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Aristotelian Elements of Tragedy in the Fourth Book of the Aeneid

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ARISTOTELIAN ELEMENTS OF TRAGEDY
IN THE FOURTH BOOK OF THE
AENEID

BY
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INTRODUCTION

About the year 1896, a mosaic was discovered in Tunis, near Susa, which depicts the poet Virgil seated between two Muses. The Muse on the left is Clio, who is the patron of history, and on the right is Melpomene, the patron of tragedy. It has been estimated that this mosaic dates back to at least the first century, a fact that shows the long standing tradition associating Virgil and tragedy.¹ His dramatic powers have also been noted by many of the commentators on the Aeneid. "Vergil's muse was more than half tragic in thought and in intention."² Of the Aeneid itself, Rand remarks that the "poem is not solely epic; in structure it is a fusion of epic and Attic tragedy, which Virgil enriches by creating a new conception of fate."³ The presence then of a tragic strain in the genius of Virgil is too obvious to be overlooked.

The purpose of the thesis will be to analyse this tragic strain in the Fourth Book of the Aeneid, because the dramatic power of Virgil is here most evident and most highly developed. Sikes, in his Roman Poetry simply says the book is a tragedy.⁴

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and Heinze comments on Virgil's great debt to drama in this book:

Eine unschätzbare Hilfe hierbei bot ihm das Drama; hier konnte er lernen, seinen Stoff in erhabenem Stile zu behandeln, und er hat diese Hilfe nicht verschmäht. 5

Before taking up the subject in any detail however, it might be well to explain the presence of a dramatic element in an epic poem. How does it happen that drama can be so prominent in a different genre of poetry, and manifest itself so strongly that one well-known commentator on Virgil says that in almost all the even numbered books of the Aeneid, "the characteristics of the tragic form are clear and are almost too obvious to need demonstration." 6

The answer to the question can be found in the Poetics of Aristotle, where the relation between epic and tragic poetry is carefully set down. For the sake of clearness and completeness, Aristotle's thoughts will be repeated briefly here.

It is well to remember first that all the elements of an epic poem are found in a tragedy, but not all the elements of a tragedy are to be found in an epic. 7 The similarities and differences of the two types of poetry may be demonstrated from the Stagirite's definition of tragedy. Tragedy is an artistic imitation

6 Conway, 25.
7 Aristotle, Poetics, S. Butcher, Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1898, 1449B.
of an action that is serious, complete and of an adequate magnitude; - so much for the object which is imitated. As for the medium, the imitation is produced in language that is embellished in more than one way, one kind of embellishment being introduced separately in one part, and another kind in another part of the whole. As for the manner, the imitation is itself in the form of an action directly presented, not narrated.\textsuperscript{8} Tragedy and epic are entirely different with regard to the manner of presentation, for the tragedy is directly presented while the epic is narrated. With regard to the medium which is language, the two are partly the same and partly different: they are the same because both use verse, but they differ insofar as the verse of tragedy is embellished in more than one way. Verse may be simply metrical; this is had in epic poetry. Or it may be recitative, or song; these last are found only in tragic poetry. The third and most important of the three elements of the definition concerns the object, and this includes plot and characters. With regard to the characters, Aristotle postulates various requirements. These can be divided into two general groups. The first and less important requirements are external to the character. Examples of these are prosperity, fame and nobility of birth.\textsuperscript{9} The more important requirements are intrinsic to the person. They are the

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., 1449B.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 1453A.
intellectual insight or διάνοια of the character and the moral bent or ἡθος of the character. Only the latter two are listed as elements of tragedy. But these naturally imply the necessity of characters in the sense of dramatis personae. The plot is had through the arrangement of the incidents.

A tragedy, then, may be said to include six elements. These are spectacle, which pertains to the manner of presentation, melody and diction, which pertain to the medium of presentation, and plot and characters, including intellectual insight and moral bent, which pertain to the object of presentation. Of these six elements, Aristotle says that the last four are essential to tragedy, namely, diction or λεξις, moral bent of the agent or ἡθος, intellectual insight of the agent or διάνοια, and the plot or μυθός. Spectacle is not essential because the effect of tragedy can be attained without it, and melody is only an accessory pleasure of tragedy.

Now plot, character, including insight and moral bent of the agent are also found in epic poetry. Because of this, there is ample justification for analysing an epic poem in order to discover the tragic elements that are present.

10 Ibid., 1454A
11 Ibid., 1450A
12 Ibid., 1450B
The purpose of the thesis may now be explained in more detail. From a negative angle, it can be said first, that its purpose is not to form the book into a tragedy by dividing it into the various parts of the Greek drama. Nor does the thesis intend to put any emphasis on the medium or language. Rather, this study will be confined to the most important parts of epic and tragedy, that is, the plot and characters. In the Poetics, Aristotle puts down a number of requirements for a good plot and true artistic characters. These will be taken up in turn and applied to the plot and characters of the Dido episode in the Aeneid. This treatment will not however, be limited to points specifically mentioned by Aristotle, because some details are present in both epic and tragedy and are not explicitly treated by Aristotle. Two such points are dramatic technique, which will be discussed in the first chapter, where the plot of Virgil's story is considered, and secondly, the general theme of the story with its relationship to the spirit and theme of the great Greek tragedians.

CHAPTER I

PLOT OF THE DIDO EPISODE

Plot is, according to Aristotle, the first principle and the very soul, as it were, of tragedy. He says that it consists in the proper organization of incidents so that they will have the ideal tragic effect. Now to the end, just mentioned, the very first requirement laid down by Aristotle is that the plot have a beginning, middle and end; this means that the first part does not come after something else in a necessary sequence, but some other thing naturally comes after it. This second part will be the middle. The end must flow from the middle in the same natural way that the middle comes from the beginning. He thus requires that the plot be a kind of germinal growth from the opening incidents of the play.

This first requirement must now be applied to the Dido episode in the Aeneid. Before this is done however, the main incidents of Virgil's plot will be outlined briefly, in order that they may be more easily analysed. Aeneas has been wandering over the sea for six years, when a storm caused by Juno throws him on the shores of Africa in the territory of Queen Dido. In order to insure his welcome in this country, Venus, goddess mother of Aeneas, resolves to make the queen fall in love with her son.

1 Aristotle, Poetics, 1449B
2 Ibid.
Virgil notes that Dido already admires the Trojan hero and his exploits, because the doors of her buildings picture their mighty deeds in the Trojan war. The wanderers are cordially invited to a banquet where Aeneas describes his adventures. The queen is so much moved by Aeneas that she is tempted for the first time since the death of her husband Sychaeus, slain by her brother, to break the vow of fidelity she has sworn to his memory. When she reveals this fact to her sister, Anna, in the opening lines of the Fourth Book, Anna strongly urges her to do so by a number of arguments. Dido finally yields to her desires. She plans a hunting party to see and be near Aeneas again. Meanwhile, the goddesses, Juno and Venus, meet. Juno slyly tries to deceive the other by proposing that Aeneas marry Dido in order that he might come into the possession of wealthy Carthage; her real purpose however, is to prevent the founding of Rome in Latium, - a city that might some day overthrow her favorite Carthage. Venus pretends compliance to this plan, knowing that it is doomed to failure. On the very next day, then, while the hunting party is going on, Juno causes a storm which brings Aeneas and Dido to the same cave for shelter. Here their love is consummated, Juno Pronuba herself presiding at the ceremony. Iarbas, a suitor of Dido, hears through Fama of the affair and immediately petitions Jupiter to right the injustice done to him. Jupiter answers his prayer by sending Mercury to remind Aeneas of his mission to found a city for his descendants. Aeneas complies with the command. He is preparing
to depart when Dido learns of his intention. She tries to change his decision by prayers, tears and threats. When all fail, she curses him and his descendants and then resolves to kill herself. The book ends with Aeneas sailing from the harbor in the early morning while Dido stabs herself on the pyre of presents she had received from Aeneas.

Has this story the beginning, middle and end that Aristotle demands for a good tragedy? It seems that it has, since the plot is a well constructed whole. Before showing the natural development of the story however, we must make an exception which is worthy of separate treatment. This is the part played by the gods in the story of Dido. As can be seen, Virgil's use of them is quite extensive, but whether this is a virtue or defect will not be decided now. This chapter is concerned with the natural development of the plot apart from the intervention of the gods. On this point, most of the commentators agree that the plot has a natural development.

The psychology of passion's progress in the first book is convincingly expressed for the first time in any literature. The poet simply and naturally leads hero and heroine through the experience of admiration, generous sympathy and gratitude to an inevitable affection, which, at the night's banquet, through a soul stirring tale told with dignity and heard in rapture, could only ripen into a very human passion. 3

Cartault also mentions the natural development of the love of Dido for Aeneas:

La passion de Didon naît et évolue selon les lois de la nature et il y a là des études d'âme qui sont vivantes et qui ont pour nous un intérêt humain. 4

At first, then, we see in Dido only the interest of one who has met misfortune in the hardships of another - "non ignara mali, miseris succurrere disco." 5 Her interest in Aeneas grows because of his striking appearance (made even more striking by the help of Venus) and also because of his past adventures. This interest naturally leads to a desire to seek his company, a desire which gives probability to the incident of the banquet and to the hunting party on the following day. Heinze in particular remarks on the gradual growth of the love of Dido for Aeneas, saying that Virgil differs greatly in this from the story of Apollonius Rhodius, whose Medea immediately falls in violent love with Jason:

Wir sahen, wie viel seelischer Virgil die Neigung vorbereitet, und dem entspricht es dann auch, wenn er dem blossen Anblick die Macht nicht zuschreibt, den Brennstoff, mag er auch noch so sorgfältig aufgehäuft sein, zur lodernenden Flamme zu entzünden. Freilich ist

4 A. Cartault, L'art de Virgile dans l'Eneïde, premiere partie, les presses universitaires de France, 1925, 308.
5 Virgil, Aeneid, I, 630.
Indeed it is maintained by some that even apart from the intervention of Venus (who has Cupid enflame the heart of Dido), the same course of action might have come to pass, but only after a longer period.

The storm is more directly due to the action of Juno. Although not entirely improbable, it is not so naturally connected as the incidents that preceded. The fact however, that Aeneas stays close to Dido and comes to the same cave is easily and naturally explained. The consummation of their love also flows from the passionate nature of Dido as it has been revealed by the poet.

At this point in the story, Virgil introduces Fama, a goddess, who spreads the report of the queen's love for Aeneas. Virgil's reason for creating Fama can easily be explained. There is always danger of monotony after the climax of a story. Since the cave scene is the climax of this book, Virgil wishes to avoid

6 Heinze, 120.
7 Rand, 353, 364.
a prosy description of how the people heard of the queen's infidelity to the memory of her dead husband. But how can the use of the goddess be reconciled with Aristotle's demand for a unified plot, where each incident grows from some preceding event in the story? It must be admitted first that the creation of the goddess is due to Virgil's vivid imagination. But the fact that Dido had yielded to her love for Aeneas would certainly become known, and the actual spreading of the rumor is not at all improbable. As a result, Aristotle's canons are not violated in the actual fact of what occurs, but in the manner in which the action takes place.

On hearing the rumor of Dido's passion for Aeneas, Iarbas acts in conformity with his character as portrayed by Virgil. The poet pictured him as a religious man devoted to the cult of Jupiter; therefore it is natural that he should turn to Jupiter when he feels he has been wronged. The actual intervention of Jupiter and his orders to Aeneas can be explained adequately only by a more thorough understanding of Virgil's ideas on Fate and the destiny of Rome, - topics which seem to fall outside the scope of this subject. We can say however, that the interest of Jupiter in the Trojans has been mentioned before.\(^8\) His sending of Mercury, therefore, is at least a probable event.

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\(^8\) Aeneid, I, 258-260
On hearing the command of Mercury, Aeneas immediately sets about fulfilling what Jupiter wishes, although he is confused and startled at first by the appearance of the god.\(^9\) His obedience is probable and natural since he is devoted to his family and to the gods. His confusion is also natural because he has fallen in love with Dido and the command to leave Carthage presents him with a real problem. From this point almost to the very end of the episode, the part played by the gods is practically nonexistent. As a result, the true dramatic ability of Virgil can be seen most clearly in the denouement.

