brother Love, and make him serve as a soldier in your camp!"), *i.e.* "Cupid, make your hard-hearted brother Aeneas fall in love!"

[19] Moles (1987) 154-55.

Back in Carthage, Dido and Aeneas go hunting. Juno sends a storm, and the couple take refuge in a cave. Propriety prevents Virgil from saying that they make love there, but Dido's reference immediately afterwards to her *culpa* makes it clear this is indeed what has taken place.[20] From this point on she does nothing to keep her behaviour within the bounds of respectability (170-72):

> *neque enim specie famave movetur*
> *nec iam furtivum Dido meditatur amorem:*
> *coniugium vocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam.*

("For Dido pays no heed to appearances or reputation, nor does she contemplate any longer a clandestine affair: she calls it a marriage, and uses this term to veil her misdemeanour").

These lines are an explicit statement from Virgil, and reveal much. As J. L. Moles explains, they show: **(a)** that Dido is at fault (*culpam*, "her (sexual) misdemeanour"), **(b)** that she is not married to Aeneas (*hoc ... nomine*, "under this name", "with this term") and **(c)** that she herself knows she is not married to Aeneas (*praetexit*, "veils", "screens", "covers up", *i.e.* deliberately conceals the fact that she is not married).[21] (Later, at 338-39, Aeneas will tell her that he did not marry her, and she will not contradict the assertion).

At this point Rumour spreads word that Dido and Aeneas have forgotten their kingdoms, and are caught up in a disgraceful passion (*regnorum immemores turpique cupidine captos*, 194). Rumour mixes fact and fiction in equal measure (190), and clearly what she says is true of Dido but not true of Aeneas. Dido has forgotten her kingdom: building work at Carthage has been suspended (86-89). Aeneas, in contrast, has not forgotten his: later, when he explains to Dido why he must leave her, he says that he has been seeing his father Anchises in his dreams, and spending his nights worrying about Ascanius' destined kingdom in Italy (351-55). Similarly, it is Dido who has been caught up in a disgraceful passion, not Aeneas. There has so far been no indication that Aeneas is romantically involved with Dido.

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[20] Moles (1984, 51-53; more briefly at 1987, 156) demonstrates that Dido's *culpa* is her sexual submission to Aeneas outside wedlock (and not her breaking of her vow to Sychaeus). Virgil does, however, take care later to report that no offspring resulted from Dido and Aeneas' union (4.327-30). His purpose is perhaps to make it clear that the Carthaginian race did not possess any of Aeneas' blood, and hence that Rome's wars against Carthage were not civil wars.

[21] Moles (1984) 53. Moles comments (51) that "Virgil himself steps out of the narrative and pronounces his own judgement".

The rumour reaches the Gaetulian king Iarbas, who complains to Jupiter. Jupiter then (221-22):

oculosque ad moenia torsit
regia et oblitos famae melioris amantis.

("turned his eyes towards the royal fortifications and the lovers who had forgotten their good name").

Is *amantis* ("lovers") an oblique way of telling the reader that Aeneas has suddenly fallen in love? Surely it is not. Virgil is presenting the situation here not as it actually is, but as it is interpreted by Jupiter—and Jupiter has obtained the information on which he bases his interpretation from Iarbas, who has obtained it from Rumour. To outward appearances, Dido and Aeneas seem like lovers, and to have forgotten their good name. In Dido's case, this appearance is a fair enough reflection of the situation. But in the case of Aeneas it is not: Virgil has still given no indication that Aeneas is in love with Dido.[22]

Jupiter sends Mercury to tell Aeneas to set sail for Italy. Mercury flies to Libya, and sees Aeneas engaged in the building of Carthage, and wearing a precious cloak that Dido had made herself and given to him. These details seem to confirm Jupiter's view. Mercury therefore addresses Aeneas (265-67):

tu nunc Karthaginis altae
fundamenta locas pulchramque uxorius urbem
exstruis? heu, regni rerumque oblite tuarum!

("Are you now laying the foundations of lofty Carthage, soppy husband that you are, and building a fair city? For shame, you have forgotten your kingdom and the things that are yours!")

