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| Dido and Aeneas – L  From The Aeneid Book 4 Lines 314-319, 327-332 |

*Dido’s plea*

mene fugis? per ego has lacrimas dextramque tuam te

(quando aliud mihi iam miserae nihil ipsa reliqui),                 
per conubia nostra, per inceptos hymenaeos,  
si bene quid de te merui, fuit aut tibi quicquam  
dulce meum, miserere domus labentis et istam,  
oro, si quis adhuc precibus locus, exue mentem.

saltem si qua mihi de te suscepta fuisset  
ante fugam suboles, si quis mihi parvulus aula  
luderet Aeneas, qui te tamen ore referret,  
non equidem omnino capta ac deserta viderer.'

dixerat. ille Iovis monitis immota tenebat  
lumina et obnixus curam sub corde premebat.

Is it me you run from? I beg you, by these tears, by your own

right hand (since I’ve left myself no other recourse in my misery),

by our union, by the marriage we have begun,

if ever I deserved well of you, or anything of me

was sweet to you, pity this falling house, and if

there is any room left for prayer, change your mind

before you fled, If only I had a child by you before you ran away, if in my palace a baby Aeneas played, to remind by his looks of you - yes you, in spite of everything - I should not seem so utterly deceived and forsaken.

She had spoken. He kept his eyes fixed on Jupiter’s

warnings, and hid his pain steadfastly in his heart.

**Glossary:** *(words in the number, case and gender in which they appear in this extract)*

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| Line 1  Line 2 mene fugis? mene = me ne. Note the emphasis on **me**: ‘Is it from me you are fleeing?’ Her woman’s pride is hurt. The logical order would be per has lacrimas dextramque tuam...ego te oro (319). But the words are disordered by Dido’s agitation, which is also reflected in the conflict of word- and verse-accent set up by the monosyllabic ending te. The me at the beginning of the line is balanced by te at the end. It is very unusual for Vergil to end a line with a monosyllable. Almost always a special effect is intended. Does that apply here?  has lacrimas = ‘these tears of mine’.  1-6. The long build up to her plea contrasts with the brevity of her final request: istam exue mentem.  Line 2. ipsa: ‘(I) myself’ = ‘by my own act’, i.e. by not insisting on formal marriage.  nihil aliud: nothing else, that is to say, but her own tears and the memory of the right hand which Aeneas had given her - or so she imagined - in pledge of marriage.  Line 4 quicquam: anything  Line 6 oro: I beg  Line 8: suboles: children | Line 9 parvulus: little child. The diminutive is used with affection -the child who resembled his father.  Line 11 dixerat: 'She had finished her speech'. Virgil often concludes a speech with a single word like this. This was because the poetry was intended for recital and so the reader knew that the voice had ended.  Line 12 obnixus: steadfast  Aeneas is unmoved by her words. Later in the Underworld Dido is unmoved by his  words |

**Notes:** Dido appeals to Aeneas on all the grounds she can think of . She tries to appeal to his sympathy, his sense of honour and his sense of gratitude. Nothing works.

By this time she has fully grasped the hopelessness of her situation, and sacrificing what little dignity and pride she has left, she makes one final abject appeal to Aeneas (327-30).

Dido’s tragedy is presented clearly in these lines. But it is the tragedy not so much of a jilted lover as that of a noble character reduced to utter humiliation and degradation.

The precise dramatic structure in no way deprives the passage of its spontaneity and dramatic appropriatenesss. Dido’s appeal is disjointed and illogical. In her emotionally disturbed state, she cannot think clearly, and in fact invalidates her case by a blatant contradiction. On the one hand, she appeals to Aeneas to stay with her on the grounds of the legality and sanctity of their union. On the other hand she appeals to him on the grounds that for his sake she has sacrificed the honour, the virtue, and the reputation she once possessed.

Yet even a Roman could hardly have felt contempt for Dido because of this. In this supreme tragic moment, Dido must surely win universal sympathy. ‘The pathos of her appeal is heightened when we find this proud, splendid creature, who had spurned many suitors, reduced to terror at the thought of facing her enemies without Aeneas’ protection. Finally, her desire for a child overcomes all other emotions, and the speech which began so fiercely ends in what is almost a soliloquy, barely whispered’. One critic refers to Vergil’s ‘sympathy and his sensitive understanding of a woman’s mind’.