

**THE SWORD-BELT OF PALLAS:  
HOLDING A QUILL FOR THE CRITIC?  
VERGIL, *AENEID* 10,495–500<sup>1</sup>**

In Homer's *Iliad*, Hektor slays Patroklos, the friend of Achilles. Achilles takes revenge by killing Hektor. Vergil in *Aeneid* 10 appropriates the sequence: King Turnus slays Pallas, the young ally of Aeneas, and Aeneas takes revenge by killing Turnus.

But Vergil has introduced a significant change: whereas Patroklos is older than Achilles, Pallas is young; he is even called a boy, *puer* (11,42; 12,943). This tips the scales of the reader's sympathies: when superior fighter Turnus slays young Pallas, it is a fight of unequal powers (*viribus imparibus*, 10,459), and the reader's sense of compassion may well lead to an endorsement of avenging Aeneas. Nevertheless, an interpreter like Quinn assures us *three times* that Pallas was killed "in fair fight" (1968, 222. 227. 18). The result of his interpretation is of course that Aeneas the avenger loses the moral high ground as well as the emotional justification and, so, a shadow is cast on the ancestor of Emperor Augustus. Quinn's reading sets the tracks for an anti-Augustan Vergil.

Here it is necessary to consider a second change executed by Vergil. For the Roman poet has *doubled* the Homeric scene in which a superior older warrior kills a younger one. When Aeneas is attacked by young Lausus, he *warns* the young man, and when he kills him it is in self-defense, since Lausus has not listened to him but madly (*demens*, 10,813) continues to challenge (*exsultat*) him. And Aeneas honors the slain, leaving him his armor. Turnus, on the other hand, seeks out his younger victim and deprives the slain of his armor – an offense against the *Aeneid*'s honor code, which demands that the spoils be dedicated to a divinity. Before one accepts a whitewash of Turnus, the text deserves a closer look – here also for another reason: without a precise reading of the narrative context in which the poet has embedded the *ekphrasis* of lines 497–499, it is not possible to arrive at a methodologically justifiable interpretation of the murder scene depicted on the sword-belt of Pallas<sup>2</sup>.

When young Lausus and his contingent are pressed hard by Pallas and his troops, King Turnus is advised by his divine sister to come to Lausus' aid (10,439 f.). Turnus, however, once reaching Lausus and his troops, does *not* join the din but does something unexpected, shouting: "It is time to stop the battle!", *tempus desistere pugnae!* (441).

<sup>1</sup> My thanks go to Prof. Baier and the Würzburg Classics Department for inviting me to give the *Josef Martin lecture* on Oct. 19, 2010, as well as for suggesting publication in the *Würzburger Jahrbücher*.

<sup>2</sup> Here I insert an (abbreviated and modified) excerpt from Stahl 1990, 200–204.

He has realized that here is his chance to execute a personalized vendetta against Pallas' father, aged King Evander, for having granted hospitality and support to Aeneas.

In fact, King Turnus even forbids all the others to go after Pallas and has the field cleared: he *alone* (emphasized twice in the same line: *solus ego... soli mihi*, 10,442)<sup>3</sup> reserves for himself the right to kill the prey which is "owed" to him (*mihi ... debetur*, 442 f.) Like the superior lion coming down on the strong but doomed bull he has been stalking (*specula cum vidit ab alta*, 454)<sup>4</sup>, Turnus descends from his chariot toward Pallas, who, aware of his physical inferiority, sees his only chance (cf. *fors* 458) for this fight of *unequal powers* (cf. *viribus imparibus* 459) in hitting Turnus from a distance before he is drawing nearer. But the youngster's strength, though great (*magnis ... viribus* 474) proves not sufficient: his spear can only graze Turnus' huge body (cf. *magno ... corpore* 478), earning him nothing but a bullying and condescending, even schoolmaster-like, taunt (481) from his stronger opponent. When Turnus, long posturing (*diu librans* 480), hurls his own spear, he pronounces: "Look whether *our* spear has greater penetrating power!", *aspice num mage sit nostrum penetrabile telum* (10,481). Pallas, his sword now drawn for close combat (475), does not flinch but bravely awaits and faces the incoming missile: Turnus' spear penetrates Pallas' shield and chainmail and, still carrying deadly force, sinks into his chest, killing him (479–489). Can one rightly say, "he met his death in fair fight..."<sup>5</sup>?