Aber er schnildert uns kein dumpfes ungeregeltes Auf- und Abwogen der Empfindungen, seine Dido wird nicht hin und her geworfen in Widerstreit der Leidenschaften; sondern in klarer Gesetzmäßigkeit schreitet die Entwicklung dem Ende zu. Soviel wie möglich wird auch hier dramatische Wirkung angestrebt.\(^10\)

Rand thinks no other ending is possible to the story.\(^11\) Cartault also brings out very clearly the dramatic development of the last part of the Fourth Book:

{quote}
Nous y arrivons [he is discussing IV 296] par étapes successives; chaque progrès des événements développe dans l'âme de Dido une situation nouvelle, une état psychologique différent des précédents,
{quote}

\(^9\) Aeneid IV, 279.
\(^10\) Heinze, 130.
\(^11\) Rand, 364.
When Aeneas resolves to leave, Dido is almost the first to learn of his intentions (quia tallere possit amantem), \(^{13}\) and she reacts according to her character. She pleads with Aeneas, she storms at him, yet he remains unmoved; curses on him and his descendants are of no avail. Despair closes on her and she is taken to the palace overcome with emotion. She does not give up hope however; her love overcomes even her pride; she begs him to stay, if not out of love for her, then at least until more propitious weather will make the voyage less dangerous. Even this last plea is not successful. She then resolves on her suicide, with the hope that in this act she will find both reparation for her sin and revenge for the cruelty of Aeneas. Truly, as Cartault remarks, "cette scène est une scène de tragédie; elle ferait grand effet au théâtre."\(^{14}\) The resolve to commit suicide is almost forced on Dido, as Cartault clearly demonstrates. He lists a number of alternate actions which might have been open to Dido, explaining why each is deficient. First, she could forget the past and take up the course of her life again as though the episode had never taken place. But this material possibility is morally impossible for a person

\(^{12}\) Cartault, 317.
\(^{13}\) Aeneid IV, 291.
\(^{14}\) Cartault, 320.
like Dido. Again, she might offer her hand to one of the nomad princes she has so often scorned, but she would then become an object of scorn and laughter. She cannot leave with the Trojans because they have shown themselves as ingrates and breakers of their word; they would not have her aboard their ship. To go after Aeneas on a separate ship would mean the abandonment of her people. To persuade the whole nation to go to Italy would be impossible because she had great difficulty in bringing them to Carthage from Tyre. Cartault concludes the passage:

Ainsi le parti qu'elle avait pris dans son désespoir lui apparaît comme le seul qui soit sage et raisonnable, comme le seul aboutissement logique de la situation.15

From the artistic standpoint, then, the suicide of Dido is amply justified. The poet has placed her in such a position that the only possible solution for a woman of her character is self destruction.

Heinze also gives a number of reasons drawn from the speeches of Dido which show why the suicide was a natural and inevitable outcome of the plot's action. He cites the loss of her chastity and the consequent shame.16

15 Cartault, 321.
16 Heinze, 136
17 Aeneid, IV, 321.
Also, in her dreams, she seems to hear the voice of her husband calling her:

praeterea fuit in tectis de marmore templum
conjugis antiqui, miro quod honore colebat
hinc exaudiri voces et verba vocantis visa viri. 18

He also quotes the passage in which Dido refuses to think of marrying one of her former suitors:

Rursusne procos inrisa priores
experiar, Nomadumque petam conubia supplex
quos ego sim totiens iam designata maritos? 19

Other reasons are also given, as, for example, the loss of the respect and trust of her subjects, 20 and the growing hostility of the neighboring tribes. 21 It can be seen from this how closely knit the plot of the story is and how inevitably it draws to the conclusion given by Virgil. A study of the character of both Aeneas and Dido will make clearer the wonderful genius of Virgil in bringing about the denouement with which the Fourth Book closes.

The analysis then, prescinding again from the part played by the gods, would seem to show not only that the Dido episode has a beginning, middle and end, but also that it enjoys the organic unity demanded by Aristotle. For he says that the tragedy must represent an action that is organically unified, the structural order of the incidents being such that transposing or removing any

18 Aeneid IV, 457-460
19 Ibid., 534
20 Ibid., 321
21 Ibid., 320
one of them will dislocate and disorganize the whole.\textsuperscript{22} In other words, the unity of the plot here is not one that depends entirely on the characters so that unity of action is had only because the characters are the same in successive incidents. Cartault brings out in a number of places the fact that there is a definite series of stages or development in the plot.\textsuperscript{23}

In speaking of the different kinds of plots, Aristotle says that the involves plot is one in which the change of fortune is attended by reversal (περίεργο) or discovery (ανακάλυψις) or by both.\textsuperscript{24} For the sake of clearness it might be well to define these two terms. Reversal is a change by which a train of action produces the opposite of the effect intended, subject always to the rule of necessity or probability. The reversal takes place when the character acts to effect one end and the result of his action is the opposite of what he intended. It can be made clear by Aristotle's example.\textsuperscript{25} In the Oedipus, the messenger comes to cheer Oedipus and free him from the alarms about his mother, but by revealing who he is, he produces the opposite effect. Discovery is a transition from ignorance to knowledge and hence a passing into love or hate between the two persons.

\textsuperscript{22} Aristotle, 1451A.
\textsuperscript{23} Cartault, 302, 308, 317, 334.
\textsuperscript{24} Aristotle, 1452A.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 1452A.
destined by the poet for good or bad fortune. The example given by Aristotle to illustrate recognition or discovery is taken from Iphigenia Among the Taurians, by Euripides. Iphigenia is revealed to Orestes by the sending of the letter. The Dido episode must now be studied to see whether these two marks of an involved plot are present.

With regard to the reversal, several commentators make explicit mention of it when commenting on the dramatic character of the plot.

L'\'action atteint son point decisif , par la realiseation de l'union desiree. Suit la peripeties preparee par les plaintes du rival dedaignee, brusquement realisee par l'ordre imperieux de Jupiter.

Heinze puts the reversal at the same part of the book:

... Aeneas in Karthago dauernd verweilen: Hera arbeitet darauf hin, Didos Liebe baut fest darauf, Aeneas selbst scheint seine Bestimmung vollig vergessen zu haben - da platzlich tritt mit Mercurs Erscheinen die Peripetie ein, und unaufhaltsam drangt die Erzahlung nach entgegengesetzter Richtung, zur Abfahrt des Aeneas.

This is a true reversal for it is the opposite effect of what was intended by Dido. Moreover, it rises from the action.

26 Aristotle, 1452A.  
27 Ibid., 1452B.  
28 Cartault, 336.  
29 Heinze, 317.
Through her union with Aeneas in the cave, Dido wants to attain perfect happiness, but the spread of her rumored love for Aeneas has the opposite effect, for Aeneas is ordered to leave Carthage. Indeed it is the turning point of the drama, as Heinze remarks:

... Virgil hat den tragischen Gegensatz empfunden, der darin liegt, Dido dass zum letzten Male im vollen Glücke strahlend uns sichtbar wird an dem Tage, der ihre Sehnsucht zwar erfüllen, aber zugleich 'des Todes erster Tag' werden sollte.³⁰

The recognition is not so smoothly handled, or at least, it is not brought about through human and natural agents. In the case of Aeneas especially, Virgil falls back on a direct revelation of the god, Mercury, to bring his hero to the recollection of his mission to found Rome. It should be noted that some authors interpret this appearance of Mercury as an external manifestation of the conscience of Aeneas.³¹ The recognition could then be explained on natural grounds, with the theophany of Mercury as a mere piece of epic machinery.³² In defence of Virgil, it can also be maintained that the sending of Mercury develops from the story, since it was the prayer of Iarbas that caused Jupiter to despatch Mercury with his message. Virgil is open to some criticism also, particularly because there is no external

³⁰ Heinze, 128.
³² Cartault, 314.
action involved. If the theophany is merely epic machinery and the poet wished to make the voice of Mercury the voice of conscience, then the action is internal and not suited to drama. If the theophany is taken as such, then Aristotle's demands on the use of the _deus ex machina_ seem to suffer.\(^{33}\)

In the case of Dido also, the recognition is not skillfully handled. Virgil here falls back on the intuition of a woman in love, thus explaining Dido's discovery of the departure of Aeneas:

\[\text{At regina dolos (quis fallere possit amantem?)}
\text{Praesensit, motusque exeptit prima futuros}
\text{omnia tuta timens.}\(^{34}\)

Strictly speaking, then, the knowledge of Dido does not come from any external event in the plot which causes it, but is attributed to her intuition. This is not the kind of recognition given by Aristotle in his examples. Here, then, Virgil fails to fulfill adequately the requirements of true tragedy.

At the close of the twelfth chapter of the _Poetics_, Aristotle says, that besides reversal and recognition, a third part of the plot is the tragic incident. He describes this as a destructive or painful action, such as death on the stage, bodily agony, wounds and the like.\(^{35}\) Very clearly we have this require-

\(^{33}\) Aristotle, \(1454B\).
\(^{34}\) _Aeneid_, IV, 296-298.
\(^{35}\) Aristotle, \(1452B\).
ment fulfilled in the suicide of Dido. It is hard to conceive a more effective use of this dramatic incident since it grows directly from the plot and is a fitting ending to the tragic love of Dido.

Virgile, qui, suivant les préceptes de l'art classique, n'abandonne une source de développement qu'après en avoir tiré tout ce qu'elle contient, a longuement décrit l'évolution de la situation créée par la rupture. Maintenant rien ne peut plus retarder le dénouement; Didon n'a plus qu'à mourir. 36

Another division of the tragedies is made by Aristotle when he says that they differ according to motive, the tragedy being pathetic where the motive is passion and ethical where the motives are ethical. 37 The Dido incident will of course fall under the pathetic tragedy or tragedy of suffering, for it concerns the passion of a man for a woman and his consequent forgetfulness of the mission imposed on him by the gods.

Aristotle also requires a chorus which should be regarded as one of the actors; it should be an integral part of the whole and share in the action. Here of course, Virgil is unable to supply any fitting substitute. But it must be recalled that Aristotle found a tragic element in Homer, who is also without

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36 Cartault, 334.
37 Aristotle, 1455B-1456A.
any chorus. Virgil compensates in part for the lack of a chorus.

No chorus can well find a place in epic, yet its part, as expressing the reflections of the poet, is taken by occasional subjective intrusions into the narrative (IV, 65, 228) and by passages of almost lyrical tone. 38

Though the statement is true, it hardly seems adequate. It is immediately evident that such parenthetical intrusions do not form an essential part of the plot. Pease maintains that the function of Iarbas in the story, like that of Fama, is to set forth public opinion, like the chorus in a Greek tragedy. 39 Something might be said in defence of this view of Fama, but it seems better to accept both Iarbas and the goddess just as they are represented by Virgil - Iarbas, because he is a person with his own proper character and personal reasons for acting as he did, Fama, because she seems to be another manifestation of Virgil's fidelity to the epic tradition.

In summing up what has been treated so far, Cartault finds these general requirements for tragedy in the story of Dido.

L'art de Virgile doit beaucoup à la tragédie. Il lui emprunte ses procédés, le contraste, la péripétie, l'inattendu, pour dramatiser son récit. Le livre IV est une tragédie véritable. Le premier acte c'est l'amour qui s'empare de Didon malgré elle, la rende, consentante malgré les résistances de sa conscience. L'action

38 Pease, 10.
39 Ibid., 51.
atteint son point décisif par la réalisation de l'union désirée. Suit la péripetie préparée par les plaintes du rival dédaigné, brusquement réalisée par l'ordre impérieux de Jupiter. Enfin vient le dénouement et c'est ce dénouement que Virgile a particulièrement développé, n'amenant Didon au bûcher qu'après l'avoir fait passer par tous les degrés de la douleur, menageant la situation de façon qu'elle lui porte des coups toujours nouveaux et de plus en plus violents.

La composition, la progression de ce dernier acte de la tragédie est un chef-d'oeuvre.40

Besides these more general characteristics of the drama, Virgil also employs a great deal of tragic technique in his manner of presentation, and it would be interesting to put a few of these down because they bring out very strongly the influence of the drama on the writing of the Aeneid. There is, of course, no intention of proving that Virgil deliberately used these means to heighten the resemblance to Greek tragedy.

In an article in the Classical Journal, to which several references will be made, DeWitt mentions a few of the tragic or dramatic means that are employed by Virgil. He points out first that most of the scene is laid in the palace, a frequent center of action for the Greek tragedians.41 Further, with regard to the arrangement of the actors, there are only two persons together (if the servants are not included) in such important scenes as

40 Cartault, 336.
41 N.DeWitt, "Dido Episode as Tragedy", Classical Journal, 2, 284.
the conversation of Dido and her sister, Anna, at the beginning of the fourth book (ll. 9-53), and also in the last scene between Dido and Aeneas (ll. 304-387). The scene between Dido and Aeneas (ll. 304-387) takes the form of a debate such as Euripides used in his Medea,(ll. 446-626). Again, we notice that the death of Dido by suicide is not without precedent in the tragedies of Greece, - Ajax, Deianeira and Phaedra all commit suicide. Virgil is faithful to the custom of the best tragedians by having the suicide take place within the palace and not before it. The death is made known to us by its effect on Anna and the servants,(ll.672-687). Finally, DeWitt mentions that the parts of Anna and the nurse of the story are those of stock characters of tragedy and frequently occur in the plays of the Greek tragedians. The ending that Virgil has given to this episode in ll. 693-705, is also worthy of note. As Pease remarks: "That there comes after the storm of passion a calmer ending, brightened by the rainbow goddess Iris, is more in keeping with the best Greek traditions." Duckworth shows how Virgil uses suspense to keep up interest in the plot. He was helped in this by the existence of several different versions of this episode.

42 DeWitt, 286.
43 Ibid., 287.
44 Ibid.
45 Pease, ll.
Virgil heightens the suspense at the climax of the action with great success. The reader knows that Aeneas' desertion of Dido will lead to her death and Virgil repeatedly refers to Dido's own determination to die (Aeneid IV, 415, 436, 450, 474, 508, 519). At the last minute however, Virgil, instilling an element of doubt in the reader's mind by means of the uncertainty of a character, makes Dido less certain of her fate; she debates with herself whether to seek marriage with one of her former suitors or to accompany Aeneas, and she considers the possibility of pursuing the Trojans (Aeneid IV, 534-546). Her waverings are artistically natural.46

Cartault says that it is characteristic of the drama to telescope the length of time and to unite and shorten events in real life down to a more narrow scope. This device is also found in the Dido episode.