The tone is sarcastic: Mercury seeks to induce Aeneas to depart by pouring scorn on him and mocking him. What he does is to confront him with a picture of how his actions appear to others: this portrayal is already familiar to the reader, though not to Aeneas, from Rumour, Iarbas and Jupiter. The sarcasm is most evident in the word *uxorius*. This word is not an objective description of his situation. Virgil has already stated explicitly that Aeneas is not married to Dido (172). But the scorn conveyed by the word serves to make Aeneas aware of the unfavourable conclusions that others are drawing from the way he is conducting himself.

[22] Cf. Cairns (1989) 49: "But it soon emerges that the state of the two *amantes*, as Jupiter thinks of them, is far from parallel ... Aeneas, although one of two *amantes*, is not an *amator*".

Mercury's words have their intended effect on Aeneas (281-82):

Ardet abire fuga dulcisque relinquere terras,
attonitus tanto monitu imperioque deorum.

("He burns to flee away and leave the sweet country, stunned by so great a warning and command of the gods").

Dulcis, like "sweet" in English, carries a range of meanings, and can be used to imply love of different kinds. It carries the implication of erotic love when used by Dido to describe Aeneas' sword and clothing at 651, *dulces exuviae* ("sweet relics"): the *exuviae* were not sweet in themselves, but were *dulces* because of the love Dido felt towards their owner. But the adjective is regularly paired in Latin with words meaning "land", or with place names, to indicate non-erotic love, or deep affection (*e.g*. for Virgil *dulcia linquimus arva*, *Ecl*. 1.3; *Vergilium me … dulcis alebat / Parthenope*, *Geo*. 4.563-64; *dulcis moriens reminiscitur Argos*, *Aen*. 10.782).[23] At 281, the land of Libya was certainly sweet to Aeneas, because he had been warmly received there by Dido. However, since Virgil has given no indication at all that Aeneas feels love for Dido, it would be a mistake to take *dulcis* here as implying erotic love.

Aeneas, then, realises that he must depart. But good manners demand that he tell his host of his departure, and here he perceives a difficulty (283-84): "With what speech now dare he canvass (*ambire*) the frenzied queen?" This is in fact the first place in which Virgil indicates that Aeneas is aware of Dido's feelings towards him. Wisely, he instructs his men to prepare the fleet quietly, and to conceal the reason for what they are doing (289-91). Less wisely, he puts off his final encounter with Dido. Still speaking to his men, he justifies this decision (291-92):

quando optima Dido
nesciat et tantos rumpi non speret amores

("since excellent Dido knows nothing, and does not expect so great a love affair to be broken off").

Aeneas is telling his men what he thinks will be going through Dido's mind. Since she supposes Aeneas and herself to be so deeply attached, he reasons, it will never occur to her that he is preparing to depart. *tantos … amores* is not an objective statement by Aeneas as to the nature of his relationship with Dido, but a description of how he thinks that relationship appears from Dido's perspective. These words cannot be used, then,

[23] See further *ThLL* 5.1.2194, 15-25.

as evidence that Aeneas is in love. On the contrary, the fact that he is able to analyse Dido's psychology before his men in this way is a strong indication that her love is not reciprocated.

Dido, of course, discovers at once that Aeneas is preparing to leave her (296-97):

At regina dolos (quis fallere possit amantem?)
praesensit ...

("But the queen (for who can deceive a lover?) sensed his trickery in advance ...").

The question appeals to common knowledge. Virgil knows what lovers are like, and his readers do - but Aeneas, by contrast, does not, or else he would not have counted on Dido's failure to understand the meaning of his preparations. In view of this ignorance, it would be hard to maintain that Aeneas is a lover himself.

Realising that Aeneas is preparing to leave, Dido raves like a Bacchant (300-01): "She rages, out of her mind, and all ablaze she raves (*bacchatur*) throughout all of the city". Her passion has clearly been growing all the while: it has now completely taken her over and driven her insane. She careers around the city, a woman on fire (*incensa*), and the reader is reminded that her behaviour will ultimately lead to her city's destruction at the hands of the Romans.

Dido then gives a speech in which she accuses Aeneas of intending to leave Carthage secretly; talks about her, or their, love (*noster amor*, 307),[24] their mutual pledges (*data dextera*, 307) and their marriage (*conubia nostra ... inceptos hymenaeos*, 316); begs Aeneas to stay; and makes veiled references to suicide. The speech begins in fury, but turns to self-pity when the focus moves from Aeneas to Dido. The specific charges against Aeneas are untrue: in Virgil's account, Aeneas merely put off telling Dido of his departure, and he did not profess to love her, swear oaths to her, or marry her. Remembering the stately and kindly figure that Dido was in book 1, the reader will feel shocked and saddened that she has been reduced to this.