With regard to the unequal situation resulting from the age difference, it is worth quoting Father Evander who later, in addressing the absent Turnus, states:

*tu quoque nunc stares immanis truncus in arvis,  
esset par aetas et idem si robur ab annis* (11,173 f.)

You, too, would now stand, a huge trophy, in the fields  
if his (scil., Pallas') age were equal (to yours) and his  
strength were the same (as yours) based on his years.

<sup>3</sup> This is echoed in Books 11 (442) and 12 (466 f.; cf. 16) when Aeneas, pursuing the killer of Pallas, searches for Turnus *alone*. It is a misquote when Thomas (1998, 276) asserts that "Stahl notes that *Pallas' name* is 'emphasized twice in the same line' " (my italics); he then bases his criticism on the incorrect quote. For the correct reading, see Stahl 1990, 200.

<sup>4</sup> For the comparison of Turnus to a lion stalking a bull, an example from art may serve as a precedent. In the Metropolitan Museum in New York, there is an Etruscan bronze tripod (identifier: 60.11.11, Fletcher Fund 1960), showing on the vertical rods: Hercules and Athena; the Dioscuri; two satyrs. On the arches, one sees: a panther felling a deer; a lion felling a ram; a lion felling a bull. The predictability of the kill seems to be clear in all three cases, with no exception. The simile is used in the *Iliad*, when Patroclus kills Sarpedon (16,427–429). There, too, the lion's superiority is not in doubt (nor is the outcome: even Zeus cannot prevent the death of his son Sarpedon. See also *Aeneid* 10,467–473: Jupiter cannot prevent Pallas' death from happening).

<sup>5</sup> Quinn 1968, 222; cf. 227: Pallas was "killed in fair fight;" 18: "in fair fight."

It is Pallas, on the other hand, who – erroneously – fosters noble ideas about the situation. He shows an honorable desire to encounter the superior opponent in single combat, either for the highest Roman (!) form of victory (cf. *spoliis ... opimis* 449) or for a glorious death.

*sorti pater aequus utrique est* (450),

“My father (scil., Evander) is impartial toward either lot”.

The young man, even in the face of death, is concerned about what his father may think of him, wishing not to cause him dishonor. The difference to Turnus, who in the end will use his own father as a negotiating card for survival, is striking: *Dauni miserere senectae* 12,934. Pallas’ father, the reader recalls, had sent his son out to learn from Aeneas as from a teacher (*magistro* 8,515) the craft of a warrior. When accepting his enemy in order to achieve, in victory or in defeat, the highest honor of paternal recognition, Pallas proves himself a student worthy of his teacher. Aeneas, too, when facing certain death in Juno’s sea storm in Book 1, wishes he could rather have died fighting for Troy, like those fellow fighters who fell “before the eyes of their fathers, below Troy’s high walls”, *ante ora patrum Troiae sub moenibus altis* (1,95)<sup>6</sup>. In the same spirit, Aeneas will later refer to the honor code when trying to comfort Father Evander by saying that his son was “struck not by a shameful wound” (i.e., he was struck in the chest rather than in the back, 11,55 f.).

Turnus, on his part, when seeking the mismatched fight, likewise thinks of Pallas’ father (in fact, his taunt had in turn provoked Pallas’ noble statement [*parens* 10,443 ~ *pater* 450]):

*cuperem ipse parens spectator adesset* (443)

“I wished his father himself were here and watched!”

