



Unmarried Dido: Aeneid 4.550-52

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UNMARRIED DIDO: *AENEID* 4.550-52

“Unhappy Dido” is perhaps the most debated figure in the *Aeneid* after Aeneas himself, but the immediate causes of her unhappiness are no mystery. Having escaped her murderous brother and founded what looks to be a great city in Africa, she falls desperately for a man whose destiny calls him elsewhere, even as hers keeps her where she is. Her resistance to the onset of passion does no good at all, and she finds herself the subject of gossip among her citizens. Moreover, beginning the affair with Aeneas has meant breaking her vow to her deceased husband Sychaeus. In the end, she kills herself and damns Aeneas and his descendants to eternal enmity with Carthage.

Scholarly debate on Dido focuses on several interrelated issues¹, of which the most contentious is perhaps the question of guilt. That is, does Dido deserve any blame for the “marriage” with Aeneas and its consequences²—if not in our eyes then in Vergil’s or those of his original audience? This can, of course, be extended to the greater debates on the mission of Aeneas in general³. Similarly, the connection between Vergil’s Dido and Roman history has been explored both as a way of locating the character against the backdrop of Roman relations with Carthage

¹ The scholarly literature on Dido is predictably abundant. I have tried to keep citation to a reasonable minimum; accordingly, the bibliography to this article is representative rather than complete. For recent overviews of approaches and problems, see N. M. HORSFALL, *A Companion to the Study of Virgil*, Leiden, 1996, 123-34, and S. SPENCE, *Varium et mutabile*: Voices of Authority in *Aeneid* 4, in C. PERKELL, ed., *Reading Vergil’s Aeneid: An Interpretive Guide*, Norman, Okla., 1999, 80-95 and 317-19. A useful and comprehensive treatment of the role of Dido in the *Aeneid* is R. C. MONTI, *The Dido Episode and the Aeneid: Roman Social and Political Values in the Epic*, Leiden, 1981; his account is particularly useful on the political side of Dido and her relationship with Aeneas. For a useful look at the complexity of Vergil’s Dido as part of the dynamic complexity of Augustan literature and culture, see K. GALINSKY, *Augustan Culture: An Interpretive Introduction*, Princeton, 1996, 229-31.

² N. RUDD, *Lines of Enquiry*, Cambridge, 1976, 32-53 is a perceptive study of the concept of guilt as it applies to Dido. Related to this question is whether the relationship between Dido and Aeneas can be regarded as a legitimate marriage by Roman standards. J. L. MOLES, *Aristotle and Dido’s Hamartia*, G&R 31, 1984, 48-54 uses Aristotle’s conception of tragedy to analyze Dido’s *culpa* with particular reference to *Aen.* 4.165-72.

³ See C. G. PERKELL, *On Creusa, Dido, and the Quality of Victory in Virgil’s Aeneid*, in H. P. FOLEY, ed., *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*, New York, 1981, 355-77; PERKELL uses the Dido episode (along with the Creusa episode) to explore the question of *pietas* and its potential to dehumanize. For the position, in my view too extreme, that the Dido episode is designed to call into question the value and ethics of Aeneas’ mission, see S. FARRON, *The Aeneas-Dido Episode as an Attack on Aeneas’ Mission and Rome*, G&R 27, 1980, 34-47.

and the Near East, as well as a way of determining the original audience's likely response to her in the *Aeneid*⁴. Critics also continue to debate the extent to which her part in the *Aeneid* owes to earlier Greek and Latin sources as well as the way the Vergilian Dido is the basis for numerous later Didos in antiquity and beyond⁵. Finally, the affinities of Vergil's Dido narrative with tragic drama remain an active and fruitful area of research⁶. In the present discussion I will try only to adumbrate Dido's character in one respect, without attempting to address the larger question of her guilt or of the implications of her story for a reading of the *Aeneid* as a whole: Dido is *infelix*, "unhappy", because of what she does and suffers, but what one does and suffers comes at least in part from within. In what follows, I will explore the implications of a debated phrase (*more ferae* 4.551) for the *character* of Dido and outline, briefly, a few of the ways in which this understanding of her character can illuminate her role in the poem. The phrase in question is designed, I will argue, to suggest a number of different readings of Dido's behavior and ultimately to evoke at this juncture in the poem a set of images and allusions that consistently associate Dido with the wild, uncivilized world—a world that differs sharply from both the Carthage that she has tried to create and the future Rome that governs Aeneas' destiny.

The passage in question:

'non licuit thalami expertem sine crimine uitam
degere more ferae, talis nec tangere curas;
non seruata fides cineri promissa Sychaeo'.

[*Aeneid* 4.550-52]⁷

⁴ See N. M. HORSFALL, Dido in the Light of History, PVS 13, 1973-74, 1-13 and R. HEXTER, Sidonian Dido, in R. HEXTER and D. SELDEN, eds., *Innovations of Antiquity*, New York, 1992, 332-84.