Aeneas checks his natural concern for Dido before making his reply (332):

obnixus curam sub corde premebat.

("with an effort he stifled the concern he felt within his heart").

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[24] De Witt (1907, 31) takes the plural as poetic, comparing *fletu … nostro* below (369). If it is a genuine plural, Dido will be ascribing *amor* to Aeneas in order to bolster her charge of betrayal.

curam ("care") has been taken by some to mean love (as at 4.1),[25] but that is not the primary meaning of the word, and there is nothing to suggest that it should be taken in that sense here. The most obvious meaning of these words is that Aeneas feels concern, or compassion, for Dido, as well he might.[26] Faced with a woman who has lost her reason, his reaction is one of solicitude, not love.

In his speech, Aeneas begins by expressing gratitude to Dido, and then states precisely what his feelings for her are (335-36):

nec me meminisse pigebit Elissae
dum memor ipse mei, dum spiritus hos regit artus.

("I shall not be irked by my memories of Elissa, as long as I remember my own self, as long as my spirit governs these limbs").

Aeneas feels for Dido no less and no more than these words imply: for as long as he lives, he will never feel displeasure when he thinks of her. He states, truthfully, that he had been planning to tell her of his departure. Then he points out, again truthfully, that he has not married her (338-39). He tells her that, were he a free agent, he would stay at Troy and re-establish it (340-44): this declaration that he would not choose to spend his life with her is tantamount to a declaration that he does not love her. He explains that he has been commanded by the gods to go to Italy, and hence (347):

Hic amor, haec patria est.

("*This* is my love, *this* my country").

This is an explicit and emphatic statement that he is not in love with her: it is Italy, not Dido, that he loves, and Italy, not Carthage, that is his country. If Dido has founded Carthage, he continues, why should he not found a city of his own in Italy? Next, he reveals that he has been spending his nights worrying about Ascanius' destined kingdom, and finally that he has received a command from Jupiter to depart. He asks her not to upset them both by objecting, but to accept the situation as it is. It is not by his own choice, he says (361), that he is making for Italy.

This speech contrasts strongly with that of Dido. Her speech is emotional and impulsive; Aeneas' is calm and rational. Dido's speech is filled with untruths; Aeneas'

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[25] Austin (1955) *ad loc*; Williams (1972-73) *ad loc*; Williams (1983) 43, 182; Mackie (1988) 14, 83 n.2.

[26] Pöschl (1962) 44.

impresses with its honesty and plain speaking.[27] Many readers have criticised Aeneas in this speech for being cold and unfeeling, and Dido will shortly make the same criticism. But that is unfair. Aeneas does feel concern for Dido, but he represses it. In Roman eyes, a man of standing, and particularly a ruler, was called upon to display dignity and self-control at all times. The proper course for Aeneas was therefore to attempt to recall Dido to a sense of her responsibilities without resorting to displays of emotion. R. O. A. M. Lyne maintained that if Aeneas were more sensitive he would say to Dido that, were he a free agent, he would choose to stay with her.[28] But this would of course be a lie (a "white lie", according to Lyne). Lyne then goes on to say that Aeneas fails to tell Dido of the love he feels for her, in spite of which he must go. But this love of Aeneas for Dido is a figment of readers' imaginations: in Virgil's story it is just not there.

Dido's response is a mixture of abuse, accusations, assertions of her own insanity and threats of revenge. She now accepts that Aeneas did not love her (370):

Num lacrimas victus dedit aut miseratus amantem est?

("Did he give in and shed tears, or have pity for a lover?")

At the end of the speech she collapses, and her servants bear her away to her marble bedchamber.

At pius Aeneas ("But dutiful Aeneas") the next passage famously begins (393), as Virgil gives Aeneas' behaviour his ringing endorsement.[29] Stunned by what he has just witnessed, Aeneas longs to comfort Dido (because of his natural concern for her, mentioned at 332), but she is no longer in his presence, and is in any case inconsolable. So he now fulfils his duty to the gods and to his men. He returns to the fleet (395),

multa gemens magnoque animum labefactus amore

("groaning heavily, and shaken in his mind by the great love").