L'art classique résume dans une scène unique, claire, logique, emouvante ce qui dans la réalité se répand et flotte dans le temps et dans l'espace. La passion de Dido passe par un certain nombre d'états successifs, qui nettement déterminés, sont concentrés dans une exposition d'ensemble et traités à fond.47

A final important tragic technique that is used by Virgil in this book is tragic irony, of which there are several out-

47 Cartault, 302.
standing instances that may be used as examples. In the opening scene of the fourth book (ll. 9-53), when Dido and Anna are conversing, the reader discovers from the lips of Dido herself that she has made a vow of fidelity to Sychaeus (ll. 20-27). It is this very vow however, which she then renews, that is to bring her to ruin. Again, in a much clearer instance, Anna is being portrayed as 'soror unanima' (line 8), as one who loves her sister dearly, 'o luce magis dilecta soror' (line 31). Yet it is due in great part to her persuasive arguments (ll. 31-53) that Dido weakens in her resolve and finally yields to Anna's pleas to betray the memory of Sychaeus by obtaining Aeneas as her husband.

His dictis, impenso animum flammavit amore.
Spemque dedit dubiae menti, solvitque pudorem.48

These are the words that immediately follow the conversation between Anna and Dido. And it is of course through this consent that Dido starts the tragic train of events that will lead to the complete ruin of her life.

A final instance of the same tragic irony may be noticed in the actions of the two sisters after their conversation (ll. 56-64)

In the true spirit of tragic irony,
Virgil represents Dido and her sister as sacrificing to win the favor of heaven from which she has just invoked a curse on her faithlessness; and to what goddesses does she sacrifice? To

48 Aeneid, IV, 54-55.
Ceres, Apollo and Iyaeus, the gods presiding over the foundations of cities and the giving of laws, when she is forgetting her duty as a queen; to Juno, the goddess of marriage, when she is forgetting her duty to her husband. 49

This concludes the treatment of the similarities between the plot of the Dido episode and Aristotle's requirements for a good tragic plot. In its main outlines the Dido episode verifies all the important requirements. It has organic unity in the development of incidents that follow each other in probable sequence. There is, moreover, a complication and denouement, and an easily recognized reversal and discovery. Before going on to discuss the role of the various characters however, something should be said about the spirit of Greek tragedy and the relation it bears to the tale of Virgil. This is the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER II

THE ROLE OF FATE

In this chapter a more general view of the story analysed in the first chapter will be taken. Before, the details were of more importance; now attention must be drawn to some more general conclusions about the nature of the plot and the forces and motives which govern it - a study which will indirectly throw more light on the role of the gods. This chapter will be concerned principally, first with the specific nature of the complication and denouement; secondly, the motive force that is the cause of the plot, which will be chiefly a discussion of the nature of fate as presented in this book by Virgil; and finally the relation of this conception of Fate to the Fate of the Greek tragedians.

Aristotle says that the complication is everything from the beginning of the story up to that critical point, the last in the series of incidents, out of which comes the change of fortune; by denouement is meant everything from the beginning of the change of fortune to the end of the play.\(^1\) The complication and denouement of the Dido episode are possessed of the highest dramatic quality. It has enjoyed popularity in all ages because the plot touches the very essence of tragedy which is conflict. "It is conflict of issues that lies at the heart of all tragedy - the

\(^1\) Aristotle, 1455B.
conflict of good with good, the division of the spirit against itself." Many authors show that conflict is present in the Dido episode as an important element of the complication. Sellar, for instance says that the tragic nature of the situation arises from the clashing between natural feeling and the great consideration of state by which the divine actors in the drama were influenced. Conway interprets the real subject of the drama as the conflict between rival claims - the claims of a woman and the claims of public duty. The tragedy lies in the ruin brought upon a great woman and her work by the shipwreck of her love. Glover is a little more vague when he remarks that the collision of the two lives and the wreckage are of the essence of tragedy. Sikes is also more general in stating that the fourth book is a tragedy, that the essence of tragedy is not only conflict of wills but of rights. Rand is the most definite in his statement of the nature of the plot.

The inner plot is of the essence of tragedy. It brings us face to face with the ancient motive of the Greek

3 Sellar, 521.
5 Glover, 206
6 Sikes, 185
drama, the conflict between human will and an overruling fate... Tragedy lies in the bitter conclusion that the actors, though pursuing right or at least natural paths, run into disaster despite themselves.7

Whether or not this idea of conflict is found in the Poetics of Aristotle as constituting the essence of tragedy, the consensus of so many authors on the necessity of conflict for the essence of tragedy leaves little room for doubt. Tragedy requires conflict and in the Dido episode there is definite conflict. The interpretation of Rand that the conflict in the Dido episode is between human will and an overruling Fate seems to be confirmed in several passages of the fourth book of the Aeneid.8 Since then, the role of the fate that is being vainly opposed is so prominent in the plot, some idea of Virgil's understanding of the word should be had.

The original meaning of fatum is something that is spoken; it early came to mean destiny, because it was applied to what was spoken by a seer or god.9 The general Latin word found various equivalents in Greek; μορφέας, of which the root notion seems to be the destiny of an individual or race, and επονομάζων, or πενεμίσων, the destiny which guides the whole world.

Some of the confusion present in Virgil rises from the

7 Rand, 363.
8 Aeneid, IV, 340-343, 361, also 331-332, if Jupiter is Fate.
indiscriminate use of fatum to designate both of these ideas. The word τυμεμένη was connected with θυμίαμα by scientific writers, and therefore with a principle of determinism. The Latin Stoics used the same word, fatum, for their προvidence of the world spirit. With regard to the μοίρα or individual destiny, Bailey believes 10 that there can be conflict between one and another, and that such a destiny may be postponed or even avoided, sometimes by the free act of an individual. As an example of this he quotes IV, 696, where Dido, 'misera ante diem', goes to her death, avoiding her allotted destiny. However these individual destinies are always subordinated to the world destiny or both gods and men being forced to bow to this overruling fate. Servius is of this opinion also as can be seen from his comment on I, 31 of the Aeneid. He asks how can the Trojans be driven by Fate, if Juno is the one who is really responsible for their wandering? He answers by saying: "Hoc ipsum odium Junonis fatale est."

A much more difficult question is the some that seeks the relationship between Jupiter and Fate. The question seems insoluble precisely because Virgil wavers in different parts of the Aeneid. Various texts for proving either side have been advanced

10 Bailey, 213.
by the different commentators. To prove that they are identical, Bailey cites Aeneid I, 257, IV, 614, XII, 725.\(^{11}\) In opposition, Frank quotes Aeneid I, 261, IX, 97, X, 112.\(^{12}\) Therefore, it seems best to adhere to the opinion of Sellar who says that the original relation of Jupiter and Fate is left undefined.\(^{13}\) Glover, too, admits that the general relation of the two is uncertain.\(^{14}\)

The relation of Fate to the plot must now be considered. What is the dramatic role of Fate in the Dido episode? What relation has it, if any, to the concept of Fate that is found in the Greek tragedians? The question comes up very prominently in Sellar, for he makes two statements that have been contested by Rand in his Magical Art of Virgil. Sellar maintains first of all that the Fate which rules the fourth book is not a righteous one:

> The fatum of Virgil can scarcely be said to act with the purpose of establishing right in the world or of punishing wrong. Their (fates') action is purely political, neither ethical, though its ultimate tendency is beneficial, nor personal.\(^{15}\)

He calls this the doctrine of predestination in its hardest form, a statement which he confirms by saying that this concept of fate

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11 Bailey, 228, 229.
12 Frank, 185.
13 Sellar, 337.
14 Glover, 298.
15 Ibid., 344.
is much inferior both in intellectual subtlety and in ethical value to the Fate of the Greek tragedy in conflict with human will.

Rand however, presents a strong case to show that this concept of Fate as presented by Virgil is ethical, noble and also a true spring of tragedy.

Virgil has infused into the idea of fate an ethical content that it did not display in previous drama. He identifies it with all that is best and sacred in the Roman ideal and in the fulfillment of that ideal in past and present history.\(^\text{17}\)

There is a strong confirmation of this statement in the conclusion to Bailey's treatment of fate, for he sums up by saying:

And if it be asked what is the content of this divine purpose, to what practical end is it guiding events, there can be no doubt as to the answer. It is the fulfillment of Aeneas' destiny, his arrival in Italy, the establishment of his power, and beyond that the foundation of Rome and the expansion of Rome's empire over the world.\(^\text{18}\)

Both Rand and Bailey prove their views by references to the sixth book, especially 11. 724 ff, 847-853, where Virgil most clearly expresses his own religious thoughts.

By identifying then, the idea of Fate with that of the destiny of Rome, Virgil makes it a righteous thing and one that is

\(^{16}\) Sellar, 344.
\(^{17}\) Rand, 372.
\(^{18}\) Bailey, 233.
a power for good. Sellar himself admits the Romans were confident in the continued existence of the empire, a confidence closely connected with religious belief; they believed they were ruling the world by the ordination of the gods.\textsuperscript{19} This idea is echoed and confirmed by the Romans themselves.

Quam volumus licet, patres conscripti, ipsi nos amemus, tamen nec numero Hispanos nec robore Gallos nec caliditate Poenos nec artibus Graecos nec denique hoc ipso hujus gentis ac terrae domestico nativoque sensu Italos ipsos ac Latinos, sed pietate ac religione atque hac una sapientia quod deorum numine omnia regi gubernarique perspeximus, omnis gentes nationesque superavimus.\textsuperscript{20}

The statement of Horace, more commonly known, attributes the Roman empire to submission to the gods. "Dis te minorem quod geris, imperas."\textsuperscript{21}

It might be well to mention that this identification of Fate with the empire and destiny of Rome was not in any way an idea that degraded the Providence of the world.

This identification of fate and the destiny of Rome may seem to be a narrowing conception to us, but it was not so to the Roman of Augustus' time, because for him there was no other real power, no other civilizing

\textsuperscript{19} Sellar, 336.
influence in the world but Rome, and the greatest blessing that could befall other peoples was to be brought within the sphere of Rome's influence. 22

Since, then the fatum of the tragedy is a power for good, there is all the more reason for the tragic element in the episode of Dido. The clash of human wills with this righteous power is as tragic as it was before, but now a reason for the clash must be had. It is found in human error and weakness. Rand therefore believes the final solution of the conflict is in the vindication of the moral law. 23 Still, it should be added that the retribution seems hardly fair - in this it is like Greek tragedy. 24

With reference to the second statement that Virgil's concept of fate is inferior in intellectual subtlety and moral content to the Fate of Greek tragedy, Rand is again prepared to deny the conclusion of Sellar. He maintains, moreover, that the Fate of the Greek drama has no moral development. 25 His proof for this statement is by no means conclusive, as he contents himself with the following:

In Aeschylus it is the accumulation of guilt which involves the partly innocent;

22 Bailey, 234.
23 Rand, 372.
25 Rand, 369.
hence...pity and fear for those who are
doomed to defeat... In Sophocles, most
clearly in his Oedipus, righteous humanity
is brought to ruin through conflict with
divine law. One cannot repress the inquiry
hovering on the Poet's lips, it would seem,
whether this law can be just. The query
grows more urgent still for Euripides; it
is no righteous divinity that sends Hippolytus to his doom. 26

It is necessary to pause here for a few moments and try
to reconstruct the religious beliefs of Virgil in the light of
what has been said. Fate is closely connected with the destiny
of Rome and with the will of the gods. Fate is also endowed with
some ethical content; therefore it punishes wrong and rewards
good actions. It is this Fate which punishes Dido with death
by suicide. She dies because she violated her vow to the memory
of her dead husband. For the part Aeneas plays in the episode,
he is both rewarded and punished. Because he forgot the wishes
of the gods and lingered at Carthage, he is punished by being
forced to leave the one he loves and also by the consciousness
that his departure will break the heart of the Carthaginian
queen. But his decision to depart shows fidelity to the will of
the gods; for this he is to be rewarded. This reward consists
in his founding of Rome, - a reward that is foreshadowed and
revealed to the wandering hero in the sixth book. 27 This proves

26 Rand, 369.
27 Aeneid, VI, 724ff.
that, for Virgil, the most tragic thing man could do, is disobey the will of the gods. It also confirms the reason given by Fowler to explain why the episode was introduced into the Aeneid. The poet adopted his version of the story of Dido not simply as an affecting and pathetic episode, but to emphasize the great lesson of the poem by showing that the growth and glory of the Roman dominion are due, under Providence, to Roman virtues and pietas— that sense of duty to family, State and gods, which rises, in spite of trials and dangers, superior to the enticements of individual passion and selfish ease.

Is there any similarity between the tragic spirit of Virgil and the older Greek dramatists? Glover finds a great kinship between the tragedy of Euripides and Virgil, saying that if Euripides is the most tragic of poets, a title conferred on him by no less an authority than Aristotle, then there is more tragedy in the Aeneid than in all the rest of Latin literature.