⁵ On the literary origins of the Dido story see HORSFALL (n. 4 above) and HEXTER (n. 4 above) 336-40. Recently, D. NELIS, Vergil's *Aeneid* and the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius, Leeds, 2001, 125-85 explores the connection between Vergil's Dido and Apollonius' *Argonautica* as does N. KREVANS, Dido, Hypsipyle, and the Bedclothes, *Hermathena* 173-174, 2003-04, 175-83. M. DESMOND, *Reading Dido: Gender, Textuality, and the Medieval Aeneid*, Minneapolis, 1994 and J. WATKINS, *The Specter of Dido: Spenser and Virgilian Epic*, New Haven, 1995 both trace post-classical incarnations of Dido and her story.

⁶ See most recently SPENCE (n. 1 above) 85-90 and V. PANOUSI, Vergil's Ajax: Allusion, Tragedy, and Heroic Identity in the *Aeneid*, CA 21, 2002, 95-134 (with useful bibliography at 95 n. 1). RUDD (n. 2 above) and MOLES (n. 2 above) are particularly interested in Aristotelian ideas of *hamartia* and the tragic. See also A. WLOSOK, Vergils Didotragödie: Ein Beitrag zum Problem des Tragischen in der *Aeneis*, in H. GÖRGEMANNS and E. SCHMIDT, eds., *Studien zum antiken Epos*, Meisenheim am Glan, 1976, 228-50; W. CLAUSEN, *Virgil's Aeneid and the Tradition of Hellenistic Poetry*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1987, 53-60; and E. L. HARRISON, *The Tragedy of Dido*, EMC 33, 1989, 1-21.

⁷ Citations are from MYNORS' Oxford text; all translations are my own.

The odd statement above has puzzled Vergil's readers, and while commentators have sometimes explained the lines to their own satisfaction, Dido's meaning here remains somewhat murky. On the face of it, Dido would seem to complain that she has not been allowed to live her life without marriage, like a wild animal, thereby escaping the painful situation in which she has twice found herself, once when her husband Sychaeus was murdered, now again when her lover Aeneas is preparing to depart in order to fulfil a destiny that does not include her. Controversy has centered on the phrase *more ferae*, and while all major commentators on these verses tend toward similar conclusions, a re-evaluation is in order. A clearer understanding of Dido's words and their intertextual associations will shed light on her character and fate.

It is of course true that any text may receive different but complementary interpretations, but in the case of Dido's complaint here it is especially likely that the lines cannot be pinned down to only one set of associations. As Book 4 progresses, Dido becomes increasingly irrational, and anyone who wishes to interpret her statement here should realize that she herself may not completely understand what she is saying. Thus, even in trying to decide between the interpretations that scholars have offered, we will have to realize that different members of Vergil's audience will have understood Dido to mean different things. These different meanings, I think, lie along a spectrum well defined by commentators beginning with Quintilian. Dido can legitimately be understood to say "I was not allowed to remain unmarried, period" (animals do not marry), or "I was not allowed to go on as an honorable widow" (as even some animals do), or even "I was not allowed to live with complete freedom from social constraint" (animals do not have social constraints).

All of these interpretations of the passage speak only to the question of what the character Dido is herself trying to say, but beyond that question there is another. As students of narratology have recognized, a speech delivered by a character can arise from two separate, even contradictory, motives: that of the speaking character within the narrative and that of the narrator who stands outside it⁸. Thus Dido tries to convey something to Anna, but Vergil may use her words to convey all sorts of messages to his audience. In other words, whether we accept or reject the ideas of any given commentator about *Aeneid* 4.550-52, we are still dealing only with what Dido is trying to say to Anna, not with what Vergil is trying to say to us. After reviewing what different scholars have thought Dido was trying to get at in these lines, I will turn to the question of why Vergil has her say what she does.

⁸ See I. DE JONG, *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey*, Cambridge, 2001, xii (s.v. "'argument' function"), xiii-xiv (s.v. "embedded narrative"), and xv (s.v. "'key' function") with references. These terms have been developed to talk about stories embedded in larger narratives, but the basic premise applies to non-narrative speech as well.

Commentators have offered a variety of suggestions for the meaning of the phrase *more ferae*⁹. Quintilian (9.2.64) takes Dido to mean that she longs for a life that is without marriage, and thus, as she sees it, like that of animals rather than human beings¹⁰. Unfortunately, Quintilian's comments are themselves controversial¹¹, and he has been made to say several different things by critics citing him in support of their own views. Servius claims that *more ferae* refers to monogamous devotion, even after the death of the spouse; his evidence for this odd claim is the lynx¹², certainly a *fera*, but not otherwise pertinent to our text¹³. FORBIGER takes the phrase to mean that Dido suggests that she should have lived like a beast, not a human being, so that she might have resisted the joys of love and marriage¹⁴ and thus (presumably) avoided the pain of losing them. Similarly, for HEYNE and CONINGTON-NETTLESHIP, Dido's phrase indicates only that she is imagining the uncivilized world that lacks both human institutions such as marriage and, accordingly, the suffering and anguish they may entail¹⁵. HENRY sees in *more ferae* a reference to innocence, and along the same lines, PAGE sees in the life of a beast a reference not to brutality but to "simple, untrained, uncorrupted nature . . ." ¹⁶. PEASE, following OGLE¹⁷, takes the passage to mean that Dido "now

⁹ The major nineteenth- and twentieth-century commentators are addressed below. For good surveys of opinions up through the first third of the twentieth century, see C. BUSCAROLI, ed., *Il libro di Didone*, Milan, 1932, 385-88 and M. B. OGLE, *On a Passage in Vergil, Aeneid IV*, 550-51, TAPA 56, 1925, 26-36. For a possible connection between our passage and the older tradition according to which Dido killed herself to avoid marrying Iarbas, see W. F. J. KNIGHT, *Roman Vergil*, New York, 1966, 126-27.