Worlds apart from Pallas (and from Aeneas in Juno’s sea storm), Turnus (the lion stalking his victim, a predictable kill) has held the troops back *not* for an honest duel; rather, in claiming Pallas as his own prey and his alone, he primarily intends to *hurt the father*. In Vergil’s conception, then, the death of Pallas is painted closer to a homicide or an assassination than to an honorable battlefield killing. Perhaps one should more appropriately say that Vergil paints Pallas’ death as a pre-meditated killing, a murder<sup>7</sup>. And

<sup>6</sup> Aeneas’ prayer (and his contrary-to-fact wish for death before Troy) was programmatically misunderstood as homesick melancholy by members of the anti-imperial school (W. Clausen, R.D. Williams). See Stahl 1981, 160 f.

<sup>7</sup> Critical indifference to the text’s authorial nuances is well demonstrated by Harrison (1998, 227 f.): “Turnus is only doing what all warriors are supposed to do ... : killing the enemy, and an important enemy commander who has himself already killed many of Turnus’ men earlier ... if all killings with taunts are criminal, then any heroic killings will attract that

as Pallas' noble bravery can be measured by the gauge of Aeneas' death wish in the sea storm, so there is (as already Servius saw) a gauge to measure Turnus' frivolous wish for Evander's presence at his son's death: this is venerable King Priam accusing Pyrrhus, Achilles' son, for having made him an eye-witness to the killing of his son Polites,

*patrios foedasti funere vultus* (2,539 f.),  
 "you polluted the father's eyes with his death".

Consistently, Turnus' final message is addressed to father Evander:

*qualem meruit, Pallanta remitto* (10,492<sup>8</sup>),  
 "As he has deserved him (i.e., dead), I am sending Pallas back to  
 him.

And

*haud illi stabunt Aeneia parvo*  
*hospitia* (10,494 f.),  
 "Not a small price is he going to pay for granting Aeneas  
 hospitality".

The experienced warrior Turnus has not granted young<sup>9</sup> Pallas the dignity of taking seriously his courage on his first day (10,508) of fighting on the battlefield. For superior Turnus, the unequal fight was nothing but a welcome opportunity to make Father Evander pay a price he allegedly "owed" Turnus (cf. *mihi ... debetur* 442 f.), in other words: for Turnus, Pallas' death was a commercial transaction, payment in blood for the hospitality granted Aeneas.

Turnus' commercial vocabulary is resumed twice in describing what follows. Aeneas refuses the ransom money offered by suppliant warrior Magus. For evaluating his refusal, three facts must be taken into account: first, Aeneas has by now been informed

label ... killing an enemy who is weaker than yourself is not wrong either ..." Does this not depend on where the author has channeled his reader's sympathy and placed the moral accents? "So Turnus' offence is to wear the sword-belt, not to kill Pallas; the death of Pallas is tragic and lamentable, but it is not in itself a crime." How might Harrison, if he chose to discuss it here, deal with Jupiter's compassionate sorrow (discussed below) which compels the highest god to turn his eyes away from the scene of Pallas' death (but Jupiter does not express pity at the death of Lausus)?

<sup>8</sup> Rightly Harrison *ad loc.* compares Pyrrhus' "equally vicious taunt" to Priam at 2,547–550. For Putnam's mistranslation of 10,492 see later on.

<sup>9</sup> "Pallas the boy" Vergil will call him when he later recalls Aeneas' pain (12,943; see also Aeneas himself 11,42). "Look whether *our* spear has greater penetrating power" was older Turnus' schoolmaster-like taunt before the deadly throw (10,481).

how Pallas was killed (510); second, before his inner eye are Pallas, Evander, their hospitality, the binding handshakes (515–517); and, third, Magus has “craftily” (*astu*), as the authorial voice emphasizes, ducked and run under Aeneas’ approaching spear (522) to embrace his knees: instead of holding up his shield, he has cowardly avoided facing the warrior’s death which Pallas so bravely and unflinchingly met. All this must be considered as having entered Aeneas’ mind and as determining his response, given when Magus asks to be saved *for his son and his father*<sup>10</sup>:

*belli commercia Turnus  
sustulit ista prior iam tum Pallante perempto.* (10,532 f.)