Whose love? The commentator A. S. Pease and many other scholars take *magno … amore* as referring to love felt by Aeneas;[30] and this is also the view taken by nearly all the translators, from Dryden onwards ("Tho' much he mourn'd, and labour'd with

[27] Feeney (1983, 217), in a valuable discussion of Aeneas' speech, points out that Aeneas does not lie when he speaks.

[28] Lyne (1987) 165.

[29] McLeish (1972) contrasts Aeneas' *pietas* with Dido's lack of *pietas* (towards Sychaeus), which causes her madness and death. (McLeish assumes that Aeneas loves Dido: 134).

[30] Pease (1935) *ad loc*; Otis (1963) 266; Quinn (1963) 36; Quinn (1968) 143 n.2; Williams (1972-73) *ad loc*; Williams (1983) 43, 182-83; Mackie (1988) 14, 83 n.2; Cairns (1989) 50.

his Love").[31] Thus there are the following twentieth-century translations: C. Day Lewis: "Heavily sighing, his heart melting from love of her"; W. F. Jackson Knight: "he was shaken to the depths by the strength of his love"; A. Mandelbaum: "though groaning long and shaken in his mind / because of his great love"; R. Fitzgerald: "And though he sighed his heart out, shaken still / With love of her"; D. West: "with many a groan and with a heart shaken by his great love" (West has a section in his introduction entitled 'Aeneas' Love'); H. R. Fairclough/G. P. Goold: "with many a sigh, his soul shaken by his mighty love".[32] In the current century, only the translations by S. Lombardo and F. M. Ahl retain Virgil's ambiguity: "He sighs heavily, / And although great love has shaken his soul" (Lombardo), "Much as he groaned and felt shaken at heart by the great force of love's power" (Ahl).[33] The new translation by M. Oakley has "With many a sigh and unmanned by the might of his love", that by R. Fagles, "moaning deeply, heart shattered by his great love", that by S. Ruden, "he continued groaning, deeply lovesick", and yet another new translation, by P. A. Johnston, "grieving deeply and shaken within by his / deep love".[34] It is more natural, however, to understand Virgil's reference in a way consistent with what he has said so far about the feelings of Aeneas and Dido, *i.e.* "groaning heavily, and shaken in his mind by the strength of her love"; and in fact it is suggested in Servius Auctus (*ad loc*), although with hesitation, that the *amor* is Dido's: *num Didonis, quo illa flagraret?* ("is this not Dido's, with which she was ablaze?")[35]

Dido now sends Anna with a final appeal to Aeneas to delay his departure. "Such were her prayers, and such the weeping (*fletus*) that her unhappy sister bears and bears again. But he is moved by no weeping (*nullis … fletibus*), nor can he be persuaded by any appeal" (437-39). Aeneas stands firm against Dido's weeping, like a great old oak tree buffeted by a northern gale, which strews the grounds with foliage (*altae / consternunt terram … frondes*, 443-44), but is not uprooted. Virgil then declares (448-49):

et magno persentit pectore curas;
mens immota manet; lacrimae volvuntur inanes.

("and in his great heart he feels concern; his mind remains unmoved; the tears flow in vain").

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31 Dryden (1697) *ad loc*.

32 Day Lewis (1952), Jackson Knight (1956), Mandelbaum (1972), Fitzgerald (1984), West (1990), Fairclough / Goold (1999-2000) *ad loc*; West (1990) xviii-xix.

33 Lombardo (2005), Ahl (2007) *ad loc*.

34 Oakley (2002), Fagles (2006), Ruden (2008), Johnston (2012) *ad loc*.

35 Ribbeck (1884) deleted 4.395 on grounds of supposed inconsistency with 438-39 and 449. Subsequent editors have retained the line.

