

VERGIL, *AENEID* 4.543

en, quid ago? rursusne procos inrisa priores
 experiar, Nomadumque petam conubia supplex, 535
 quos ego sim totiens iam dedignata maritos?
 Iliacas igitur classis atque ultima Teucrum
 iussa sequar? quiane auxilio iuvat ante levatos
 et bene apud memores veteris stat gratia facti?
 quis me autem, fac velle, sinet ratibusque superbis 540
 invisam accipiet? nescis heu, perdita, necdum
 Laomedontaeae sentis periuria gentis?
 quid tum? sola fuga nautas comitabor ovantis?
 an Tyriis omnique manu stipata meorum
 inferar et, quos Sidonia vix urbe revelli, 545
 rursus agam pelago et ventis dare vela iubebo?
 quin morere ut merita es, ferroque averte dolorem.

543 versum ante 540 posuit Baehrens

In his vigorous analysis of Dido's soliloquy J. Henry confronts the problem of line 543: 'How comes it that, having just decided that she will not go with the Trojans, that they would not even receive her if she went, she so immediately inquires shall she go with them, alone or accompanied?' He suggests that the words introduce 'a new category of objections'; hitherto the issue has been between herself and the Trojans, but now she reflects that the Trojans are not the only people she has to deal with. To go alone is but to run away from her own people, and she cannot in the circumstances of their recent arrival at Carthage ask them to sail with her. 'Even more impossible to leave Carthage than to go with Aeneas.'¹

This interpretation, with its emphasis on the word *fuga*, beautifully highlights an aspect of Dido's quandary: for her to go alone would be to betray her people. But Henry does not solve the problem thereby, for what prevents her from going alone is not the recognition that she cannot face being a traitor, but the refusal of the Trojans, as she supposes, to let her on board their ships (540–3). Thus the articulation of this 'new category of objections' as a double question is distinctly odd, since one alternative has already been rejected. In these circumstances the question 'quid tum?' cannot be taken as a reaction to the preceding lines but must look back over them to the end of line 539, a hyperbaton which seems contrary to the spirit of the words. Sense and syntax alike combine to undermine Henry's solution.²

There are two main ways in which scholars have approached this troublesome line. The first is to suppose that Dido imagines that the Trojans *might take her after all*, and on this basis she goes on to consider whether she should go alone with them or with the support of her Tyrians in her train, both ways being implicitly rejected, either as cowardice or as unfair and unacceptable to her people. This interpretation,

¹ J. Henry, *Aeneidea* ii (Dublin, 1878), p. 786.

² A. S. Pease, *Aeneidos liber quartus* (Cambridge, MA, 1935), *ad loc.*, is in substantial agreement with Henry in taking line 543 to introduce a new aspect of the case, but he does not expressly debate the apparent contradiction.

adopted by R. G. Austin and R. D. Williams,³ is very difficult, for in the light of the preceding lines the reader will not easily sanction such an 'after all' without the slightest syntactical pointer.

The other main approach avoids the contradiction by supposing Dido at line 543 to accept that the Trojans *will not take her* and to be asking herself what in these circumstances she should do. The contradiction may be avoided in two ways, both of which have the advantage of allowing the question 'quid tum?' to indicate a response to the preceding lines. Firstly Dido may pick up the rejected proposal and restate it with a different emphasis as a foil to the new proposal which she is about to consider, namely the possibility of departure along with the whole Carthaginian population. She would then be asking herself whether the right way to go was not to slink away like a coward but to set forth with all her folk. However, the syntax of alternative questions does not easily convey the idea that the first alternative is subordinate in this way; rather one feels that both alternatives are equal. Also, the future indicative *comitabor* is surely too vivid to serve in a discounted hypothesis, and again, therefore, this solution is unsatisfactory.⁴ We are left with the second way of avoiding the contradiction, namely to suppose that line 543 refers to Dido's going not on board a Trojan ship but on one of her own. The question which she asks herself will then be whether she should slink off after the Trojans on *one* of her own ships or whether she should go openly with *all* her people. This interpretation, clearly exemplified by R. Sabbadini,⁵ has the obvious weakness that every word in the sentence '*sola fuga nautas comitabor ovantes*' seems better designed to evoke a picture of Dido *among* the jubilant Trojans on board one of their ships than on one of her own.

Where subsequent discussions recognize the existence of a problem critics have had recourse to one of the above unsatisfactory suppositions. However, the problem disappears completely if line 543 is relocated in front of line 540:

Iliacas igitur classis atque ultima Teucrum	537
iussa sequare? quiaue auxilio iuvat ante levatos	
et bene apud memores veteris stat gratia facti?	539
quid tum? sola fuga nautas comitabor ovantis?	543
quis me autem, fac velle, sinet ratibusque superbis	540
invisam accipiet? nescis heu, perdita, necdum	
Laomedontae sentis periuria gentis?	542
an Tyriis omnique manu stipata meorum	544
inferar et, quos Sidonia vix urbe revelli,	
rursus agam pelago et ventis dare vela iubebo?	
quin morere . . .	

This proposal was made a century ago by E. Baehrens,⁶ who criticized the received order of lines on the grounds that whereas the idea of taking all her people was

³ See the commentaries on this passage of R. G. Austin, *Aeneidos liber quartus* (Oxford, 1955), and R. D. Williams, *The Aeneid of Virgil, Books 1-6* (London, 1972).

⁴ This interpretation is my own modification of that of Henry (above, n. 1), devised as an attempt to make sense of the passage and put forward here to forestall its possible use as a counter to the criticism.