In reading the Dido episode, Glover further thinks that the Greek drama is presupposed, and above all, the knowledge of Euripides; his reason is that it is concerned with the conflict of character and the coincident conflict of destiny, a theme that

30 Aristotle, 1453A.
31 Glover, 54.
greatly interested Euripides and is prominent in his plays:

We see the unfolding of a woman's character; we see how what is best in her gives its opportunity to what is worst; we see the triumph of her love become her ruin. Behind all this we see some dark divine power forwarding a design, for which we find it hard to see an adequate reason, and yet for which the instinct and passion of a human creature are sacrificed, a life is crushed... by the act of one beloved. 32

This problem is the same one that is found in the Troades of Euripides, when Hecuba is the one who suffers, and also in the tragedy of Phaedra. Because of this reappearing problem, expressed in a very similar way, Glover feels a great kinship between the Greek and Latin poet.

Rand, however, finds in Sophocles a closer counterpart for Virgil; he says that in both his art and theology, Virgil is bound by far closer ties to Sophocles. Both pursue the same ideal truth in their poetry - the ideal of final purification and reconcilement of a noble human nature with the divine nature. 33 Virgil is not so close to Euripides in spirit, although "he is akin to Euripides in his pathos and far reaching humanitarian sympathies." 34 They differ in spirit because Virgil is not inclined to cast scorn on the gods. Rather, his fates are a moral

32 Glover, 54.
33 Rand, 371, also Sellar, 344.
34 Rand 370.
force, as has been said, and they do consider right and wrong. For it must be remembered that both Aeneas and Dido were guilty of some wrong doing; therefore they violated the moral law. Because of this, retribution follows as inexorably as it would in Aeschylean tragedy. There is, however, even in Virgil, some protest, or at least "touche of protest"\textsuperscript{35} against the fates of some characters in the Aeneid. Rand points out some examples in Book II.

The influence of the spirit of the Greek tragedians on the spirit of the Virgilian epic is undoubtedly present, but it is a little more difficult to analyse than the actual imitations, whether of technique or subject matter which were noted in the preceding chapter. But at least it can be said that there is similarity of spirit between Virgil and the greatest Greek tragedians, particularly in their general concept of Fate. It is conceived as a righteous thing, all powerful and inexorable, which punishes wrong. Virgil has added something to its nature by making it more nationalistic and identifying it with the destiny and greatness of the Roman Empire.

\textsuperscript{35} Rand, 370.
CHAPTER III

THE ROLE OF THE GODS

References have been made frequently in the previous chapters to the part that is played by the gods in the tragedy of Dido. In taking up this subject now in more detail, it should be noted that definite conclusions are almost impossible.

The Vergilian gods were for Vergil a convenient dumping ground for all those degrading notions of anthropomorphic weakness, from which he was struggling to free his conception of the ruling power in things. The system of the Olympian gods intrudes hopelessly on the mystic Vergilian Stoico-Epicurean philosophy, and makes - there is no denying it - one glorious muddle.¹

Others also agree that the part of the gods in the Aeneid is not easy to appraise.² Yet the gods cannot be ignored, because Aristotle speaks of the role of the supernatural in a tragedy and has definite ideas on how the gods should be used in the plot. Moreover, here, more than in any other aspect of this study, the difference between tragedy and epic manifests itself. Epic tradition goes directly contrary to the norms that are set down by Aristotle for the function and use of the gods in tragedy. Aristotle would have them introduced rarely, or at least, for a limited purpose,³ epic wants them used frequently in a variety of ways. The reason for the divergence in use of gods rises from two

¹ Matthaei, 14.
² Pease, 51.
³ Aristotle, 1454B.
related factors. The first and more fundamental of these is wonder, of which Aristotle says: "The wonderful depends for its chief effect on the irrational."\(^4\) Now epic and tragedy differ in this point because the scope of the irrational is greatly limited in tragedy. The reason lies in the manner of presentation which brings up the second factor to explain the divergence between epic and tragedy. When a story is directly presented there is less opportunity to introduce irrational elements.

The irrational...has wider scope in epic poetry, because there the person acting is not seen. Thus the pursuit of Hector would be ludicrous if placed upon the stage—the Greeks standing still and not joining in the pursuit, and Achilles waving them back. But in the epic poem the absurdity passes unnoticed.\(^5\)

What has this to do with the role of the gods in the Aeneid? Aristotle wishes to avoid any use of the gods where the unity and continuity of the plot suffers by their introduction as irrational factors.

It is evident that the unravelling of the plot, no less than the complication must rise out of the plot itself; it must not be brought about by the deus ex machina... Within the action there must be nothing irrational.\(^6\)

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4 Aristotle, 1460A.
5 Ibid., 1454A-1454B.
6 Ibid.
Although the limits set by Aristotle to the action of the gods is more narrow than the actual part given them by Virgil, there are some grounds for effecting a reconciliation between Aristotle's theory and Virgil's practice. From the context, it can be seen that the prime purpose of Aristotle in limiting the scope of the action of the gods is to prevent the entrance of the irrational into the plot, either in the complication or the unravelling. Because of the very nature of tragedy, such a demand limits the action of the gods to the parts that are set down by Aristotle.

The deus ex machina should be employed only for events external to the drama - for antecedent or subsequent events, which lie beyond the range of human knowledge, and which require to be foretold or reported; for to the gods we ascribe the power of seeing all. 7

Whether or not Virgil could have written the episode of Dido without the help of the theophanies is, then, not a mere academic question, but one which will determine the role of the gods. The first chapter of this thesis tends to prove that this would have been comparatively easy. To stress this unity of the plot, considered in itself and apart from the action of the gods, is very important, because the passage just quoted from Aristotle was directed against a prevailing abuse - the irrational solution of a complication in plot by the introduction of gods.

7 Aristotle, 1454B.
The first point to be noticed then, is that Virgil is not forced to use the gods because the plot needs some external agent for its unravelling, but rather because epic tradition demands their frequent introduction into the narrative. Here, as in so many other places, the influence of Homer's example is felt by Virgil.

The next problem is concerned with Virgil's use of the gods. How are the gods employed in the plot of the Dido story? The views of the commentators fall into three general categories. The commentators either admit that the gods play an active part in the unravelling of the plot as necessary and essential characters, or the commentators believe that the function and role of the gods in this book is merely that of epic machinery, or finally some modification between these views is defended.

Those who hold the first position seem to be fewest in number, only one author of those consulted maintaining it explicitly. This is Norwood, who thinks that the gods, as characters, are even more real than Dido, that it is as a consequence of Virgil's failure to make them appear real, that the character of Aeneas suffers in this book. He even maintains that the human characters are passive instruments and therefore Aeneas is free of blame.

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9 Ibid., 146.
Conway might also be mentioned as defending this view, although he is not overexplicit in his affirmation, but merely says the cave scene was directly engineered by Juno.¹⁰

By far the most common view is that the gods are mere epic machinery. A number of quotations from the authors will best bring this out. "Everything in the story could have been done without a god lifting a finger."¹¹ This statement of Pease, strong as it is, finds confirmation in the words of Glover.

It is quite clear that the gods are not the supreme rulers of the universe... Set in the Aeneid, the Olympian gods are found to be dead beyond disguise - the truth cannot be hid. They are mere epic machinery.¹²

And in speaking of the intervention of Cupid to arouse the love of Dido for Aeneas, Cartault says:

Il n'est qu'une machine mythologique qu'il a cru devoir employer parce qu'il ne concevait pas l'épopée que dans les formes traditionelles, mais dont il aurait pu se passer, s'il avait été hardi et novateur.¹³

Evans thinks that the gods are mere epic machinery because human elements would be lost entirely if Dido were merely the victim of a plot of the gods. This alternative is rejected, because

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¹⁰ Conway, New Studies, 159.
¹¹ Pease, 51, note 398.
¹² Glover, 302.
¹³ Cartault, 302.
Elissa is pictured in her first conversation with Anna as one who could resist her love for the Trojan successfully if she wished.\(^{14}\) Matthaei also follows this opinion.\(^{15}\)

A good example of the modified view between these extremes is seen in Rand who speaks of the gods, not as the supreme rulers of the lives of men, and yet not as mere puppets or epic machinery.

Virgil's gods are not merely human passions writ large, adding nothing to the plot but epic mechanism and the contrast of shifted scenes; they are large, human actors, more powerful, but submissive, like men, to the fates. Their action has interest in itself and their characters have personality. They descend to the human plane, help or retard, and withdraw.\(^{16}\)

Sellar, too, is close to this idea.\(^{17}\)

From what has been said, it is clear that there is wide diversity of opinion as to the exact nature of the role of the gods. Pease does not defend any of these positions, yet he inclines finally to a position similar to that of Rand and Sellar. "Vergil seems to have tried by the actions of the gods to connect the actions of men with the higher and more universal plans of destiny."\(^{18}\) This last interpretation appears the best of the three.

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15 Matthaei, 20.
16 Rand, 364.
17 Sellar, 337.
18 Pease, 51-52.
The position of Norwood is weak because it robs the poem entirely of human interest, and does not agree with the inner consciousness which tells man he is free. This makes the opinion of Norwood poetically weak also, for it does not move in a convincing manner, but goes against human nature.

The second interpretation, insofar as it is taken literally so that the role of the gods is limited strictly to that of epic machinery and adornment, also seems to be false for several reasons. It cannot be denied that the gods help and retard the action in the manner indicated by Rand. They also externalize and manifest actions and developments, particularly those that deal with the emotional reactions of characters. By using the gods to externalize these reactions, Virgil avoids the use of soliloquy or monologue, which he reserves, as Heinze has remarked, for more solemn and important occasions. An example of this use is in the fourth book where Juno and Venus meet to plan the marriage of Dido and Aeneas (ll. 90-128). Here the conversation of the two deities reveals the state of heart of Dido and shows how much she loved Aeneas. Another function for which the poet uses the gods, is to typify and externalize conscience. There are examples of this in the two theophanies of Mercury.

19 Rand, 364.
20 Heinze, 124.
21 Aeneid, IV, 95, 101.
22 Aeneid, IV, 238-278, 556-570.
It is also true, as Rand says, that Virgil employs the gods to provide change of scene, arouse interest and lend relief to the more tragic scenes of the story. Examples of these are found in the conversation of Juno and Venus (11. 90-128), the description of Fama (11. 173-195) and the appearance of Iris (11. 693-705).

Does the part played by the gods, as interpreted by Rand, Sellar and Pease, violate in any way the precepts laid down by Aristotle to govern the actions of deities in tragedy? This question will be answered by considering the scenes where the gods appear in the story. The discussion will be directed particularly to this point: how is the action of the gods related to the plot?

The first theophany that concerns us is that where Cupid, under the form of Ascanius, arouses Dido's love for Aeneas, in order to insure a kindly welcome for the latter at Carthage. Cartault has already been quoted on this point, where he says that this substitution of Cupid is merely a mythological mechanism, used by Virgil as a traditional form of forwarding the plot. He adds that the love of the queen develops according to the laws of human psychology, so that the role of the god is not

23 Rand, 366.
24 Aeneid, I, 717 ff.
25 Cartault, 302.
an essential thing, but an epic device. 26

At the beginning of the fourth book, there is a dialogue between Juno and Venus, 27 during which Juno shows her intention of marrying Dido and Aeneas, if Venus will give her consent. This scene has, of course, secondary purposes. It shifts the attention from Dido while at the same time it reveals the state of her emotions. In its relation to the plot of the story however, it should be noted that even without this scene between Juno and Venus, the following incidents of the plot would have unfolded in probable sequence. There is nothing irrational or improbable in Dido's growing love, her arrangement of the hunting party, the storm and the scene in the cave. But, on the other hand, it is true that the divine actors give more credibility to the scenes described by Virgil. It might have taken a longer time for the affections of the queen to rise to so high a state. But even if this be admitted, the unity of the story does not depend essentially on their intervention. It is in fact a dramatic device which helps focus the time element into a shorter period, in order that the action might progress more rapidly.

With regard to Fama, the only one of the goddesses who

26 Cartault, 301.
27 Aeneid, IV, 90-128.
is not a traditional Olympian, the epic motive in using her seems fairly clear. The climax of the action in the book has just been described. To prevent a falling of interest, Virgil does not describe in prosy style how the rumor of Dido's love reaches Iarbas, but he personifies the rumor that flies through the cities. (173–197) Certainly it would have been a very natural thing for the native Carthaginians to comment on the position of Aeneas. Through them Iarbas could discover what happened. But here again, Virgil adopts the device of a goddess for the double advantage of interest and epic coloring.

The intervention of Jupiter comes under one of the few exceptions permitted by Aristotle. He sanctions the intervention of a god for events that fall outside human knowledge and which must therefore be foretold or reported by a god, - for to the gods is ascribed the power of seeing all things. 28 Whether or not the prayer of Iarbas was to be answered (11.206–218), was something known only to the gods.

Cartault best expresses the theophany of Mercury as far as its relation to the plot is concerned.

S'il intercale ici ce hors-d'œuvre, c'est qu'il veut nous présenter une imitation homérique étant à ses yeux un élément essentiel de son art, et, comme cette imitation retarde inutile-

28 Aristotle, 1454B.
ment la marche de l'action, on peut supposer que, s'il la insérée, c'est pour nous rappeler que le séjour d'Enée à Carthage a pour prototype celui d'Ulysse dans l'île de Kalypso.  