curas must mean "concern" or "compassion", as at 332 above: Anna's entreaties, like Dido's speech at 305-30, cause Aeneas to feel concern for Dido, but do not change his mind. But whose are the tears that flow in vain? Many scholars follow St Augustine (*Civ. Dei* 9.4 *fin*) in claiming these tears for Aeneas;[36] others claim them for different combinations of Aeneas, Dido and Anna.[37] Dryden wrote: "Sighs, Groans and Tears, proclaim his inward Pains, / But the firm purpose of his Heart remains".[38] Fairclough/Goold's translation attributes the tears to Aeneas: "and in his mighty heart [he] feels agony: his mind stands steadfast; his tears fall without effect".[39] The argument that the tears are Aeneas' rests on a supposed correspondence between the narrative and the preceding simile: the *lacrimae*, it is claimed, correspond to the *frondes* in the simile.[40] There would be some force in this argument if *frondes* meant "leaves" - although it would still be bizarre to compare the action of tears coursing down a human face to the wild trajectory of leaves whirling in a gale. However, the meaning of *frons*, according to the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, is "the leafy part of a tree, etc., foliage or leafy boughs", and not "leaf" (for which the Latin word is *folium*).[41] In the simile, Virgil is describing what happens to an oak tree in a gale: he is not saying that individual leaves fall to the ground (in the manner of tears), but that foliage, leafy boughs, branches, twigs etc. are forcibly torn from the tree and violently strewn on the ground. The simile shows graphically how Aeneas is assailed and even injured by Dido's tearful appeals, but is not overcome by them: it does not inform the reader that Aeneas is weeping. Moreover, Virgil has just referred to Dido's weeping (*fletus … fletibus*, 437-39), and has described how that weeping was repeatedly conveyed to Aeneas by Anna. The tears must therefore be Dido's.[42]

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[36] See Pease (1935) on 4.449. Horsfall (1995, 125 n.20) is especially forceful on this point. See also Pöschl (1962) 46; Otis (1963) 269; Quinn (1963) 41 n.1; Williams (1983) 182-83; Lyne (1987) 163-64; Anderson (1989) 48.

[37] Pease (1935) on 4.449.

[38] Dryden (1697) *ad loc*.

[39] Fairclough/Goold (1999-2000) *ad loc*. Likewise Griffin (1986) 72: "His will remains unmoved, in vain fall his tears".

[40] West (1969) 44-45.

[41] *OLD s.v. frons*[1], 1 (in the *ThLL*, 6.1.1350, 81-82; *frondes* at 4.444 is listed as an example of the plural used collectively with the meaning "Laub"). This argument has not to my knowledge been advanced before.

[42] For a full refutation of the view that the tears are Aeneas', see Hudson-Williams (1978). Hudson-Williams (20) raises a further point, that the tears must be Dido's because they are described as *inanes* ("without achieving their purpose"): they fail to induce Aeneas to change his mind. But *inanes* would still make sense (though perhaps less obviously so) if the tears were Aeneas': Aeneas' own tears would not induce him to alter his *mens*. See further Mackie (1988) 92 n.1.

The interpretation of the rest of the book is unproblematic. Having failed to persuade Aeneas to delay his departure, Dido plans her own suicide, and tricks Anna into building a funeral pyre for her. Her madness is repeatedly mentioned. At night she lies awake, reviewing her options. In her fevered state, suicide seems the only one possible. She is also distressed at having broken her vow to Sychaeus (552). It is at this point that Mercury visits Aeneas a second time and warns him that, unless he leaves at once, Dido will burn his fleet. Aeneas makes his escape.

At dawn, Dido sees Aeneas' ships out at sea, sailing away. She makes a speech in which she again draws attention to her own insanity, and declares eternal war between Carthage and Aeneas' descendants. In doing so, of course, she condemns her city to destruction at the hands of the Romans: Dido's tragedy is also Carthage's. She mounts the funeral pyre and, after a final speech, kills herself with Aeneas' sword. The reaction in Carthage is as if the city is already being sacked. Whereas Aeneas has done right by his people, Dido has brought ruin on hers.

Book 5 opens with Aeneas at sea looking back at the flames rising from Carthage. Then Virgil adds (4-7):

> *Quae tantum accenderit ignem*
> *causa latet; duri magno sed amore dolores*
> *polluto, notumque furens quid femina possit,*
> *triste per augurium Teucrorum pectora ducunt.*

("What cause kindled so great a fire is unknown; but the hard pains when a great love is defiled, and the knowledge of what a mad woman is capable of doing, fill the Trojans' minds with dark foreboding").

Virgil says that the Trojans know well what pain can arise when a great love (*magno … amore*) is defiled (*polluto*). Is this "great love" a love of both Dido and Aeneas, or of Dido alone? As at 4.395, where Virgil also writes *magno … amore* (*magnoque animum labefactus amore*), it is more natural to understand the reference in a way consistent with the preceding narrative, and take the love as being of Dido alone. Moreover, the logical sense is "a mad woman is capable of doing something terrible when her love has been defiled", not "a mad woman is capable of doing something terrible when her and someone else's love has been defiled". Dido cannot logically be said to have killed herself because Aeneas' love had been defiled.