⁵ R. Sabbadini, *Vergili Aeneis* (Torino, 1922), on 543: 'li accompagnerò sulle mie navi sola o con tutti i miei?' The plural 'ships' is rather odd in connection with her going alone, but the meaning is clear enough. More precise is C. Buscaroli, *Virgilio, il libro di Didone* (Milano, 1932), p. 382: 'seguirli sola su una nave'. Buscaroli refers to other suggestions e.g. that at 543 Dido intends to disguise herself as a slave in order to get aboard a Trojan ship despite their refusal! At least the authors of this interpretation took the contradiction seriously.

⁶ E. Baehrens, 'Emendationes Vergilianae', *Neue Jahrbücher für Philologie und Paedagogik* 135 (1887), 807-29, p. 820. I quote the main section: 'quaestionem in universum factam, secuturane sit Troianos horum se subdens imperio (537), quamquam ingratus eorum animus

rejected by Dido, the idea of going alone (543) was not. The required rejection is contained in lines 540–2, which are out of place and do not follow on from anything. If line 543 is placed before line 540, however, the whole passage flows well and the formula 'quid tum?' is intelligible. This seems to me to be essentially correct, although the assertion that the idea of going alone is not rejected is debatable, since the emotional nuances of line 543 could be seen as tantamount to an implicit repudiation of the course. Baehrens is not answering directly the contradiction to which Henry addressed himself, but his proposal does show the way here too. His suggestion has been virtually ignored by editors,⁷ and it is this fact, together with the manifestly conflicting and unsatisfactory attempts otherwise made to make sense of the passage as it stands, that invites further discussion of the proposal.

The following paraphrase brings out the sequence of ideas, supplying in brackets the necessary connections which Dido leaves unexpressed: 'How can I apply to the Africans whom I scorned? (I cannot). Shall I then follow the Trojans? (Might they not be expected to accept me) because they are grateful to me? Then what? (*How* shall I go?) Shall I go alone with them? But, supposing I wanted to, which of them will let me on board? (None of them will.) Alas, don't you see yet what Trojan treachery is like? (Yes, I do.) Or shall I go on my own ships with my people so recently settled? (Impossible, they will not come.) Why don't I die...?'

In this sequence the proposal to approach the African chiefs is rejected out of hand, but the thought of going with the Trojans is more seductive. Lines 538–9, though fiercely ironical, give grounds why, in a decent world, she might expect her grateful beneficiaries to accept her. True, she implies that they are in fact not grateful, but this does not in itself constitute a rejection of the proposition out of hand, but rather underlines the bitter pessimism with which she contemplates it. The next point to consider is how she should put this into effect. The first suggestion, that she should go alone, is expressed with shame and distaste (*fuga, ostantis*), but the question does not carry with it its own implicit answer. The answer is explicit and immediate: if she were willing – and the supposition reflects the shame and distaste of the previous line – none of the Trojans would take her. With this option ruled out she turns to the second alternative and considers whether she should go with her own ships and people in support. This would certainly obviate the difficulty, but now there is another obstacle: she could not impose that upheaval upon them.

In this way the moral implications of the word *fuga*, so well caught by Henry, can be preserved. It does not in itself amount to a rejection of the proposal but conveys a sense of disgrace which gives full force to the immediately following hypothesis *fac velle*. The interrogative formula 'quid tum?' does not have to introduce a new proposal but may rather mark reflection upon the proposition just stated. At Terence, *Eun.* 338 begins the following imaginary exchange: 'Do you know why I wanted you?' 'Tell me.' 'I have a court case tomorrow.' 'Well then?' (*quid tum?*) 'Make sure you tell your father to come and support me.' Here the interrogative formula asks for the practical consequences of the situation just outlined ('I have a court case'). So in

dubitantem de re suscipienda facit (538 sq.), tamen singillatim persequitur Dido de variis sequendi modis deliberans. disputat autem v. 540–2 de se a Troianis excipienda simulque hanc rationem inprobat, tum demum ex se quaerit utrum sola an cum tota gente sit comitatura (543–6). sed hoc alterum de tota gente iactum ut statim refutat iustis causis, ita ad prius illud (solane sit itura) nihil respondet. haec autem responsio necessaria habetur in panno illo 540–2, qui suo loco alienus est utpote non pendens alicunde. bene omnia profluent v. 543 ante 540 posito.'

⁷ But not by M. Geymonat, *Vergili opera* (Torino, 1973), who records it in his apparatus criticus.

Vergil, Dido has proposed (but not rejected) a second possible course of action: shall she follow the Trojans? Then she properly goes on to consider the practical consequences of such a decision: shall she put it into effect on her own or in company? Similar uses of the question 'quid tum?', marking a response to a situation rather than progress to a new point, are regular in Cicero, e.g. *Verr.* 3.25, 4.89, 4.132; *Caec.* 80; *Mur.* 26; *Flacc.* 55; *Piso.* 72. The delay of the second alternative, introduced by *an*, until after the explicit rejection of the first, is of course unproblematic. The vigorous word *inferar*, which has led some interpreters to think wrongly of an attack on the Trojans, follows perfectly in this position: on her own ships and with the support of her own people she has the initiative the lack of which was the weakness in her previous idea.

A mechanical explanation is available for the corruption, which must have arisen early since all the manuscripts share it. Because of the similarity of its start with that of the next line (*quid...quis*), line 543 was accidentally overlooked by the copyist's eye moving straight to the beginning of line 540. When the omission was discovered it was rectified by the replacement of line 543 at the wrong but superficially plausible position immediately preceding the second alternative introduced by *an*.⁸

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⁸ I wish to record my thanks to my colleague Dr Michael Apthorp for the benefit of his comments on a draft of this article.