It can be seen that the elaborate description of Mercury (238-261) and his message to Aeneas (265-276) is another bow on the part of Virgil to epic tradition. This is made all the more clear by the comments of some of the authors who maintain that Mercury is the external manifestation of the conscience of Aeneas, wakened at last to a sense of his infidelity and duty. Therefore, the appearance of Mercury cannot be classified as mere poetic imagery and epic machinery, because he helps forward the plot. But it is important to notice that the same result could have been obtained through the natural intervention of conscience, especially since Aeneas has been represented as a man devoted to duty and the will of the gods.

The vision of Mercury is not merely mythological machinery - a deus ex machina to give the action an onward push. It externalizes two things: the workings of Aeneas' conscience and the intervention of Heaven.

The same view can be taken with reference to the dream in which Mercury appears and tells Aeneas to leave Carthage (560ff.)

"The action of the gods is the reflection in outward nature of the

29 Cartault, 314.
mood of the man's mind, the divine actions and dreams merely bring to a focus feelings already latent."31 Pease also agrees that both the appearance and the dream in which Mercury takes part "play very definitely parts which we should assign to the sudden resurgence of conscience."32

The final theophany of Iris (11.693-705) is a clear case of the dea ex machina. But Iris is not introduced to solve the central problem of the play and bring about a denouement; Virgil employs her merely to end the episode and the book in a manner more in conformity with that of Greek drama. The theophany of Iris makes it possible for the poet to strike a peaceful note at the end and soften somewhat the tragedy of Dido's suicide. But the plot of the story is complete without resorting to this appearance of the goddess.

It therefore seems just to say that Aristotle's canons for the use of the gods have not been disregarded by Virgil. He has used the gods extensively; - this has provided an epic atmosphere. He has introduced them skilfully; - this has made them real characters, not puppets. Finally he has so cleverly employed them that the unity of his story, particularly when it is considered from a dramatic point of view, has not suffered.

32 Pease, 53.
CHAPTER IV
CHARACTER OF DIDO

Characters rank next to plot as the most important element of tragedy. Aristotle speaks most commonly not of the characters as dramatis personae, but more of the two elements which make up the individual character, moral bent and intellectual insight. The θεός or moral bent of the agent is considered the more important of these two elements, the διάνοια or intellectual insight is the less important. In various places of the Poetics, Aristotle lists different requirements which apply to character in some one of the three senses named above. The purpose of this part of the thesis is to examine the two most important characters of the Dido episode and try to verify in them Aristotle's requirements for tragic character. This chapter will consider the character of Dido, the next, the character of Aeneas.

The first requirement is one that is mentioned by Aristotle in passing: "He must be one who is highly renowned and prosperous, a person like Oedipus, Thyestes, or other illustrious men of such families." Virgil observes this rule throughout the Aeneid:

The class from which the personages of the Aeneid are taken is almost exclusively that of the most elevated classes in dignity and influence...

1 Aristotle, 1450A.
2 Ibid., 1453A.
The actors moreover, who play their parts in these critical events are not considered common or mean... Dido or Elissa was a name famous in Phoenecian legend and associated with the ancient renown of Tyre. Cartault is also explicit in referring to Dido as a member of the highest social classes.

De cet être humain si magnifiquement organisée Virgile a fait hommage à l'aristocratie. Didon est aristocrate; elle a la puissance, l'opulence, elle jouit de tout ce qui donne de l'éclat à la vie, elle en jouit comme d'une chose qui lui est due; elle regnë, elle a une existence fasteuse.4

However, this is a requirement that is more or less external and not characteristic of the poet's inner representation of qualities of mind and heart. Aristotle is more interested in these latter qualities.

In respect to character there are four things to be aimed at. First and most important, it must be good. Now any speech or action that manifests moral purpose of any kind will be expressive of character: the character will be good if the purpose is good.5

It is necessary therefore to prove first the goodness of the character of Dido from her words and actions. This is easily done, for Virgil has given numerous clues of the goodness of Dido.

3 Sellar, 357, also DeWitt, 284.
4 Cartault, 337.
5 Aristotle, 1454A.
Virgil first presents her as going to the temple, nor is this the only time she is shown as God-fearing and religious. She is a good and capable ruler of her people, she passes laws and distributes justice to her subjects. Other obvious signs of goodness of character are seen in her fidelity to the memory of her husband, Sychaeus, her kindness to the shipwrecked Trojans, her love for her sister, Anna and her devotion to the gods:

Her character as it is represented before the disturbing influence of this new passion produced by supernatural means, is that of a brave and loyal, a great and queenly, a pure trusting and compassionate nature.

In order to anticipate objections, a few remarks will be made on certain aspects of the character of Dido which have been questioned. First, her suicide at the end of the book, does not destroy the essential goodness of Dido as portrayed by Virgil. It is well known that the Stoics permitted suicide as an escape from suffering. Beyond that, Virgil's words acquit her of guilt:

ne fato, merita nec morte peribat,

Even if it be admitted that "Dido dies in defiance of her fate; suicide is against the volition of the gods, an act of her own

6 Aeneid, I, 496, IV, 56, 457.
7 Aeneid, I, 507-508.
8 Aeneid, IV, 15-17, 457
9 Aeneid, I, 562, 630.
10 Sellar, 405.
11 Aeneid, IV, 696.
will running counter to all the wise orderings of higher powers"\(^{12}\) her death is still one that is not merited in the eyes of Virgil. This is one instance where the desires of Virgil pulled him one way and his theological conceptions of fate and the gods pulled him another. He wished to reserve free will to men although the idea of an overruling fate seemed to deny it. He seems to compromise finally however, since he does not permit the death of Dido until Juno sends Iris to cut a lock of her hair. This act seems to sanction the death of the Carthaginian queen, subordinating her act of rebellion into conformity with the world fate.\(^{13}\)

The nobility and goodness of Dido is admitted by some authors up to a certain point, but they maintain this quality is lost when she turns and curses Aeneas and his nation.\(^{14}\) To this, the answer of Heinze seems adequate: "Der gedanke, Aeneas, fur seine Untreue leibhaftig zu strafen, kommt ihr erst in den Delieren des Wahnsinns."\(^{15}\) Glover agrees that Dido became insane, adding that it was her despair which achieved the descent into insanity, while contributing factors were her Oriental superstitions.\(^{16}\) Pease explains her sudden insanity by the violence of her emotions: "...her unrestrained love turns to an equally

\(^{12}\) Matthaei, 25.
\(^{13}\) Ibid., 26.
\(^{14}\) Evans, 99.
\(^{15}\) Heinze, 134.
\(^{16}\) Glover, 147.
intense hatred, either of these extremes of passion being destruc-
tive of the normal mental balance of its victim.\textsuperscript{17}

A final objection that might be mentioned is that Dido is merely an adventuress and temptress in the path of Aeneas,\textsuperscript{18} a charge that would be a real blot on the character of the queen, if it were true. But it is hardly consonant with Virgil's re-
presentation of Dido throughout the first four books of the \textit{Aeneid}. He has shown her as a woman who is devoted to the memory of her husband, one who is religiously inclined and devoted to the service of the gods. No hint is given anywhere that the love of Dido for Aeneas is anything but good and sincere.

Car elle est femme, entièrement femme, elle a un coeur fait pour l'amour; mais l'amour chez elle est noble et pur comme tout le rest; elle ne le conçoit que comme une affection loyale immut-
ablement attachée à celui qui en est digne, qui embellit toute la vie, qui est la flamme douce et rechauffante qui suffit au cœur.\textsuperscript{19}

The essential goodness, therefore, of the character of Dido seems to be proved. But Aristotle does not want the characters of a tragedy to be perfect. He remarks, that if a virtuous man is brought from prosperity to adversity, it does not excite pity or fear, but merely shocks. His ideal is rather:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Pease, 34.
\item Cartault, 337.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The character between these two extremes, - that of a man who is not eminently good and just, yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty.\textsuperscript{20}

The tragic flaw in the character of Dido is revealed early in the fourth book, when she first tells Anna the effect that Aeneas has had on her. The flaw does not arise from ignorance because she seems to realize the perils of an attachment to Aeneas. In the opening scene with Anna, (ll. 8-53), Dido weighs the matter in her own mind and definitely says what her better nature prompts her to - an oath that she would rather suffer the horrors of the underworld, than in any way violate her honor.\textsuperscript{21}

In spite of arguments, Dido's conscience is still on the side of this instinct of hers, and she knows that she is acting against her better instincts and her vow of loyalty to Sychaeus; she has therefore not yet lost the pudor which she has vowed herself to lose should she prove unfaithful to Sychaeus, but this is the first step in the downfall; the end is the outcome of the beginning. To resolve to win the love of Aeneas is no wrong thought or action, but to attempt it against her conscience is the first step towards shame.\textsuperscript{22}

The very protest and resistance to the natural inclination of her heart shows that her sin is not due to ignorance, but deliberate choice.

\textsuperscript{20} Aristotle, 1453A.
\textsuperscript{21} Evans, 102.
\textsuperscript{22} Glover, 190.
Rand also place the tragic flaw at this point in the story. The poet believed the sin was complete at the moment of decision because Aeneas is still unknowing, but Dido, by mentally consenting has "given hope to her wavering heart, and loosed her chastity."23 Heinze reiterates the necessity of a fault for the sake of poetic justice, while placing it at the same part of the story:

\[\text{Damit Didos Tod poetisch geregtigt erscheine, musse sie eine Schuld besteht darin, das sie die Pflicht der Treue, die sie als bindend anerkennt, wissenlicht verletzt.}\] 24

It is well to remember however, that the fault of Dido, even though deliberate, is still lessened in view of the facts.

Both Aeneas and Dido are faithless to an absolute moral standard and their own ideals, but their infidelity is so natural, - almost irresistible, that we are ready to condone: "si fuit errandum, causas habet error honestas."25

The fault, then, is not a wanton violation of the will of the gods, but one that is lessened by Dido's affectionate nature and the intrigues of Venus.

How does it happen that the tragic character of Dido arouses the sympathy of the reader to such an extent, that Aeneas appears in a very unsatisfactory light? It is because Virgil has caught so completely the spirit of the Greek tragedy. There is

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23 *Aeneid*, IV, 93, also Rand, 353.
24 Heinze, 122.
25 Rand, 363.
justice in the fate of Dido and her unhappiness, but it is not a full justice:

The powers at work are not commensurate with our ideas of the powers of right and wrong, and the righteous issue as we understand it, is but dimly discerned, if at all, by the straining eye. On these lines, Virgil has drawn his picture of the catastrophe of Dido. Brought by Venus to the breaking of her vow, she suffers the full curse which she has invoked on herself if she should do so.26

With this qualification, then, that the punishment does not seem proportioned to the fault of which she is guilty, the well known statement of Glover best sums up the situation. He says that our sympathy is with Dido, but not our judgment.27 Like the ideal tragic hero of Aristotle, she falls from a height of greatness, and the disaster that wrecks her life may be traced to a deliberate fault, but not to deliberate wickedness. Her ruin is due to a failure of will; when Aeneas was accidentally brought into her life, he became a temptation to which she yielded.

Aristotle's next requirement is stated by him very briefly. \( \textit{\alpha \iota \upsilon \tau \varepsilon \tau \rho \nu \alpha \ \kappa \omicron \omicron \sigma \omicron \upsilon \nu} \), - the second thing to aim at is propriety.28 In explaining this term he remarks that there is a type of manly valor, but for a woman to be valiant

26 H. Nettleship, Vergil, 63.
27 Glover, 202.
28 Aristotle, 1454A.
or terrible, would be inappropriate. It remains then to prove that the character of Dido, as painted by Virgil, is appropriate to her, or true to type.

First, there are two distinct characteristics in Dido, her womanliness and her queenliness. In these, or in the combination of them, there is most danger of Virgil's failing to make Dido and her character appropriate.

Dido is at once a woman and a queen, a woman in the large and ample sense, in instinct, feeling and sympathy, and a queen in her ideals and in her achievements. Dido is a woman because she notices the size and manliness of Aeneas; she is imaginative and understands his melancholy character. 29

Heinze makes some objection to the picture of Dido that is drawn by Virgil because he says that the poet did not make any attempt to portray her as a more convincing character. He maintains that all the materials for a more convincing drawing of Dido was present from her past history, - from her actions after the death of her husband, when she showed herself a practical and vigorous leader, who brought her people to Carthage to found a new nation. 30

The answer to this objection seems to lie in the question of which of the two tendencies in the character of Dido was the

29 Glover, 185.
30 Heinze, 135.
predominant and more forceful. Without doubt, from what was written by Virgil, her womanliness must be accepted as the dominant force. "Dido should be treated primarily as a woman, though a queen, to whom love was absolute and overpowering."31 From the speeches that Dido makes, she is shown as a highly emotional woman, deeply, particularly after she learns of Aeneas' intention to desert her, in love.32 Therefore, Virgil chose to emphasize a different aspect of the character of Dido than the one manifested by her in earlier life. Certainly, this emphasis seems more in accord with the desire of Aristotle than the emphasis of her monarchical abilities. Yet Virgil is careful not to make Dido a colorless and spineless creature in the face of Aeneas' desertion.