If the "great love" is Dido's alone, it is also worth asking: love for whom? There are two other places where Virgil refers to Dido's *magnus amor*. At 1.343-44, Venus, who is in disguise, tells Aeneas:

Huic coniunx Sychaeus erat, ditissimus auri
Phoenicum, et magno miserae dilectus amore.

("Her husband was Sychaeus, the richest of the Phoenicians in gold, and loved with the great love of an unhappy woman").

But later, at 1.675, Venus tells Cupid that she plans to make Dido fall in love: *magno Aeneae … teneatur amore* ("so that she may be held in great love for Aeneas"). Dido, then, felt "great love" for two men, Sychaeus and Aeneas, and one of those loves was defiled in the course of what took place at Carthage. To my knowledge, no scholar thinks of Sychaeus at this point, and all assume that the reference is to love for Aeneas.[43] Lyne, however, sees the inappropriateness of Dido's love for Aeneas being said by the Trojans to have been defiled by him, and therefore tentatively labels the "abruptly discordant participle" (*polluto*) a "further voice".[44] But *polluto* deserves further scrutiny. The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* cites two meanings that fit this context: "to violate, degrade ... by immoral action" (*s.v. polluo*, 3a) and "to defile with illicit sexual intercourse" (*ibid*, 4). The immoral action that has taken place at Carthage is the intercourse in the cave. I therefore suggest that *magno … amore … polluto* refers to the great love of Dido for Sychaeus, which has been defiled by her sexual submission to Aeneas.[45] The fault implied by *polluto* is hers and hers only. But, in any case, my argument requires merely that it is accepted that *magno … amore* refers to a love of Dido alone.

In book 6 Aeneas has his final encounter with Dido, in the underworld (440-76). He enters the Mourning Fields, where those who died of love are to be found, and notices Dido, her wound still fresh. As soon as he is certain that it is her (455):

demisit lacrimas dulcique adfatus amore est

("he shed tears, and spoke to her with sweet *amor*").

Here, for the first time, Aeneas is shown as feeling love for Dido - but it is after her death, when she is a mere shade, a dim form (*obscuram*, 453), like the moon which one sees,

[43] See *e.g.* Williams (1960) on 5.6.
[44] Lyne (1987) 232-33.
[45] In the *ThLL*, this instance of *polluo* is listed under a general heading "potius per culpam, ignominiam … sim."; but on my view the sub-heading, "promissa, foedera sim.", implies a misinterpretation of the passage (10.1.2565, 61-63).

or fancies that one has seen, through the clouds (453-54). It would be a mistake to seize on this passage and infer from it that Aeneas was in love with Dido in book 4: as Virgil presents it, Aeneas does not love Dido while she is alive, but does feel love for her when he encounters her unexpectedly after her death. It would also be wrong, in view of the fact that Dido is dead, a shade that can barely be seen, and suffering from a mortal wound, to see Aeneas' love as erotic: the context, and the word *dulcis*, suggest a softer and more tender emotion, *i.e*. non-erotic love.[46]

In his final speech to Dido (456-66), Aeneas once again defends himself, naïvely asking whether he was the cause of her death (he still resembles the Cretan shepherd at 4.69-73 who has wounded a deer without realising it).[47] He claims once again that he left Carthage unwillingly, and that the gods gave him no choice but to leave. Still not fully comprehending what has happened between himself and her, he says he could not foresee that his departure would cause her such intense pain, and he asks her, as she retreats, from whom she is fleeing, apparently not realising that it is himself.[48] Refusing to meet his eye and giving no answer, Dido, his enemy (*inimica*, 472), tears herself from him and flees into a shadowy grove (473-74),

coniunx ubi pristinus illi
respondet curis aequatque Sychaeus amorem.

("where Sychaeus, her husband of old, responds to her sorrows and reciprocates her love").

The implication is clear: Aeneas did not reciprocate her love. He follows her in tears: the emotion he feels is pity (*miseratur euntem*, 476). Anderson comments on this passage: "As she walks away spurning him, he can only look after her with tears that epitomize his love and pity. Anyone who needs proof that Aeneas loved Dido can find it here".[49] But Virgil only mentions pity at this point: there is no mention of love.