These commercial transactions of war Turnus was the first  
to abolish – then already when Pallas was killed.

So, for Aeneas’ wishful thinking (his thinking is still under the fresh impression of what happened to Pallas), Turnus could have tried to take Pallas prisoner alive and release him for ransom. Therefore Magus’ appeal to Anchises and Iulus cannot help him:

*Hoc patris Anchisae manes, hoc sentit Iulus.* (534)

Thus feels the spirit of my father Anchises, thus Iulus.

The poet has created for Aeneas an opportunity to explain that Turnus’ conduct has invalidated certain conventions that would allow for occasional exceptions even on the battlefield, and that it was Turnus who replaced the currency of ransom money with that of blood, and who, by violating and defiling the father-son-relationship, has invalidated any appeal to Iulus and Anchises.

It is, Aeneas feels, as if someone has killed me in order to hurt Anchises, or my son Iulus in order to hurt me. Aeneas now acts as the avenger of this cruelly treated relationship and feels that as such he must be inexorable. Releasing cowardly Magus would mean taking Pallas’ heroic death lightly. *Ex hoc enim facto* (scil. your death at my hands) *ad utrumque perveniet gratia, si orbitas Euandri vindicetur et interitus Pallantis* (Donatus). No word of criticism on excessive human behavior is heard from Vergil’s lips here (if compared to his earlier comment on Turnus’ conduct, when appropriating Pallas’ baldric instead of offering it to a divinity, 500–505). And if one takes into account the situation of utter need of Aeneas’ men – Aeneas has meanwhile been informed (510–512) not only of Pallas’ death but also of his own troops’ defeat and flight, their need for his help and their being within “a hair-breadth from death” (R.D. Williams’ translation, *ad loc.*) –, then Magus’ arguments (528 f.) that the Tro-

<sup>10</sup> Donatus points out the refined argument of Magus: (1) an appeal to Aeneas’ own obliging situation as a father and a son; (2) an artful suggestion of wealth (not specified, to avoid any impression of a possible shortage of funds), especially in silver and gold; (3) the Trojan “victory” does not turn on this one life.

jans' "victory"(!), *victoria Teucrum* (528), does not depend on this and that one single life does not make so great a difference, appear rather beside the point.

The gesture that Turnus (after first appropriating the sword-belt of the slain) grandiloquently (*largior* 494) returns the body for burial, "whatever the honor of a tomb and whatever the consolation of burying is", should not be misunderstood as a sign of his humanity (or even clemency, *Milde*, as Pöschl, pioneer of the 'tragic Turnus' narrative, termed it)<sup>11</sup>; the belittling<sup>12</sup> and derogatory statement,

*quisquis honos tumuli, quidquid solamen humandi est,*  
*largior* (493 f.),  
whatever the honor of a tomb, whatever the consolation of  
burying is,  
I grant,

proves that it is small matter in which Turnus is willing to show magnanimity (if it is magnanimity at all and not cruel irony). For, as the main part and climax of his message, there follow the words about the high price he makes Father Evander pay. What he releases, – is small change, so to speak.

And it will be the visible reminder represented by Pallas' sword-belt that will trigger Aeneas' deathblow in the final scene of Book 12 (941 ff.). Therefore we understand the comment which the author adds in his own *persona* (thus emphasizing the plotline) about Turnus exulting in the spoils: the human mind does not know moderation when uplifted by favorable circumstances (10,501 f.). (Pallas, after all, had promised the spoils of *his* last opponent to god Tiber, 421 ff.; Aeneas will dedicate the arms of Mezentius to Mars, 11,5 ff. and not at all despoil the corpse of young Lausus, the opposite number of Pallas, 10,827. But godless King Mezentius, acting like Turnus, reveals his sacrilegious character also in his intent of making his son a living trophy, *tropaeum*, by having him wear slain Aeneas' armor, 10,774–776.).