¹⁰ *Quamquam enim de matrimonio queritur Dido, tamen huc erumpit eius adfectus, ut sine thalamis uitam non hominum putet, sed ferarum*. Quintilian is discussing *emphasis*, the figure by which hidden meaning is drawn out of a phrase.

¹¹ See, for example, OGLE (n. 9 above) 32-34 and R. G. AUSTIN, ed., *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos liber quartus*, Oxford, 1955, ad loc.

¹² On *more ferae* Servius says "Plinius in naturali historia dicit, lyncas post amissos coniuges aliis non iungi". No such passage of Pliny survives.

¹³ In a recent, as yet unpublished, paper R. MONTI has given a credible defense of Servius' position. Citing Plato, Euripides, and other Greek authors, he shows that Servius' interpretation of *more ferae*, if not his specific reference to the lynx, is grounded in one ancient tradition of thought about animals, namely that they can represent a more moral way of life than human beings.

¹⁴ A. FORBIGER, ed., *P. Vergili Maronis opera*, Leipzig, 1873, ad loc.

¹⁵ C. G. HEYNE, ed., *Publius Virgilius Maro*, Leipzig, 1832, ad loc.; J. CONINGTON and H. NETTLESHIP, eds., *The Works of Virgil with a Commentary*, London, 1884, ad loc.

¹⁶ J. HENRY, *Aeneida, or Critical, Exegetical, and Aesthetical Remarks on the Aeneis*, Dublin, 1878, vol. 2, 789-98; T. E. PAGE, ed., *The Aeneid of Virgil*, London, 1894, ad loc. This is essentially the view also of G. S. DUCLOS, Dido as "Triformis Diana", *Vergilius* 15, 1969, 33-41 and KNIGHT (n. 9 above), 126-27. BUSCAROLI (n. 9 above) 386, citing Lucretius' discussion of early man, also sees *more ferae* as indicating a state of primitive innocence.

¹⁷ OGLE (n. 9 above) and A. S. PEASE, ed., *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos liber quartus*, Cambridge, Mass., 1935, ad loc. are followed by T. E. KINSEY, *Virgil, Aeneid 4.550-1*, LCM 7, 1982, 14; F. KLINGNER, *Virgil: Bucolica, Georgica, Aeneis*, Zurich and Stuttgart, 1967, 455-56; B. OTIS, *Virgil: A Study in Civilized Poetry*, Oxford, 1964, 269 n. 2; and C. SEGAL, *Dido's Hesitation in Aeneid 4*, CW 84, 1990, 9 n. 23.

sees that she should not have tried to have any marital relations with Aeneas, in view of her faith pledged to Sychaeus, for by doing so she has degenerated from the self-restraint of a civilized human being to the lower (because less intelligent and less morally controlled) level of the brute". For OGLE and PEASE *more ferae* is Dido's own self-reproach, since wild animals do not have legitimate wedlock, only promiscuous passion. Whatever their disagreements over points of detail, these commentators agree that Dido wishes to have been allowed to live without the pain brought about by her dealings, lawful or not, with marriage and its equivalents. The other details of these lines are generally subordinated to that view, whether the particular commentator thinks Dido is primarily concerned with her own distress about abandonment or with guilt over her broken promise to Sychaeus. This view is certainly not without its merits, but it does not really explain why Vergil has chosen the phrase *more ferae* in particular.

Since AUSTIN is the most recent of the major commentators, I will direct the majority of my comments to his analysis. He has identified three problematic phrases: *non licuit*, *thalami expertem*, and *more ferae*; I think we need to look carefully at the meaning of *sine crimine* as well. The meaning of *non licuit* depends substantially on the following *thalami expertem*¹⁸, and therefore I will take the second phrase first. "Unacquainted with the marriage bed" can only suggest virginity, not, as AUSTIN would have it, widowhood¹⁹. He argues that *uidua*, when used of vines, means not "widowed" but "unmarried"²⁰, and he is right, but it is one thing to show that a particular phrase meaning "widowed" can also mean "unmarried", another to prove that phrases meaning "unmarried" will readily suggest "widowed". *Experts*²¹ suggests lack of any experience or participation, not temporary lack of contact. Servius Auctus, followed by R. D. WILLIAMS, takes *thalami expertem* to refer only to remarriage²², but this too is strained, since a woman once married can never again be *thalami experts*.

We return now to *non licuit*: whom does Dido blame with these words? AUSTIN's solution is Anna, the addressee of the preceding lines, but if we reject his reading of *thalami expertem*, Anna becomes an odd choice. Dido can blame Anna for encouraging her affair with Aeneas, but not for forcing her to marry Sy-

¹⁸ See SEGAL (n. 17 above) 9-10 on the marital associations of *thalamus* in *Aeneid* 4.