The scene is a reversal of the scenes in Carthage. In Carthage, Dido was alive, made speeches to Aeneas, pursued him and was unfaithful to Sychaeus; in the underworld, she

[46] Cf. Catul. 72.3-4: *dilexi tum te non tantum ut vulgus amicam, / sed pater ut gnatos diligit et generos* ("I loved you then not as ordinary men love their girlfriends, but as a father loves his sons and sons-in-law"). Day Lewis (1952) well translates *dulcique adfatus amore est* as "and addressed her in tender, loving tones".

[47] I follow modern editors in taking his words at 458 as a question, not an exclamation.

[48] Camps (1969, 29) justly observes: "his speech is full of affection and sympathy for her but contains nothing to suggest the feelings of one who has himself suffered a devastating loss".

[49] Anderson (1989) 59. Anderson also misrepresents the scene by writing "she walks away": in fact, she flung herself away (*corripuit sese*, 472). Austin (1977, *ad loc.*) points out that this is a phrase from drama.

is dead, says nothing, flees from Aeneas and is comforted by her dead husband. It is now Aeneas, not Dido, who is described as feeling love (though he is not "in love"), and it is now Aeneas who, three times (455, 468, 476), weeps tears (Aeneas does not weep anywhere in book 4). By attributing *amor*, once, to Aeneas in book 6, Virgil underscores the absence of *amor* in Aeneas in book 4.

It should now be clear that Aeneas is at no point in love with Dido, and that he is not even aware, until after her death, of the full extent of her feelings for him. Austin's remarks about "a woman and a man in love" therefore turn out to be pure make-believe. The many scholars who conclude that Aeneas is in love with Dido on the basis of one or more of the passages discussed above appear, on this analysis, to be mistaken. As for the translators of the *Aeneid*, all but two of the thirteen considered above impose their own interpretation on at least some of the crucial passages, freely adding in masculine possessive pronouns in order to supply Aeneas with the feelings that Virgil does not.[50] When all the passages are taken together, the picture that Virgil gives is not an ambiguous one: he has made it quite clear that Aeneas is not in love with Dido. So it would also be a mistake to fall back on the poet's famed ambiguity and argue that he has left the question unresolved. There are no grounds for concluding that Aeneas has any feelings of love for Dido during her lifetime. Hence the story of Dido and Aeneas is not a conventional, romantic love story in which a pair of lovers, "star-crossed" perhaps, share a mutual passion. It is, rather, a story about a love which is entirely one-sided and which is more akin to an obsessive disorder than to what people today would describe as love.

The key to understanding why Virgil's story is as it is, rather than as readers with a romantic notion of love might prefer it to be, lies in the historical context of the poem, and in particular in the official mind-set of Augustan Rome. The Romans traditionally viewed *amor*, in the sense of erotic love (ἔρως in Greek), in entirely negative terms.[51] It was not something noble or beautiful: it was morally bad, a vice (like anger or greed). It was a type of madness that would seize hold of a person and make him, or her, act in an undignified and shameful way. Most objectionable was that it was anti-social, and threatened the stability of the community. The Romans did not associate love and marriage as closely as moderns do: marriages, at least among the aristocracy, were contracted for reasons to do

[50] I have not considered translations into other languages, since this is a paper about the interpretation of the *Aeneid* rather than about trends in scholarship or translation. The translations that I have chosen are sufficient to demonstrate that Virgil is being seriously misrepresented to readers who do not know Latin.

[51] For a valuable discussion of ancient attitudes to love and their relevance to Dido and Aeneas, see Cairns (1989) 54-57.

with property, or for political reasons.[52] *Amor* could only upset the arrangements that had been made by the respective families. It was self-control (*temperantia*) that made marriages work; *amor*, the opposite of self-control, broke up marriages by making husbands and wives unfaithful to each other. For the Romans, *amor* was a force which disrupted their world, a world in which duty, obedience and responsible behaviour (*i.e. pietas*) were paramount. A Roman gentleman had responsibilities to his family and to the state. He did not neglect these, or put them in jeopardy, by allowing himself to fall victim to *amor*.