*Turno tempus erit magno cum optaverit emptum*  
*intactum Pallanta, et cum spolia ista diemque*  
*oderit.* (10,503–505)

For Turnus, there will be a time when he will desire an un-touched Pallas, bought at a *high price*, and when he will hate these spoils and this day.

<sup>11</sup> Pöschl 1964, 195.

<sup>12</sup> For the belittling character of the statement, compare Aeolus about his unenviable little kingdom (*quodcumque hoc regni* 1,78, and Austin's comment *ad loc.*). On the other hand, compare Aeneas' utterance after Lausus' death, *teque parentum / manibus et cineri, si qua est ea cura, remitto* (10,827 f.) with Vergil's glorification of Aeneas' nurse Caieta, *si qua est ea gloria*, at 7,4.

In this comment, Vergil not only establishes the causal nexus between Turnus' *hybris* and Turnus' death (thus bearing out Jove's prediction at 471 ff. with human motivation). Also, we here for the third time (in order of occurrence, it is the second time, cf. *magno* 503 ~ *haud ... parvo* 494) hear a commercial vocabulary (cf. *belli commercia* 532) and see Turnus' metaphor of the price to be paid, and this time Vergil (not without irony?) turns the metaphor – less than ten lines have intervened – against Turnus himself. His predicted future desire for a high price to undo what he has done, especially when announced through the author's intervention, is a clear advance indication of Turnus' un-heroic desire to survive at the end of the work, and sufficient explanation for his unwilling (*indignata* 12,952) departure from this life.

Aeneas' ensuing refusal toward cowardly Magus' ransom offer, no longer allowing any *belli commercia* (10,531 ff.), then, is in line with the authorial voice. Turnus has introduced the new currency of blood (494), Vergil points out the long-range consequence (503), Aeneas can no longer allow an exception and accept payment in the old currency (531 ff.), for the father-son-relationship, to which Magus appeals, has been cruelly mocked.

Vergil as the author even goes one step further and, confirming one of the alternatives mentioned by Pallas before the deadly encounter (449 f.), in his own *persona* directly invokes dead Pallas:

*O dolor atque decus magnum rediture parenti ...* (10,507)

Oh you, about to return to your father as a cause of grief  
and a great honor!

These words resume the father-son topic, which, like the price metaphor, can be seen to permeate all three passages dealt with here.

If thus the poet in his own *persona*, like his hero Aeneas, declares himself in sympathy with dead son and mourning father, on whose side is his reader expected to stand by now? After all, long ago already the poet has imbued his reader with a sense of fearful foreboding, ever since the moving departure scene when father Evander fainted while contemplating the possibility that his son might not return to him alive (8,572–584).

Let us also take note of the fact that even the father of the universe, recalling the death before Troy of his own son Sarpedon, cannot bring himself to watch the killing of Pallas:

*oculos Rutulorum reiecit arvis* (10,473)

Vergil has not left his reader with any option of finding Turnus' conduct acceptable once we have discovered his diabolic intent. Killing a brave but physically inferior young man *in order to exact a price of grief from his father* is humanly so abhorrent

that the reader can no longer sympathize at all with the killer. Hardly will one agree with Quinn's excuse for Turnus that his repulsive wish is "a characteristic piece of braggadogio"<sup>13</sup>, bragging. Vergil puts his reader here in the same position as he did when he presented to us the heart-rending lament of a Trojan mother (transferred from Sicily to Italy for the rhetorical purpose) who must observe Turnus' Rutulians carrying on sticks the heads of her son and his friend (9,481–497). He has not created a comparable situation to lend his art to an *Italian* mother's voice.

A further aggravating circumstance, let us recall, is that Vergil's Turnus, by triumphantly appropriating and donning the sword-belt, has committed an offense against the *Aeneid's* honor code. Unlike Turnus, Lausus had promised the armor of *his* last opponent to river god Tiber; and Aeneas will dedicate the arms of Mezentius to war god Mars, and he will not spoliolate at all the corpse of young Lausus (the dramatic counterpart of Pallas), 10,827.