¹⁹ Pace OGLE (n. 9 above) 35 who points out that *thalami experts* should mean "not joined in lawful wedlock". On this reading, the phrase might indicate promiscuity, since it could indicate quasi-marital relations. If OGLE is right to stress that *thalamus* suggests a legitimate married state, his interpretation seems to strain the meaning of *experts*, which more commonly means something like "untouched by" rather than "not compliant with" *vel sim*. Similar to OGLE on this point are K. QUINN, *Latin Explorations: Critical Studies in Roman Literature*, London, 1963, 55 and WLOSOK (n. 6 above) 246.

²⁰ AUSTIN (n. 11 above) 163 refers to the use of *uidua* of a vine at Catullus 62.49. *Vidua* is never used by Vergil, though he does use the participle *uiduatus*.

²¹ On *experts* see TLL s.v., *passim*, but especially I.A.2.III.D.

²² Servius on *thalami expertem*: "non omnino, sed post Sychaeum".

chaes years earlier. This decision was her father's (as 1.345-46 make clear), and it seems rather forced to insert him into her speech here. Others have suggested, more plausibly, that it is directed at the gods or fate²³, and thus *non licuit* must be addressed to the world at large: "I was not permitted to remain a virgin" because, by and large, princesses are made to marry. It may be worthwhile to consider OGLE's suggestion²⁴, that *non licuit* does not so much mean "I was not allowed by you (or by fate, etc.)" but rather "it wasn't possible after all (as you or others may have thought)". It is this understanding of the phrase which allows OGLE (and thus PEASE) to argue that Dido reproaches herself with these lines, but, as often in interpretations of this passage, it requires a distinctly exotic understanding of an ordinary Latin phrase.

Now for *sine crimine*: Catullus 62²⁵, the same poem that AUSTIN cites to justify taking *thalami expertem* to mean "widowed", makes it clear that a certain blame-worthy selfishness might easily be attributed to women who remained unmarried. AUSTIN and others seem to take the phrase to mean no more than "without disapproval" by Anna (or for that matter by anyone), while HENRY goes so far as to translate it as "innocent". Yet *crimen* is a strong word for such disapproval; it suggests instead accusations of wrongdoing, and that is perhaps why some commentators have tried to explain our next phrase *more ferae* as meaning "promiscuously"²⁶, one of the interpretations attributed to Quintilian's discussion. On this reading, Dido now sees that she could not have her relationship with Aeneas and get away with it.

AUSTIN is right to deny this reading of *more ferae*, but his suggestion "like a woodland creature", is little better. *More ferae*, literally "in the manner of a wild female"²⁷, might suggest, if the female in question is a beast, ferocity as much as promiscuity: does Dido, then, want to be a savage? It seems clear that either *more ferae* here must mean something entirely different, or the female in question is not, or at least is not only, a beast. As we have seen, most commentators have understood the phrase to indicate, in some form, the simplicity and presumably

²³ T. LADEWIG, C. SCHAPER, and P. DEUTICKE, eds., *Vergils Gedichte*, Berlin, 1912, 184; QUINN (n. 19 above) 55.

²⁴ OGLE (n. 9 above) 35-36. These are my paraphrases and not direct quotations from OGLE.

²⁵ See Catullus 62.56-61.

²⁶ LADEWIG, SCHAPER, and DEUTICKE (n. 23 above) 184; OGLE (n. 9 above) 35; BUSCAROLI (n. 9 above) 387-88; PEASE (n. 17 above) 449; K. QUINN, *Virgil's Aeneid: A Critical Description*, Ann Arbor, 1968, 336-39; and WLOSOK (n. 6 above) 246.

²⁷ Forms of *ferus* (adjective and substantive) occur twenty-four times in the *Aeneid* aside from our passage. Nineteen occurrences refer to animals, though of these, four are in some ways ambiguous in that they have links to human beings or anthropomorphic entities; these are 2.51 (the Trojan Horse), 6.285 (monsters in the Underworld, including Scylla, the Harpies, and the Gorgons), 7.20 (men whom Circe has turned into beasts), and 7.489 (Silvia's stag). Five instances refer to human beings or gods: 2.326 (Jupiter), 4.466 (Aeneas), 6.49 and 6.80 (the Sibyl, or literally her *fera corda*), and finally 10.12 (Carthage, which can only be viewed as a collective for its citizens).

anxiety-free nature of animal life. Yet this interpretation is difficult since it is unclear why Vergil's audience should make an automatic connection between *more ferae* and emotional freedom. Critics such as CONINGTON-NETTLESHIP, HENRY, and DEWITT are, I think, on firmer ground when they mention the wild life of women like Camilla²⁸, for elsewhere in the poem Dido is also associated with huntresses like Camilla and with the wild world in general.

We need not take the allusion to be a conscious formulation on the part of Dido, who clearly does not understand all the implications of her statement. QUINN's explanation²⁹ is useful: in uttering 4.550-51, Dido is fumbling with the truth, but it is a truth she does not understand, at least not fully and consciously. She says, perhaps without awareness of the implications, "like a beast", but Vergil points to a greater complex of meanings also.

