

Not Only Ariadne: The Influence of Catullus 11 on *Aeneid* 4

Although Vergil's engagement with Catullus in *Aeneid* 4 has long drawn scholarly attention, studies on this topic focus almost exclusively on the influence of Ariadne's soliloquy at Catullus 64.132-201 on Dido's monologues at *Aen.* 4.305-30 and 365-87 (see Monti 1981: 1-3 with bibliography). In this paper I argue that Vergil also alludes to Catullus 11 to imply that the same story can be told from different points of view. Spence (1999: 83) has persuasively theorized that "Book 4 shows the reader Dido's perspective." The reference to Catullus 64 strongly contributes to creating this impression, as Dido presents herself as the new Ariadne, who saves the life of her beloved guest despite the risks that this relationship may cause, and Aeneas as the new Theseus, who treacherously abandons the woman after obtaining what he sought. The allusion to Catullus 11 serves to switch the focalization, and grant Aeneas the opportunity to defend himself from Dido's accusations by sharing his own perspective of the story: he must depart from Carthage because his affair with Dido is threatening the mission that Fate has assigned to him. The influence of Catullus 11 on the *Aeneid* has already been noticed by Putnam (1995-96: 86-92) and Nappa (2007: 388-92), who point out that Vergil refers to this poem several times in his narrative, using a technique that Wills (1998) defines as "divided allusion." However, they claim that the first echo of this poem occurs in Book 6. I suggest that Vergil's allusive engagement with Catullus 11 begins earlier in Book 4, and is then clarified and completed by the episodes analyzed by Putnam and Nappa.

In the *renuntiatio amoris* of poem 11 (see Cairns 1972: 79-82) Catullus asks his friends Furius and Aurelius to deliver a contemptuous message to Lesbia (*pauca nuntiate meae puellae / non bona dicta*, 15-6), by which the poet ratifies the end of their affair. Having realized that his relationship with dominant and unfaithful Lesbia is emasculating him, the

poet is now ready to leave Rome, and embark a more active and manly lifestyle, a “life of *virtus*” (Fredricksmeier 1993: 94), characterized by military hardship and *pietas*.

This account is evoked by Vergil in two episodes of *Aeneid* 4. First, at 4.223-37 Jupiter commands that Mercury urge Aeneas to depart from Carthage without delay, for his stay in Africa is jeopardizing his mission. Here Jupiter, who entrusts his *dicta* (226), plays the role of Catullus, the *nuntius* (237) Mercury that of Furius and Aurelius, and Aeneas that of Lesbia. Then at 4.333-61 Aeneas switches role, taking on those of both Catullus and Furius and Aurelius, for he himself must inform Dido of their imminent breakup. Although this is the longest speech delivered by Aeneas in the whole poem, it is defined as “few words” (*pro re pauca loquor*, 337). Furthermore, Aeneas makes it clear that he must put an end to this emasculating relationship, and engage in activities more suitable for his role as an epic hero. Line 347, where he confesses to Dido that he must abandon her to seek a new fatherland, makes it unmistakably clear that he has chosen *Roma* over *Amor*: *hic amor, haec patria est*.

Aeneas’ change of rout is reminiscent of Catullus’. However, while Catullus wishes to depart from Rome, where his relationship with Lesbia started and developed, and visit foreign lands, mentioned in the epic travelogue of stanzas 1-3, Aeneas must leave Carthage and Dido to complete his epic journey, and finally reach the location where Rome will be founded. Putnam and Nappa have pointed out that several places included by Catullus in the travelogue are cited by Vergil at some key moments in the poem, where he alludes to Caesar’s (6.830-1) and Augustus’ achievements (6.794-800; 8.725-8). These parallels, which complete the “divided allusion” to Catullus 11 started in Book 4, confirm that Aeneas’ departure from Carthage is necessary and, ultimately, providential: in the short term, it allows the hero to reach Italy and fulfill the mission assigned to him by Fate; in the long term, it enables Rome to impose its dominion over the known world.

Bibliography

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