Virgil's conception is at once more passioned than that of Sophocles' Deianeira, and more womanly than the Medea and Phaedra of Euripides... No weakness nor womanly ferocity mingles with the reproaches she utters on first awakening to the betrayal of her trust... Her passion goes on deepening in alterations of indignation and recurring tenderness. It reaches its sublimest elevation in the prayer for vengeance.33

This seems to prove that there is propriety in Virgil's representation of Dido; he does not develop the queenly aspects

31 Evans, 99.
32 Rand, 357.
33 Sellar, 406.
of Dido’s soul very much, but he shows her imperious nature and her spirit in the final scene of the book where she manifests by her words, her beautifully executed deception of her sister, Anna, with regard to her intention of killing herself, and finally by her suicide, the qualities that made it possible for her to become the queen and ruler of a new and prosperous city.

It might be objected that such a person, especially if she be so tender of heart and so womanly, would not possess the propriety of character that Aristotle demands in such speeches as the one where she prays for vengeance on Aeneas. In answer, it might be denied that such an objection has any value because it is not inconsistent with so strong a character as Dido to feel deeply when she has been so grievously wronged. There is even more justification if it is recalled that she was insane with hatred and despair. But even beyond that, Cartault calls attention to the fact that all these ideas of vengeance are expressed in the form of classical remembrances and allusions.

Il ne faut point être surpris que ces idées de vengeance retrospective et maintenant irréalisable se présentent à elle sous la forme de souvenirs classiques; Virgile a voulu la représenter comme une femme de haute culture littéraire et en même temps ces horreurs sur lesquelles elle promene son imagination sont tellement étrangères à sa nature qu’elle ne peut les concevoir que
Heinze, too, in reference to classical allusions, shows that all the questions in Dido's impassioned speech to Aeneas are taken from the Medea. Thus, with regard to propriety, in the case of Dido, Virgil has presented a woman completely human and thoroughly feminine.

For his third quality of character Aristotle demands -- that it be true to life. That Dido fulfills this requirement can be proved, first from the effect she had on Virgil, himself, secondly from the effect she has had on the readers of the episode.

A number of writers agree that Dido first won a place in the heart of Virgil himself. Sikes, for example, believes that Dido was first conceived as an obstacle in the path of Aeneas' founding of Rome and that her character was merely to be that of a rebel against fate, a woman who had broken her vow to her husband, Sychaeus. But when the poet came to a detailed treatment of her, she grew under his hands, and "the touching of the chord of love and passion responded more deeply than he expected." Heinze emphasizes the fact that Dido is not an in-

34 Cartault, 332.
35 Heinze, 130, note.
36 Pease, 32.
37 Aristotle, 1454A.
38 Sikes, 189, also Conway, New Studies, 140
39 Conington, Aeneid, IV, 13.
different subjects whom the poet could use as he wished:

Sie weist weder realistiche Porträtzüge auf, die an ein lebendes Modell denken lieben, noch auch typische Eigenart; aber sie ist doch auch keineswegs nur das an sich ganz indifferente Instrument, dem der Dichter pathetische Töne entlockte.  

If, then, she became a real character for the poet, it is clear he endowed her with some of the quality demanded by Aristotle.

The favorable reactions of all readers to the episode of Dido can be proved by what two great writers have said of this book of Virgil. St. Augustine writes in his *Confessions*:

"Quid miserius flente Didonis mortem quae fiebat amando Aeneam, non autem flente mortem meam, quae fiebat non amando Te."  

And Ovid tells how popular the story was even in ancient times.

Some critics doubt whether Dido's determination to commit suicide is a natural reaction and naturally portrayed. Pease answers this difficulty well.

The decision has been gradually reached, and even after it is formed, her passionate purpose vacillates, in a manner psychologically accurate in one whose emotions cannot be ruled by logic. These Virgil twice compares to the ebbing and flowing tides of the sea.

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40 Heinze, 134
43 Pease, 35.
But there are some weaknesses in the portrait of Dido which should be pointed out. A defect that is more common in other characters of Virgil seems present in some degree at least, in the character of Dido.

The personages of Virgil are revealed partly in his account of what they do and partly through the medium of set speeches expressive of some particular attitude of mind. Virgil's imagination is that of an orator rather than a dramatist. It is not a complete and complex man, liable to various moods and standing in various relations to other men, but it is some powerful thumos in the man, that the oratorical imagination is best fitted to express.44

Dido seems to live most fully in the final scenes of the book where she is stirred to the depths of her soul with a passionate feeling toward Aeneas that takes the nature of tenderness and indignation in turn. The effectiveness of the portrait of Dido, then, is, in a sense, accidental, because she was a type of character more fitted to the imagination of Virgil. Because of this failing Virgil has not been able to give life to the minor characters of the Aeneid, to the men who are mere names, such as Gyas, Mnestheus and others.

Yet even if it be granted that Dido escapes the fate of many of Virgil's characters in this regard, she is still not entirely true to life. Heinze elaborates on the point when he

44 Sellar, 396.
says that Dido has qualities that draw the reader but that she has not "typische Eigenart", a personal and proper quality in her character. He also adds that she is negative in portrayal:

So ist sie denn zu charakterisieren vor allem negativ; es ist ferngehalten von ihrer Person alles mädchenhaft Naive, Zaghafe, alles Niedrige, alles Tücksiche, Gehässige und barbarische Rohe; aber auch das Klagen und Jammern, das sentimentale Schwelgen im eigenen Unglück, unnützes Bedauern, dass es so und nicht anders gekommen, all diese Inventarstücke der tragischen Monodien und hellenistischen Rührzenen sind aufs äußerste sparsam verwendet.45

From these criticisms, it is clear that Dido cannot be called true to life without qualification. She has much in her that draws our sympathy but she is not completely filled out as a character; it is only because of the strong scenes in which she plays that she makes so strong an impression.

Aristotle demands \( \tau \varepsilon \tau \varsigma \varepsilon \tau \nu \delta \tau \overset{\circ}{\circ} \varsigma \alpha \lambda \nu \) or consistency as the fourth element in a good tragic character. He adds that even though the subject, suggesting the type be inconsistent, still he must be consistently inconsistent.46 Virgil keeps the picture of Dido's character consistent in a number of ways.

Dido is a woman of action, not of reflection, and therefore in this

45 Heinze, 134.
46 Aristotle, 1454A.
time of trial and doubt when she is speaking with Anna in the first part of the episode she is unequal to the occasion and yields to inclination. Hitherto, hers has been an 'unexamined life'.

This characteristic is prominent throughout the book. She goes immediately after this scene to offer sacrifice as a kind of release from the pressure of thought and reflection. She is continually engaged in external action, - the banquet, revisiting the hall at night, showing Aeneas through the city and so forth. As soon as she discovers the intention of Aeneas to abandon her, she goes to him. As Cartault, following the dramatic course of the action, remarks, Virgil has concentrated the last part of the episode in one decisive scene which fits the character of Dido perfectly: "... elle ne tolere pas l'incertitude; elle va droit au but et tout s'ecroule." She is, then, warmly emotional and affectionate throughout the book, not given to calm thought.

There is a great deal of the Epicurean in the character of Dido, which is also presented consistently throughout the book. Pleasure loving, craving friendship, prone to emotion and to individual self expression, skeptical of the intervention of divine beings in human concerns and emphasizing the power of fortune, Dido exhibits not a few characteristics of the Epicurean.

47 Glover, 139.
48 Cartault, 317.
This consistency of character is also present, logically and psychologically, in Virgil's presentation of Dido.

Jede neue Phase der äusseren Handlung führt auch eine neue Phase der inneren Entwicklung herbei; und jede dieser Phasen repräsentiert möglichst rein und unvermischt einen bestimmten Gemütszustand.\(^{50}\)

Pease believes that the psychological representation of Dido's fluctuation of emotion and vacillation with regard to her decision to kill herself is truly drawn and consistent with her nature.\(^{51}\)

Dido, therefore, fulfills the requirements of Aristotle for a truly drawn tragic character, particularly in the more important points of goodness, consistency and tragic flaw. She is undoubtedly the dominant character of the episode, which makes the love story, especially a tragic one such as this, a dangerous element in an epic. In this book, at least, the destiny of Aeneas has ceased to be the center of interest; it is entirely obscured by the tragedy of Dido.\(^{52}\) This happened against the will of Virgil.

The tragic story of the love of Dido and Aeneas had, beyond his first intention and almost against his will taken hold of him, expanded to a greatness and deepened to an intensity un-

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50 Heinze, 130.
51 Pease, 35.
52 Crump, Growth of the Aeneid, 62, also Crump, Epyllion from Theocritus to Ovid, 248.
surpassed in ancient or modern poetry. This episode has eclipsed in some sense the rest, by its fusion of delicate psychological insight with human sympathy, of splendid eloquence with burning passion. 53

It is true, however, that the tragedy may not have been so strongly felt by the ancient Roman as by the modern reader. The character of Dido would not have attracted them so strongly because of her possible allegorical significance. She was the representation of Carthage, the arch enemy of Rome. Fowler believes this was the reason for its introduction into the Aeneid. 54 The Roman might feel that the death of Dido provided poetical justification for the deadly enmity which animated the struggle between Rome and Carthage. 55 All this would tend to make Dido less a person and more a symbol, with consequent loss of tragic effect.

But even granting the allegorical significance that might attach to Dido, Virgil undoubtedly drew her with great care:

Passion is exhibited in Dido in a fatal but not ignoble struggle with the purposes and chosen instruments of Omnipotence. The tragic interest of this antagonism stimulates the imagination of the poet to a more energetic delineation of character. 56

55 Sellar, 321.
56 Ibid.
Itt might almost be said that Dido helped the poet picture her more convincingly by reason of the role she played. Therefore, even though there are defects in Virgil's portrait, and even though some have said that the Aeneid is an epic concerned with conflict of principles rather than characters,\footnote{Pease, 32, also Nettleship, \textit{Suggestions to Study of Aeneid}, 36.} what Mackail has said of Dido is still true:

\begin{quote}
Dido is perhaps Virgil's greatest creation, and certainly one of the greatest in all poetry. While she is there she fills the whole canvas and beside her Aeneas fades and chills. Into her Virgil pours all his insight into the human heart and his sense of purely human tragedy. He gives her immortal life.\footnote{Mackail, 107.}
\end{quote}
CHAPTER V
THE CHARACTER OF AENEAS

The same general requirements that were taken from the Poetics to determine the tragic character of Dido will be used in the treatment of the character of Aeneas. First, then, the nobility of Aeneas should be considered.

Aeneas as the son of a mightier goddess is distinguished by the honor of a higher lineage than Achilles in the Iliad. To Anchises is attached the sanctity of one enjoying a closer communion with the immortals, of one at once favored and afflicted above others, and elevated, like Oedipus, into honor and influence beyond the grave. 1

Aeneas thus has a mother who is a goddess and a father who enjoys the honor of the gods after his death. Aeneas fulfills the requirement of Aristotle for illustrious persons.

The treatment of the other requirements will present more difficulty for commentators have disagreed violently in appraising the character of Aeneas. On the one hand we find such statements as: "After reading the fourth book of the Aeneid, Charles Fox exclaimed to a friend, 'Can you bear this?', adding that Aeneas was always either insidious or odious." 2 The calmer judgment of Glover is also unfavorable: "That Dido has ruined the character

1 Sellâr, 356.
of Aeneas with nine tenths of his readers is the admission of one of Virgil's most sympathetic critics. (J.R. Green)" This reaction is balanced by statements at the opposite extreme.

If it be true that it is heroism to sacrifice one's all in following a call one believes divine, that it is a nobler thing to conquer self than to conquer Latium, then Aeneas is cleared of cowardice and unmanliness. Gilbert Norwood, speaking of the Dido episode says: "No blame whatever attaches to Aeneas." What is the truth? It will be the task of this chapter to appraise Aeneas accurately.

Aristotle first requires goodness in his tragic characters. It is quite easy to find evidence for believing in the essential goodness and sincerity of Aeneas. He is the hero of a Roman epic. Sikes truly says, the Roman would be unable to distinguish the character of the epic from the character of the hero; if then, the hero were to be bad and immoral, the epic would necessarily be viewed in the same light. As a result, the nature of the poem and the role played by Aeneas demand goodness in his character.

To understand Aeneas, we must first picture a man whose whole soul is filled by a reverent regard for

3 Glover, 172.
5 Norwood, 146.
6 Sikes, 185.
destiny and submission to Jove, who represents destiny on its personal side. He can therefore never play the part of the hero in revolt; but at the same time he is human, and liable to weaknesses.7

Aeneas is primarily a man who revered the will of the gods, a point that strongly proves his goodness. A hint of what Aristotle meant by goodness is found in his statement that the character will be good if the purpose is good.8 If this means, that the person acts with good intention and to the best of his knowledge, then proof of the goodness of Aeneas is found in his reverence for the gods.

Il est plein de respect pour tous les dieux, même pour ceux qui le maltraitent. Jamais il ne lui arrive de se plaindre de Junon, qui le poursuit d'une haine implacable, et au moment même où elle vient de soulever les enfers contre lui, il immole en son honneur la laie blanche avec ses trentes petits.9

Every hero should have some outstanding quality; that of Aeneas is undoubtedly his pietas, that devotion to kinsmen, race, nation and gods of which he has almost become a symbol. This submission to the will of the gods lays him open to the charge of being a passive instrument of Fate, but this point will be considered later.