Let us consider further the idea that *more ferae* connects Dido to women associated, like Camilla, with life in the wild. When Dido is introduced in Book 1, she is described by a simile³⁰ that looks back to a famous passage from the *Odyssey*:³¹

²⁸ See N. W. DEWITT, *Aeneid* IV, 551: *more ferae*, *AJP* 45, 1924, 176-78 who thinks *fera* refers to a kind of life of proud virginity in the wild.

²⁹ QUINN (n. 26 above) 336-39.

³⁰ On this simile, see especially V. PÖSCHL, *The Art of Vergil: Image and Symbol in the Aeneid*, Ann Arbor, 1962, 60-68; M. K. THORNTON, *The Adaptation of Homer's Artemis-Nausicaa Simile in the Aeneid*, *Latomus* 44, 1985, 615-22; and DUCLOS (n. 16 above) 33-34. The Homeric model: οἷη δ' Ἄρτεμις εἶσι κατ' οὐρεα ἰοχέαιρα, / ἢ κατὰ Τηϋγετον περιμήκετον ἢ Ἐρύμανθον, / τερπομένη κάπροισι καὶ ὠκείης' ἐλάφοισι / τῇ δὲ θ' ἅμα νύμφαι, κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο, / ἀγρονόμοι παίζουσι· γέγηθε δέ τε φρένα Λητώ / πασσάων δ' ὑπὲρ ἥ γε κάρη ἔχει ἠδὲ μέτωπα, / ῥεῖα τ' ἀριγνώτη πέλεται, καλαὶ δέ τε πᾶσαι / ὥς ἢ γ' ἀμφιπόλοισι μετέπρεπε παρθένος Ἀδμήης (*Od.* 6.102-9).

³¹ Even as work on intertextuality has opened up new possibilities for understanding the relationship between the Vergilian text and its predecessors and successors, work on etymology, word-play, and other verbal conceits has demonstrated the importance to Latin poetry of apparently very subtle verbal clues. In particular, Vergil has been shown to lean heavily on his audience's knowledge not only of Greek texts but also of specific Greek words and phrases. When confronted with an inexplicable Vergilian phrase, therefore, it makes sense to look for a possible Greek version that can be found in a text obviously known to Vergil. This technique will not always produce results, but here it may bear fruit. The collocation *more ferae* strongly resembles the Greek ἀγρονόμος, a word applied at *Odyssey* 6.105-06 to the nymphs who hunt with Artemis: τῇ δὲ θ' ἅμα νύμφαι, κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο, / ἀγρονόμοι παίζουσι ... "and with her frolic nymphs who dwell in the wild, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus".

If I am right that Vergil's *more ferae* is a reference to the Homeric ἀγρονόμος, then the Vergilian phrase reflects a particular understanding of each element of the Greek ἀγρονόμος, and in fact *more ferae* not only reflects Homer's nymphs—it also allows the reader to see that the different context has activated a perhaps latent set of associations. Dido's phrase is not a calque in the strict sense of the term; rather, it is an interpretive translation of Homer's ἀγρονόμος. Whereas Homer's word might be translated simply as "dwelling in the wild", Vergil has chosen to make use of a broader set of associations for both the first element (since the Greek root *agr-* can suggest the bestial as well as the rustic) and the second (since *nomos*, like the Latin *mos*, can suggest both

qualis in Eurotae ripis aut per iuga Cynthi
 exercet Diana choros, quam mille secutae
 hinc atque hinc glomerantur Oreades; illa pharetram
 fert umero gradiensque deas supereminet omnis
 (Latoniae tacitum pertemptant gaudia pectus):
 talis erat Dido . . .

[*Aen.* 1.498-503]

Just as on the banks of the Eurotas or over the ridges of Cynthus
 Diana exercises her band; following her a thousand
 Oreads throng on this side and that; she wears her quiver
 on her shoulder and, as she walks, stands above all the goddesses
 (joy assails Latona's silent heart): thus was Dido . . .

The *fera* Dido wants to resemble is not—or not only—an animal, but one of the virginal huntresses of Diana's band, perhaps even Diana herself³². Thus *sine crimine* refers not only to the disapproval of a meddling sister nor to the broken promise to Sychaeus, but also to the social censure of a woman who prefers the somewhat mannish life of a virgin huntress. Dido does not merely wish she could have been left as an *uniuira*³³ but that she could have fully entered the symbolic imagery so often associated with her, that of the huntress in the wild, a woman separate entirely from the world of men. It is important to differentiate the view presented here from the various versions of the consensus, that is, that Dido wishes that she might have remained unmarried as an escape from the pain that her “civilized” life has brought her. Whatever Dido herself is consciously trying to say, the pattern of Diana imagery that surrounds her strongly implies that, on some level, Dido does not simply wish that she had not had to suffer from her erotic relationships, but that she had not had to have such attachments in the first place.

habit—the nymphs spend time in the country—and character). Thus, Dido's *more ferae* is not so much a Latin translation of a Greek word as a Latinate interpretation of the phrase and its context. Vergil's text recognizes that what is benign in its proper place—i.e., that Diana's nymphs should be ἄρμονοι—becomes dangerous and disturbing when found elsewhere. Dido's wish that she could have lived *more ferae* points up the fundamental lack of fit between her character as an individual and her life as a member of, indeed as the head of, her society.