At the time that Virgil was writing, this negative view of *amor* was particularly prevalent. To Augustan Romans, *amor* was one of the vices which had led to the collapse of the old Republic. In the recent decades there had been certain women who were notorious for their scandalous behaviour and their cultivation of *amores* (disreputable love affairs). Clodia Metelli, attacked by Cicero in the *Pro Caelio*, was one of them. Another was Sempronia, the wife of D. Junius Brutus. Sallust describes her as a society lady; she was beautiful and talented, but her way of life was promiscuous and degraded, and she ended up becoming a supporter of Catiline (Sal. *Cat*. 25). The picture that Catullus gives of his "Lesbia" (one of the sisters of P. Clodius Pulcher, possibly the Clodia just mentioned) illustrates the way in which a wealthy aristocratic married woman might choose to conduct herself. But the person whose love-making was most shocking and disastrous for Rome was a man, Mark Antony: he fell in love with a foreign queen, Cleopatra, held court with her in Alexandria, and produced children by her, despite not being, in Roman law, married to her. It was believed that he even intended to give Rome to Cleopatra, and transfer the government of the empire to Alexandria (Cass. Dio 50.4.1-2).

In 31 BC Antony was defeated at Actium, after which he and Cleopatra committed suicide. Augustus then established peace, and claimed that he was restored the Republic. Henceforward, a higher standard of behaviour was expected. Temples were restored and forgotten religious ceremonies revived. The old immorality was not just frowned upon; it was actively punished. Marriage was promoted and, in due course, adultery criminalised. Women were once more expected to behave in the traditional fashion, sitting at home spinning and weaving. Virgil and Horace welcomed and promoted the new mood in their poetry, and were honoured by Augustus. Ovid, by contrast, mocked it, and was exiled.

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[52] In 46 BC Cicero divorced his wife Terentia and married Publilia, a girl young enough to be his granddaughter. Afterwards, Terentia sought to discredit Cicero by maintaining that he had married Publilia out of ἔρως; but Tiro, anxious to defend his master's reputation, wrote in his biography of him that he had married her for her money (Plut. *Cic*. 41.4).

If the mind-set of Augustan Rome is taken into account, it will be seen at once that the hero of Rome's great national poem cannot succumb to *amor*. Aeneas was not just the originator of the Roman race: he was a member of Augustus' own family, since the *gens Iulia* claimed descent from Venus. Aeneas was therefore an ancient counterpart to Augustus,[53] and had to be portrayed with all the attributes of a great leader, and without moral failings.[54] Thus Aeneas is above all *pius*: he is a man who puts his duty to his people before all other considerations. Dido's modern counterpart, on the other hand, was Cleopatra: both were African queens who attempted to detain a Roman leader and persuade him to abandon duty for pleasure.[55] In the case of Antony, Cleopatra was successful, inducing him to overturn all the values of Rome for *amor*. Aeneas was made of sterner stuff, however, and resisted. Dido and Cleopatra were both afflicted by madness,[56] and both, after failing to achieve their designs, took their own lives. Cleopatra was an enemy of Rome, and as for Dido, she was the founder of Carthage, Rome's most intractable foe. Dido's destruction and Carthage's destruction are linked in *Aen.* 4; and the destruction of both was necessary to Rome. Dido is an example of a bad leader, the opposite of Aeneas: she failed her people, and paid the price.

Are we not, though, expected to feel compassion for Dido? Virgil does allow us to feel some compassion for the victims of the Roman mission, especially Dido and Turnus: it is not their fault that they come into conflict with a higher purpose. This sympathy for the other side, surprising in a Roman context, appeals strongly to us today. We consider that it is one of the features which make the *Aeneid* such a great work of art. But we must be careful not to home in on this sympathy of Virgil's so much that we underrate or overlook the central theme of the poem, the establishment of Rome's greatness, and its central purpose, to justify Rome's right to rule. We should remember that Aeneas' behaviour is of a higher moral order than Dido's, and that is why it was Rome, not Carthage, that deserved "empire without end".

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[53] Pease (1935) 47-49.
[54] Cf. Cairns (1989) 1-84.
[55] For an account of the numerous points of comparison, and also the points of non-comparion, between Dido and Cleopatra, see Pease (1935) 24-28. See also Camps (1969) 29-30, 95-96.
[56] For that of Cleopatra, see Hor. *Carm.* 1.37.7, 12, 14.

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