7 W. Arnold, Roman Stoicism, University Press, Manchester, 1906, 391.
8 Aristotle, 1454A.
Many commentators agree to this quality of pietas in the sense explained above;\(^\text{10}\) and this seems sufficient proof for calling Aeneas good in the sense explained by Aristotle. Confirmation of their opinion can be found in the Aeneid. The frequent use of the epithet pius shows it,\(^\text{11}\) the high opinion of Aeneas expressed by his followers when they first meet Dido,\(^\text{12}\) his fidelity to the commands of the gods even when he finds these commands difficult to obey,\(^\text{13}\) all bring out clearly that he had goodness as a characteristic moral trait.

This does not imply that Aeneas' part in the episode is blameless. Most commentators agree on the presence of a tragic flaw in his character.

But even the Stoic may have his occasional and human lapse from virtue, and every tragic hero must have his moral flaw. This, in Aeneas, is his deviation, even for a moment, from the task imposed on him by fate. Indeed the fourth book is a tragedy of forsaken loyalties, that of Dido to the memory of Sychaeus and that of Aeneas to the high destiny of his nation.\(^\text{14}\)

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10 Pease, 42, also Nettleship, Vergil, 61, also Grant, 18.
11 N.Moseley, Characters and Epithets, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1926.
12 Aeneid, I, 515.
13 Aeneid, IV, 281, 576-577.
14 Pease, 44.
Mackail also admits that "...defence of Aeneas is impossible."\textsuperscript{15} Indeed, it is not so much a question of finding a moral flaw in Aeneas, as of limiting it within bounds that will save his goodness of character. The moral flaw would not be limited to neglect of his destiny if he had really married Dido and then deserted her, – and such an interpretation has its defenders. Cartault speaks strongly in favor of making the marriage a legitimate one, asking what more could possibly be required since Juno Pronuba, the goddess of marriage solemnized the ceremony.\textsuperscript{16} However, it is hard to find justification for this interpretation in the text of Virgil; indeed, refutation of the view is found especially in the lines:

\begin{align*}
\text{nec jam furtivum Dido meditatur amorem;} \\
\text{conjugium vocat; hoc praetexit nomine culpam.} \\
\end{align*}

\textsuperscript{17} Another passage that presents difficulties, if the legitimacy of the marriage is defended is the direct denial of Aeneas:

\begin{align*}
\text{nec conjugis umquam} \\
\text{praetendi taedas aut haec in foedera veni.} \\
\end{align*}

Virgil would hardly put a direct lie into his hero's mouth on such a point and Cartault does not refute these passages.

Even if there is not a tragic flaw in the marriage, Aeneas

\textsuperscript{15} Mackail, \textit{Virgil and His Meaning to the World of Today}, 106.  
\textsuperscript{16} Cartault, 310. He might have been influenced by the fact that the marriage of Jason in Apollonius' tale was a legitimate one.  
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Aeneid}, IV, 171-172.  
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid.}, 339-340.
does not escape entirely without blame. Some, at least, have attempted to reduce the real guilt of Aeneas down to the disappearing point. Rand in particular, while admitting that Aeneas is at fault, tries to show that he should not be blamed:

A very natural temptation it is for Aeneas, coming at the moment of extreme despair and after so many attempts to raise the walls of a new Troy. Might not Carthage fulfill at once the oracle and the dream? 19

Such reasoning does not seem justified. If Aeneas thought Carthage fulfilled the oracle and the dream, there was no reason for his not marrying Dido. It would have been against his conscience not to have done so. Granting that he could not act against his conscience, Aeneas either completely forgot his mission and destiny or else he deliberately yielded to the temptation to linger at Carthage.

In trying to determine which of the two reasons named above kept Aeneas at Carthage, these thoughts suggest themselves against the likelihood of the first. It is impossible for a man to forget a mission and destiny that has kept him wandering for six years. Therefore, he must have realized that Carthage was not the city he was destined to found. This seems to be the only logical reason for not marrying Dido. The tragic flaw in the character of Aeneas is now clear. It lies in his delaying at

19 Rand, 353.
Carthage so long, - a sin which Virgil undoubtedly considers greater than his abandonment of Dido.

Is it not, however, a greater flaw in the character of Aeneas to expose the life and happiness of Dido to ruin, if he understood, as it seems he must, that he would have to leave Carthage? Conway answers the difficulty by recalling the difference in moral standards of Christian and pagan times. He blames no one except perhaps Dido for the tragedy. The position of women in the time of Augustus was still that of pawns used by the men to further their own schemes. The example of Augustus, who juggled the women of his family into a variety of marriages and alliances for political purposes, set the norm for others. Glover adds that the connection of love and marriage seems natural and inevitable in our own day, but at the time in which the Aeneid was written, no such connotation was had.

According to the standards of Stoicism, Aeneas is blameless and to be praised for what he did. Roman morality tolerated an amour de voyage, the sin could have lain in constancy to the love.

As examples Sikes names, as far back as the time of Cato, the handing over by the Stoic of his wife Marcia to his friend

20 Conway, New Studies of a Great Inheritance, 58.
21 Glover, 203.
22 Sikes, 190.
Hortensius, and in much more recent times the adventure of Caesar and Cleopatra. No blame whatever attached to Julius Caesar because he escaped, but contempt was felt for Antony who later succumbed to the wiles of the Egyptian queen. The same point is urged even more strongly by Henry, when he says that Aeneas is a fit subject for an epic poem even though he did betray Dido. His reason is that it is an error to raise the moral issue at all; that the poem is pre-Christian and should be treated as another adventure. This last opinion goes too far as it is one with which Virgil hardly seems to agree. An interesting bit of evidence to show where the sympathies of Virgil were in this point, is recorded by Suetonius, who says that in the reading of this book, the poet's voice faltered on the appeal of Dido, "hoc solum nomen quoniam de conjuge restat." The same view is confirmed by others.

Whether the poet felt as his readers today may be questioned. He would perhaps not have been so much shocked at such an episode in the life of a contemporary, but it is almost inconceivable that he did not see how it would jar in the setting of his poetry. But whatever he thought or felt, he made the significance clear. The character of Aeneas as conceived by Virgil is a background against which such conduct is seen for what it is - it becomes something very like sin.

25 Glover, 204.
In the tragic flaw of Aeneas, then, the ancient and modern viewpoints differ. The modern reader finds the hero most guilty in the abandonment of Dido, but Virgil intended his guilt to lie in staying with the queen so long.\textsuperscript{26} Virgil puts more stress on the wrong done to Rome, the modern stresses the wrong he has done to Dido.

To offset the prejudice which springs from Aeneas' desertion of Dido, it should be noted that there is no explicit mention by him of marriage. In fact, it has been shown that he denied such an intention.\textsuperscript{27} Further, while the relations of Aeneas and the queen are left in some uncertainty, Dido seems certain she will not bear him a child.\textsuperscript{28} This shows at least the fact that Aeneas did not take every advantage of the queen before abandoning her. Rather it seems to suggest that either the cave scene was just the result of passion and he never really loved the queen (which shall be proved false), or he was thoughtful enough of Dido not to increase her pain beyond due measure by the parting which he saw almost as an inevitability. The second alternative is much more probable, especially since confirmation of its truth is found in Virgil's comment on Dido - "omnia tuta timens."

\textsuperscript{26} Pease, 45, also Glover, 202, also Evans, 103.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Aeneid}, IV, 339-340.
\textsuperscript{28} Pease, 45.
The stay of Aeneas at Carthage is truly a tragic flaw if its effect on the hero is considered. Since Aeneas loved Dido, his struggle with his heart shaking emotions and his mastery of them are as tragic for him as for her. His passion and hers, natural and condoned, clashes with the purposes of an irresistible and righteous fate. The conflict of human wills with this fate makes the tragedy. The separation of the lovers was as great a source of sorrow to Aeneas as to Dido, but the Trojan hero does not manifest his grief as clearly as Dido. This shall be shown in more detail when another aspect of his character is treated.

Aristotle asks that the tragic character be endowed with propriety which seems to mean that there should be nothing incongruous in the character as represented by the poet. Confirmation of this is found in Aristotle's statement that it is a violation of this quality if a woman is portrayed as terrible or valiant. Virgil's portrait of Aeneas seems to fulfill this demand:

Aeneas by the fundamental scheme of the poem has to be an idealized and symbolic character... He had to be a warrior and legislator, a founder, a governor.

Certainly these characteristics are proper to the hero of an epic. Even physically, he is "... a fine figure of a man, strong in body and mind", a quality not unimportant in the mind of a

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29 Rand, 364.
30 Aristotle, 1454A.
31 Mackail, Virgil and His Meaning to the World of Today, 103.
32 Sikes, 189.
Roman, who placed great importance on physical fitness and prowess. Propriety of character is also seen in the dominating motive force of the actions of Aeneas: "Aeneas should be considered as a man, a man of destiny to whom love was of importance second to his mission." As a consequence of his confidence in his destiny, he is enduring and courageous in battle. Aeneas is, therefore, outstanding in the manly virtues.

Whether or not Aeneas is true to life is more open to debate. The doubt springs partly from the virtues given to his hero by Virgil. A very common criticism of the character of Aeneas is given by Sikes who finds a paradox in his character; Aeneas does not win our sympathy because he has too many virtues, not because he has too few. Because Virgil tried to make his hero supreme in virtue, he failed to make him human and true to life. Tennyson makes the same mistake in portraying King Arthur.

On the other hand, it must be remembered that Aeneas is not so obvious a character as Dido; his actions need more interpretation. If this is done properly, Aeneas takes on more life and reality. In his desertion of Dido, - to begin with a point that has provoked most critics into enmity of the Trojan hero, Aeneas

33 Evans, 99.
34 Sellar, 398.
35 Sikes, 192.
cannot appreciate the intensity of Dido's nature, - a limitation which blinds him to the intense pain his decision causes the queen.

The tragedy very largely depends on mutual misunderstanding: an ambitious and unimaginative man is brought into contact with an emotional woman whose temperament is beyond her own control. Aeneas is not deliberately brutal; he merely fails to understand why Dido cannot view the position sensibly.36

This brings out the fact that Aeneas and Dido lived according to different philosophies, - Dido is primarily Epicurean, Aeneas is Stoic. Aeneas gives primacy to duty, Dido, to love and joy.

An even more vulnerable aspect of the character of Aeneas is his automatic acceptance of the will of the gods. This does not seem fitted to a character who is true to life:

In the part he plays he is conceived as one chosen by the supreme purpose of the gods, as an instrument of their will and thus necessarily unmoved by the ordinary human impulses... That he is on the one hand the passive receptacle of divine guidance, and on the other the impersonation of a modern ideal of humanity playing a part in a rude and turbulent time, are the two main causes of the tame and colorless character of the protagonist.37

Certainly, if Sellar's statement is true, Aeneas fails signally in Aristotle's demand for a character true to life. Men are not conceived as passive instruments, who exercise no influence over

37 Sellar, 309.
their destiny. Rather, "it is not in our stars, but in ourselves ..."). But there is a vast difference between the passive submission of an instrument to the hands of a directing providence and the wilful submission of a hero to his destiny.

The keynote of Aeneas' character is complete submission to fate, as represented by Jupiter, but he does not submit blindly. Stoicism demands a willing acquiescence and Aeneas obeys against his wish, - "Italiam non sponte sequor", - but with the full assent of his will. This is Stoicism at its height. "Superanda omnis fortuna ferendo est."38

Because Aeneas always does what pleases the gods, and does so willingly, he is not a mere automaton. The proof that he is a real man comes in cases like the one above where the will of the gods conflicts with his own desires. First impressions are liable to be unjust to a character like Aeneas. For this reason, a careful study will now be made to vindicate the character of Aeneas as a man who is true to life. It must be remembered always that Aeneas is a Stoic and that it is characteristic of the Stoic to repress and hide his true emotions.

Virgil first gives an idea of his hero when the shipwrecked men land on the shores of Carthage. Aeneas addresses them:

\[
\text{revocate animos maestumque timorem mittite; forsan et haec olim meminisse juvabit.}
\]

38 Sikes, 187.
These are the words of a brave man of action, who has encountered perils, does not wear his feelings on his sleeve, whose vision is set on a distant goal, which somehow he will reach; deep woe at heart with mastery of emotion, supreme reserve and resolution, these are the fundamental traits of the character of Aeneas.40

In the fourth book also, it is possible to interpret the character of the hero by looking beyond the external actions and words to the feelings concealed beneath. The first impulse of the reader is to say that Dido's love has no real effect on the Trojan hero, that the whole affair is merely an interlude. But the opposite is true because the stay at Carthage brought real suffering to Aeneas as well as to Dido. This must now be proved.

In the beginning of the fourth book, it is true that Virgil gives all his attention to Dido and does not mention the reactions of Aeneas at all. Later on also, it is Dido and her interior feelings that are most clearly manifested, chiefly because it is more consonant with her nature to speak out what is in her heart. No hint is given of the feelings of Aeneas until Jupiter first

39 Aeneid, I, 202-209.
40 Rand, 352.
sends Mercury to command him to leave Carthage.

Heu, quid agat? quo nunc reginam furentem audeat adfatu? quae prima exordia sumat?41

He does not wish to pain Dido, yet he must obey the gods. The decision to start preparing in secret (ll.290-291) is typical of a man who puts off an unpleasant duty. From this part of the episode until the end, the emotions of Aeneas can be studied more easily because Virgil drops more hints of his reactions.