A comprehensive list of relevant works on Vergil's use of such features of language is beyond the scope of this paper. For a similar example of bilingual wordplay, see C. NAPPA, Cold-Blooded Virgil: Bilingual Wordplay at *Georgics* 2.483-9, CQ 52.2, 2002, 617-20. Two important book-length studies are J. J. O'HARA, *True Names: Vergil and the Alexandrian Tradition of Etymological Wordplay*, Ann Arbor, 1996 and M. PASCHALIS, *Virgil's Aeneid: Semantic Relations and Proper Names*, Oxford, 1997.

³² Citing Ovid and the *Ciris*, DEWITT (n. 28 above) 177-78 suggests, as I do, that *fera* might naturally be taken to suggest a follower of Diana.

³³ On the ideal of the *uniuira* see G. WILLIAMS, *Some Aspects of Roman Marriage Ceremonies and Ideals*, JRS 48, 1958, 23-24; RUDD (n. 2 above) 42-47; and MONTI (n. 1 above) 34-55. MONTI offers a useful correction of R. HEINZE, *Virgils epische Technik*, ³1915 = *Virgil's Epic Technique*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993, 99.

Her model is not the animal that never marries because it is subhuman but the nymph who avoids men because she prefers the virginal life of the followers of Diana/Artemis³⁴. So while commentators rightly stress that Dido's problem is that she has suffered from her relationships with men, the problem goes further than they have generally seen. Whatever Dido realizes about her own nature, Vergil lets us see that she has strong affinities with the virginal females whose existence in Greco-Roman myth represents at best a margin of civilized life and at worst an inversion of, or challenge to, it. Our lines might then be paraphrased

"I was not allowed to live my life as a virgin without being thought immoral or selfish, like a wild female (nymph, huntress, Diana), never to come into contact with such anxieties as these (feelings of abandonment occasioned by both Sychaeus and Aeneas, and feelings of guilt for betraying Sychaeus)".³⁵

In addition to the simile of 1.498-502, the imagery of Diana³⁶ attaches to Dido in at least four other ways. Before the queen herself makes an appearance, Venus tells the story of her husband's murder and her desperate flight from Tyre; Venus has disguised herself as a huntress (Aeneas thinks of Diana or one of her nymphs) and avers that Tyrian girls customarily dress in this manner (1.335-70). Also, Dido herself becomes a huntress in Book 4, where (4.133-39) she is arrayed in gold, as Artemis the huntress is in the twenty-seventh Homeric Hymn (27.1) and Callimachus' *Hymn to Artemis* (110-12)³⁷. Dido's hunting partner in Book 4 is compared to Apollo, and thus their hunt evokes those of Diana and her brother (4.143-50). Finally, at 6.450-55, Dido is compared to the moon.

³⁴ Vergil's Dido also has affinities with the Amazon Penthesilea, who is the last image that Aeneas sees on Juno's temple immediately before the first appearance of Dido. See DUCLOS (n. 16 above) 34; P. A. MILLER, *Sive deae seu sint dirae obscenaeque volucres*, *Arethusa* 22, 1989, 51-53; J. PIGON, Dido, Diana, and Penthesilea: Observations on the Queen's First Appearance in the *Aeneid*, *Eos* 79, 1991, 45-53; and SEGAL (n. 17 above) 3-4.

³⁵ It may be worth wondering too if Dido's speech is a way for Vergil to announce his own literary independence from tradition. Dido seems to have been largely known as the type of the honorable widow, and in that case, her complaint that she has not been allowed to remain that way may refer to Vergil's (or the tradition's) revision of her story.

³⁶ See R. O. A. M. LYNE, *Further Voices in Vergil's Aeneid*, Oxford, 1987, 194-98 on hunting imagery. R. A. HORNSBY, *Patterns of Action in the Aeneid: An Interpretation of Vergil's Epic Similes*, Iowa City, 1970, 89-100 is a useful discussion of the different ways Diana imagery links the various descriptions of Dido. In particular, HORNSBY is right to note the discrepancy between the nature of the imagery and the realities of Dido's life. Nevertheless, HORNSBY's view of Dido and her fate is, I think, much too harsh; there is certainly more to her character and her downfall than the "venom of her self-love" (97). DUCLOS (n. 16 above) attempts, though not entirely successfully, to interpret the complex of Diana imagery in the light of the concept of "Diana Triformis". The most recent examination of Diana imagery in Vergil's story of Dido is J. T. DYSON, *King of the Wood: The Sacrificial Victor in Virgil's Aeneid*, Norman, Okla., 2001, 149.

³⁷ In the opening of the Homeric Hymn, Artemis is called χρυσηλάκατος; in Callimachus' hymn (lines 110-12), we find Ἄρτεμι Παρθενίη Τιτυοκτόνε, χρύσεια μὲν τοι / ἔντεα καὶ ζώνη, χρύσειον δ' ἐξεύξαιο διόφρον, / ἐν δ' ἐβάλεν χρύσεια, θεή, κεμάδεσσι χαλινά. Cf. Vergil, *Aen.*

That Dido has a strong attachment to the idea of a life *never* touched by marriage is supported by another passage also:

‘si mihi non animo fixum immotumque sederet
ne cui me uinclo uellem sociare iugali,
postquam primus amor deceptam morte fefellit;
si non pertaesum thalami taedaeque fuisset,
huic uni forsan potui succumbere culpae’.

[4.15-19]

“If it did not remain my fixed and unmoved intention
that I would join myself to no one in marriage,
after my first love defrauded me by his death—
if the marriage bed and wedding torch did not irritate me,
I could perhaps have submitted to this one fault”.

She says not that she is still grieving for her former husband Sychaeus nor that she feels bound by her oath never to remarry, but rather that she finds the whole idea of marriage hard to tolerate. Her phrases for marriage (*uinculum iugale*), for the way Sychaeus’ death affected her (*deceptam morte fefellit*), and for her view of weddings (*pertaesum thalami taedaeque fuisset*) pave the way not for a confession of new love, but for the hardly romantic description of falling in love with Aeneas: *succumbere culpae*³⁸. My reading differs from that of AUSTIN most obviously in that I see in Dido’s words at 4.550-51 a rejection of marriage *per se*, but it also differs from the views of earlier commentators in that I think Dido’s words reflect more than a reaction to the pain that marriage and love have caused her: the problem is not only that Dido has suffered but that, as Vergil’s text characterizes her, she was never entirely suited to the institution of marriage in the first place. At this point, it is useful to remember that Dido is not consciously saying that she rejects marriage and that Vergil is not necessarily saying that Dido would have been happy had she only remained unmarried. The text does, however, acknowledge the anomaly of a woman like Dido—a woman ruler with strong affinities to Artemis and wild nature—marrying.

Dido has just turned her anger on Anna, who encouraged her to pursue a relationship with Aeneas. With *non licuit* she broadens her attack and also finally reveals the nature of the problem that was introduced into the poem when she

4.133-39: *reginam thalamo cunctantem ad limina primi / Poenorum expectant, ostroque insignis et auro / stat sonipes ac frena ferox spumantia mandit. / tandem progreditur magna stipante caeterua / Sidoniam picto chlamydem circumdata limbo; / cui pharetra ex auro, crines nodantur in aurum, / aurea purpuream subnectit fibula uestem.*

For a different, though not necessarily contradictory, view of the emphasis on gold in the descriptions of Dido, see B. PAVLOCK, *Eros, Imitation, and the Epic Tradition*, Ithaca and London, 1990, 76-77.

³⁸ For *deceptam morte fefellit*, see PAVLOCK (n. 37 above) 78-79. On the phrase *succumbere culpae* and its relevance to the guilt or innocence of Dido, see RUDD (n. 2 above) 39-40. On *thalamus* here, see SEGAL (n. 17 above) 9-10.

herself was: she is by nature like Diana and her nymphs. At the end of the sudden, unconscious, statement of this aspect of her nature, when she comes to the memory of past grief implied by *talis curas*, Dido reproaches herself for forgetting her promise to Sychaeus. Thus, the lines not only form a transition between the pain caused by Aeneas' impending departure and that caused by Sychaeus' death, but they also show that Dido's problem with marital love is not limited to the suffering of an abandoned woman or grieving widow. Rather, Dido is best suited by nature to live *more ferae*: not "promiscuously" or "like a woodland creature", but as a virgin huntress. In this, she is not unlike Atalanta, whose life of hunting was also brought to an end by Venus for the sake of a hero.

It will be objected that Dido says and does things that militate against a conscious aversion to romantic love³⁹. This is true enough, and I would certainly not try to remove the passion from Dido's character. Her thwarted affinity with Diana and her nymphs does not capture the "truth" of her nature any more than the incident in the cave does⁴⁰. Yet the Diana imagery is marked as significant in the text since it prefaces not only Dido's introduction and first meeting with Aeneas but also their fateful afternoon in the cave. That Dido has such anti-erotic and anti-marital sentiments may not define her, but it does help account for her inner conflict and misery, and it points up the casual cruelty of the gods who need her to ignore this aspect of herself.

The pattern of imagery associated with Dido—the association with unmarried girls (Nausicaa), and with virginal nymphs and huntresses (Diana and her entourage)—reinforces her role as a female leader. Dido's role as head of state is remarked several times in the *Aeneid* and is, of course, one of the things which renders her always a bit suspect. Her unease over the institution of marriage is more than a reaction to the tragic end of her union with Sychaeus; it is also part of her comfort as ruler in place of a man⁴¹, whether husband or brother. The fact that Juno and Venus compel her to love Aeneas signifies in part that Dido's tragic struggle is not with fate or love but with herself.

We turn now to the Homeric simile that introduces us to the lovely young maiden Nausicaa and which, as we have noted, was adapted by Vergil to introduce Dido in Book 1. Nausicaa is superficially a positive model—she is modest, intelligent, and attractive, and, as far as we know, her story has a happy ending. Yet

³⁹ PAVLOCK (n. 37 above) 72-87 is a sensible and balanced discussion of the role of eros in the story of Dido.

⁴⁰ Thus THORNTON (n. 30 above) 619 misses the point of the simile that compares Dido and Diana and links her to Nausicaa. For THORNTON, the Diana simile and its Homeric forbear are used only to highlight Dido's dissimilarity to Diana and her virgin escorts (as well as Nausicaa and her companions). This helps, in THORNTON's view, link Dido more closely with Venus.