After the first impassioned speech by Dido, where she pleads with him, bewails his abandonment of her and regrets that she has not even a child to remind her of him, Virgil writes:

Dixerat. Ille Jovis monitis immota tenebat lumina et obnixus curam sub corde premebat.42

In itself the external act of casting down his eyes might signify that Aeneas was not at all moved by the queen, but the final phrase shows he has feelings, - "and with a struggle he crushed the anguish in his heart." The phrase recalls that of the first book (1.204) - "premit altum sub corde dolorem." He hid his feelings then to hearten his men, now it is to remain obedient to the gods for signs of love would make the parting only more difficult.43 Cartault maintains: "Enee ne partage point l'afiec­tion de Didon et son coeur reste froid."44 Mackail also says

41 Aeneid, IV, 283-284.
42 Aeneid, IV, 331-332.
43 Rand, 555.
44 Cartault, 299.
that "His entanglement at Carthage brings him no pleasure while it lasts and he breaks it off with a sombre acquiescence." How wide of the truth these statements are should soon be made clear.

If it is taken as granted that Aeneas loved Dido and was seeking the most painless way of terminating a situation that had become impossible for him, then his words and actions become more intelligible. If this is not taken as granted, many lines are very difficult of explanation. Rand penetrates the intention of Virgil most successfully in explaining the character of Aeneas. He clearly shows that when Aeneas speaks of his gratitude to Dido, he is restraining himself from giving way completely to his emotions. His denial of his intention to marry her, his deliberate insistence on his resolution to go to Italy are cruel, but not so cruel as the attempt to soften the inevitable parting by expressing his affection and love for her. The latter course would only have encouraged the queen to new efforts. His predicament and the tragedy of the situation are found by Rand in the last words of the speech of Aeneas: "Italiam non sponte sequor." Italiam expresses his mission as manifested by the gods, non sponte expresses his personal desire and love, and sequor expresses the resolution he adopts. Surely in this struggle and

45 Mackail, *Virgil and His Meaning to the World of Today*, 103.
46 *Aeneid*, IV, 332, 393, etc.
47 *Rand*, 358.
48 Ibid., 359.
the suffering that it necessarily involved, Aeneas is more true to life than many of Virgil's commentators believe him to be. Only after Dido has been carried into the palace, faint from the excess of her feeling, is the love of Aeneas for the queen shown:

\[
\text{at pius Aeneas, quamquam lenire dolentem}
\]

\[
solando cupit et dictu avertere curas,}
\]

\[
multa gemens magnoque animum labefactus amore}
\]

\[
jussa tamen divum exsequitur classemque revisit.49
\]

The most important word for expressing the feeling of Aeneas is \textit{amor}, the word for passionate love; yet because he is \textit{pius Aeneas}, he fulfills the commands of the gods. If Aeneas had weakened and gone to the palace to tell the queen of his intention to stay, then sympathy would have been with the hero, but this act would have spoiled him as a true to life character. It would have reversed the picture Virgil has constructed so carefully in the preceding books. The man who is obedient to the gods would have been replaced by a stranger.

However, there is weakness in the picture of Aeneas as a true to life character.

For though Aeneas can explain to others where he is going and that it is the will of the gods, he does not seem able to make it clear to himself. He knows that he is to seek Italy, but in spite of the abundance of revelations, he is outside the council of the gods. He needs, from time to time, the hand of heaven to push him forward. His quest is not a spiritual or inner

49 \textit{Aeneid}, IV, 393-396.
necessity to him... Aeneas did not consciously have a conviction of a future which would be the necessary spiritual outcome of his principles, and this want of clearness and conviction tends to mar a fine conception.50

In other words, Italy seems to Aeneas merely to be a region, not an idea. This is incongruous in a man who is destined to found a new people. There is, of course, some growth in the character of Aeneas, which might partly account for this deficiency. But he had already received revelations from Creusa and Venus; moreover he had clearly informed Andromache of his mission. Where, then, is the vision that has kept him constant for six years? A man cannot forget the mission that has made him a wanderer for six years. Aeneas is weak and colorless as a character because there is no inner urge which corresponds or matches the commands and revelations of the gods.

Duckworth says51 that Virgil had an epic precedent for the forgetting of the commands of the gods. In Homer, the heroes either forget or appear ignorant of the commands of the deities. But precedents do not remove the inconsistency of characters.

Aristotle's fourth demand for a true character is that he be consistently represented throughout the play. Because he is not true to life, Aeneas is also inconsistent in his actions.

51 G. Duckworth, Foreshadowing and Suspense in the Epics of Homer, Apollonius and Vergil, Harvard University Press, Princeton, 1933, 12
To remain so long at Carthage is directly against the will of the gods; to fulfill the commands of Mercury so exactly is the essence of pietas. Since forgetfulness of the command cannot be defended in Aeneas, his disobedience was a deliberate lapse from the characteristic virtue of pietas. What Rand says of the discouragement of Aeneas may be accepted, but his mistake is not due to forgetfulness or ignorance.

On the night before Aeneas sails from Carthage, Virgil writes that he returned to the ship.

Aeneas celsi in puppi iam certus eundi carpebat somnos rebus iam rite paratis.52

But Aeneas had just left Dido after an unusually painful scene.

If he is really in love with the queen, how can he sleep so calmly?

A la dernière nuit de Didon, Virgile oppose par un contraste cruel la dernière nuit d'Énée à Carthage; Énée a tout préparé methodiquement, c'est la seule préoccupation; sa résolution de partir est prise définitivement, et il goute paisiblement le sommeil, tandis que Didon veille et se ronge. Cette attitude découle logiquement du parti qu'a pris Virgile de le montrer docile aux dieux et extérieurement impassable; on regrette qu'il n'éprouve point... au moins quelque inquiétude a propos de Didon.53

Evans also remarks that if Aeneas loves Dido, it is difficult to understand this reaction.54 But Aeneas is not without defenders.

52 Aeneid, IV, 554-555.
53 Cartault, 330.
54 Evans, 102.
Rand finds a conclusion exactly opposite to the adverse criticism.

Carpebat somnos... is this a sign of heartlessness? Rather after the anguish of his own struggle and the pain of his sympathy with Dido's grief, he gains that peace which succeeds a bitter fight, and yields to his exhaustion when all has been done that he can do.55

But it is still doubtful whether or not this is a normal reaction, whether it is consistent with the circumstances Aeneas has just endured. Though he may have been exhausted, he was still stirred to the depths of his soul. A suspicion arises at to whether or not Virgil may not have been preparing the way for the reappearance of Mercury, who asks Aeneas to depart immediately. The sleep appears to be merely a dramatic expedient which is not too artistically handled. As a consequence the character of Aeneas suffers from a lack of consistency.

What then is to be concluded about the character of Aeneas? It is not completely satisfying from a dramatic point of view. This may be due partly to the incomplete condition in which the Aeneid was left by Virgil, but even beyond that there is an incompleteness in the character itself.

The character of Aeneas then is a failure, for want of completeness and conviction, but... a failure which opened for all time a door into a new world, which brought

55 Rand, 362.
under poetry’s survey great conceptions of man, the agent of heaven, attempting and achieving acts small in themselves but of incredible consequence for mankind, of a divine purpose and providence.56

In summing up impressions of Aeneas’ character, some points need emphasis. First, the final solution adopted by Aeneas - the decision to leave Carthage and Dido, undoubtedly stamps him a hero. He saw the right values of love and duty.

In brief, Aeneas is an epic hero whose heroicity is moral rather than physical. He has his faults and sinks again and again under the burden of destiny laid upon him by the will of the gods; but he invariably rises again, until, after being tried in the furnace of suffering, we see him emerge in the latter half of the Aeneid a true Roman, justum et tenacem virum propositi.57

But even if this is admitted, there is no doubt that "a little of the sacred fires of rebellion would have carried Aeneas straight to our heart of hearts."58 The humanity of Aeneas would have been more deeply appreciated if it had been emphasised by Virgil; but Aeneas is a Stoic who must not reveal his emotions. Virgil enhances the characteristic by making the references to his interior feelings very brief. Artistically speaking, this is a defect, because the character of Aeneas is not sufficiently clear to the

56 Grant, 18.
58 Matthaei, 19.
reader. Because Virgil could not capture in its entirety the nobility of the figure in his imagination, Aeneas is cold, distant, unfeeling and somewhat removed from men.

There is another factor that would make Aeneas less humane:

As the head of his people he was not only their general but also their high priest, and this role, like his monarchic power, both elevated and isolated him, making him one of the loneliest characters in literature, more lonely even than Dido, who does have some confidante in Anna. 59

He is also called a pathetic and heroic figure, removed from humanity in his virtues as well as in his shortcomings. 60

Because of the combination of all these factors, there is not the same feeling of kinship with Aeneas as with other characters. By doing what is right, he disappoints the reader, - a disappointment which can be traced back to the poet. Whether, as Norwood says, 61 it is because Virgil let Dido become more than a secondary figure, or whether, as Conway believes, 62 it is because Aeneas first put love before duty and then reversed his decision, the episode brings Aeneas down in the eyes of the ordinary reader.

If for us the character of Aeneas suffers by his desertion of Dido, that is simply because the poet, seized with intense pity for the

59 Pease, 41.
60 Mackail, Virgil and His Meaning to the World of Today, 103.
61 Norwood, 147.
62 Conway, New Studies of a Great Inheritance, 159.
injured queen, seems for once, like his own hero, to have forgotten his mission in the poem, and at the very moment when he means to show Aeneas performing the noblest act of self sacrifice, renouncing his individual passion and listening to the stern call of duty, human nature gets the better of him, and what he meant to paint as a noble act has come out on his canvas as a mean one. 63

Dramatically, he is overshadowed by the character of Dido, but he is certainly not a colorless and uninspiring figure, even in this episode. Aeneas is shown as a national hero, who had the courage to renounce his love in order to follow the call of duty. It can be truly said that not the least of the penalties consequent on this heroic decision has been the loss of esteem suffered by the hero in the minds of many readers of Virgil.

63 Fowler, 416.
CONCLUSION

After studying Virgil's treatment of the plot and characters of the Dido episode, it is easy to confirm the statements made by so many commentators on his dramatic ability. Virgil adopts in his epic many characteristics of tragic poetry, particularly as it has been developed by the Greeks. It is hard to find a parallel closer to the plots so dear to the Greek dramatists than Virgil's story of Dido. The Roman poet tells a story of conflict, the conflict of love and duty, bringing in its train death to Dido and a great sorrow to the heart of Aeneas. The general theme is intensified by a powerful concept of that darkly dominant fate which plays so great a part in the plays of the Greek tragedians.

Virgil has, moreover, whether deliberately or not, been faithful to the demands of Aristotle in his development of the plot. In itself, the tale has a unity and continuity which needs no external intervention to bring about a satisfactory conclusion. In the details too, it is easy to find the marks of a true tragedy, complication, with the organic development of incidents, climax, and denouement, involving both an anagnorisis or recognition and a turning point. The death of Dido provides a perfect instance of the tragic incident, which is mentioned by Aristotle. There are also technical details of development, contrast and irony.

Since Virgil's prime interest was the production of a Roman epic, worthy to be compared with those of Greece, he is
faithful, in his handling of the story, to the epic tradition set by Homer. On this account, the gods are employed extensively by him. The difference between tragedy and epic is felt most strongly here because the traditional development of these two kinds of poetry were more or less opposed in their use of the gods. Virgil, however, uses the gods so freely, because he wants to imitate the example of Homer and not because the weakness of the plot forces him to find help in some external agency.

Though the characters are somewhat weaker than the plot, probably because the poet was more interested in the story than in the development of the characters, the merits of Virgil's leading figures should not be overlooked. Due credit should be given Aeneas, who is the victim of a great deal more censure than he deserves. He suffers so much at the hands of critics for two main reasons; first, because sympathetic study is not given to his part in the plot, and second, because there is a natural prejudice against his decision to abandon Dido. But even the most hostile critic must admire the course he finally adopts and the steadfast adherence to it which he displays. He also fulfills in a high degree Aristotle's requirements for a good tragic character, - he is noble, good, true to life and consistent. The trait of forgetfulness or lack of interest in his mission is a fault that can be forgiven when the skillful delineation of the Stoic ideal is recalled.
Even more may be said for Dido, since she is undoubtedly the dominant figure of the story and the one who wins our interest and sympathy. This would be impossible were she not faithfully drawn and as naturally convincing as a real person. Because she is so like ourselves, the pity which is the proper effect of tragedy is strongly felt by the reader. She is throughout a queen and a woman of tender heart and noble impulse.

Seeing how wonderfully he has succeeded in catching the spirit of tragedy in his verse, and how aptly his melancholy genius portrays the "tears of things", it is easy to agree with the beautiful tribute paid to Virgil by Tennyson:

Thou that seest Universal Nature moved by Universal Mind,
Thou majestic in thy sadness at the doubtful doom of human kind...
I salute thee Mantovano, I that loved thee since my day began,
Wielder of the stateliest measure ever moulded by the lips of man.
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