⁴¹ See PANOSSI (n. 6 above) 105-07 on the play of masculine and feminine elements in the characterization of Dido.

Nausicaa's story is almost the opposite of Dido's in several important respects⁴². Nausicaa is a royal virgin of marriageable age, whereas Dido is a royal widow who has already been married once. Moreover, and more importantly, Nausicaa is attracted to a hero in distress as he tries to reach home after the fall of Troy; he is destined to leave her idyllic land and to end up with another woman in his authentic home—it is his poem, and the gods are ultimately behind him, whatever tribulations they may visit upon him in the short term. With considerable assistance from heaven, Dido falls hard for her roving hero, but his destiny is no less a part of the fabric of their world or of the *Aeneid*. The whole thrust of the poem assures the audience that he cannot stay in Carthage, and that she cannot follow. If Dido had been able to live, like Diana's companions, *more ferae*, she would not merely have escaped erotic love and its unfortunate side effects; she would have escaped the *Aeneid*. Finally, after the meeting of Nausicaa and Odysseus, she takes him to meet her parents, the legitimate source of political and military authority in her community; along the way, she takes steps to preserve her reputation and his safety. When Aeneas meets Dido, on the other hand, he is meeting with the political authority of Carthage, *regina* and *dux*. The *Odyssey*'s careful preservation of societal norms collapses in Dido's Carthage.

If Vergil's use of the simile from the *Odyssey* introduces Dido as a new Nausicaa, the subsequent events of the *Aeneid* do not bear that comparison out, for as we have seen, Dido is not Nausicaa⁴³. When she utters the phrase *more ferae*, she reaches not for the Phaeacian princess but for the nymphs who resemble her and her agemates only in their unmarried state. But whereas Nausicaa and her companions are destined for marriage, those nymphs were not. Nymphs are divinities of the wild world, and by associating Dido with them, Vergil emphasizes that her connections to civilized life are problematic⁴⁴. In this regard, one can see a number of connections between Dido and *feritas* in addition to her connection to Diana. At 4.68-73 she is compared to a wounded doe, at 4.300-3 to a bacchant, at 4.465-73 to the mad heroes Pentheus and Orestes, and at 6.469-71 to a rocky cliff in the wild. At 6.450-55 a simile compares her to the moon⁴⁵, and, in that passage,

⁴² See GALINSKY (n. 1 above) 229-30 and HEXTER (n. 4 above) 337. PIGOÑ (n. 34 above) 46-48 provides a concise review of the ancient and later criticisms of the comparison as well as attempts to refute them.

⁴³ See PAVLOCK (n. 37 above) 72-73.

⁴⁴ PAVLOCK (n. 37 above) 69-87 argues that various aspects of the Dido story—for instance excessive wealth and her eventual use of magic—emphasize her problematic relationship with civilized values. See in particular 76: "However appealing Dido may be because of her impressive public role and her capacity for love, Vergil insinuates her ambivalent connection to the civilized values governing his heroic view".

⁴⁵ DUCLOS (n. 16 above) 36-37 reads the final appearance of Dido, and the moon simile there, in the light of the Diana imagery elsewhere applied to Dido. In my view, DUCLOS' interpretation of this complex of imagery is somewhat overly schematic and her reading of Dido's final appearance too optimistic.

she is literally found wandering *in siluis*. In Dido's view (with *non licuit* at 4.550), it may have been impossible or ill-advised to live like a *fera* (whether that word primarily refers to a beast or human being), but the poem's imagery consistently turns her into one.

The literary model most commonly invoked in discussing Dido is Medea, another woman forced to fall in love (at least as Apollonius would have it⁴⁶) and whose touching romance turns remarkably sour and violent. Yet Dido is also kin to some of the young men of Greek tragedy, particularly Ajax, but also Hippolytus, another devotee of Diana who is destroyed by the intervention of Venus, though, of course, in a vastly different way⁴⁷. Yet elements of his struggle are the same as those faced by Dido: his chosen way of life does not fit the conception of a young man's life held by his community (or, fatally, by Venus). Dido is neither permanently virginal like Diana nor still unmarried like Nausicaa. Though constantly associated with such women, Dido is forced to feel passion and act on it—unfortunately, her patron goddess is not the *uirgo* Diana but the *matrona* Juno. The lack of fit between her inner nature and her world is at the center of her tragedy.⁴⁸

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⁴⁶ In addition to NELIS (n. 5 above) and CLAUSEN (n. 6 above) 40-60, see W. W. BRIGGS, *Virgil and the Hellenistic Epic*, ANRW II.31.2, 1981, 959-69. KREVANS (n. 5 above) persuasively argues that Apollonius' Hypsipyle is also an important model for Dido.

⁴⁷ See PANOUSI (n. 6 above) 101-15 for an analysis of Vergil's use of the tragic Ajax in the creation of Dido. The complex relationship between Vergil's account of Dido and the myth of Hippolytus, especially as related by Euripides' play, has been well analyzed by DYSON (n. 36 above) 149-52 and HARRISON (n. 6 above), especially 8-12.

⁴⁸ For helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article, I would like to thank N. KREVANS, R. MONTI, V. PANOUSI, S. C. SMITH, and A. WILCOX.