On the sword-belt<sup>14</sup>, a crime scene is depicted: 49 sons of Aegyptus lie in their blood, slain by their 49 brides. (In the myth, they have executed the orders of their father; only one daughter, Hypermestra, has spared her bridegroom. These features are – understandably – not mentioned in the *Aeneid* passage):

*et laevo pede pressit talia fatus  
exanimem rapiens immania pondera baltei  
impressumque nefas: una sub nocte iugali  
caesa manus iuvenum foede thalamicque cruenti,*  
(10,494–498)

and, following such words, he pressed with his left foot<sup>15</sup> the deceased, snatching away the immense weight of the sword-belt and the wicked crime embossed on it: the band of young men foully slain in *one* night, their wedding night, and the bloody marriage chambers,

quae Clonus Eurytides multo caelaverat auro;  
quo nunc Turnus ovat spolio gaudetque potitus.  
(10,499–500)

<sup>13</sup> Quinn 1968, 221.

<sup>14</sup> I cannot here go into details of this piece of equipment (important for precisely understanding the epic's final scene at 12,941–944). Suffice it to indicate that the *balteus* in all likelihood is a combination of waist- and shoulder-belt, the waist-belt traditionally decorated with rectangular plates that are riveted to the leather and embossed with cone-shaped elevations or mythological motifs. Vergilian scholarship usually intermingles the translations "baldric" and "sword-belt".

<sup>15</sup> On the action of setting one's foot on the defeated enemy, see the details in Stahl 1985, 29–31.



This had Clonus, son of Eurytos, embossed with much gold;  
 having appropriated this spoil, Turnus now exults and is  
 happy.

One can easily concur that the bloody scene on the sword-belt may have some bearing on the meaning of the context in which the poet has set it. But how to access that meaning? Now: the narrator has placed the taking of the spoil and this *ekphrasis*, on the one hand, following Turnus' heartless message for Father Evander that he will pay a high price for having granted hospitality to Aeneas (493 f.) and, on the other hand, before his own authorial comment on human lack of moderation in success and his prediction of Turnus' future willingness to pay a high price for having the killing of Pallas undone (10,501–505).

If one takes into account this framing context together with the heavy sympathetic weighting of the preceding narrative in favor of slain Pallas, the nearest and most natural parallel to the murdered young bridegrooms would be Pallas whose death, we said, comes close enough to being a murder.

The adverb *foede* (with its connotation of defiling), pointing to the nefarious character of the deed as well as of the doers, would likewise be appropriate for Turnus' wish to have father Evander present to watch his son dying – in the same way as the related verb *foedare* at 2,539 covers aged King Priam witnessing the slaughter of his son, Polites. One may also cite Juno's "foul" service, *foeda ministeria* (7,619), of throwing open the Gates of War – a function which pious King Latinus refuses to provide for Turnus and his companions who want him to break the peace, declare war on the Aeneadae, and open the nefarious bloodshed of two nations destined to live in peace.

The phrasing *caesa manus ... foede* does not ascribe any disparaging quality to the *victims*, but *caesa*, being passive voice, requires an answer to the complementary question "(slain) by whom?" I.e., the murderous Danaids find their complement in Turnus, slayer of Pallas. Precisely speaking, the scene on the sword-belt does not depict the act of killing but its aftermath, i.e., the slain corpses (*caesa manus*) lying in their bloodied chambers (*cruenti thalami*). This exactly fits the present situation of the narrative: when "blood and life", *sanguis animusque* (487), leave him, Pallas touches the "hostile ground" "with bloody mouth", *ore cruento* (489). The sword-belt scene lets the reader perceive Turnus' crime multiplied 49 times, driving home the nefarious character of his action.

What about the wedding night, could it, too, have a reference to Pallas? One might think of the fact that Pallas was killed on his first day in battle ever (10,508; cf. 11,155), right at the beginning of his career as a hero, and see a faint correspondence to the bridegrooms being cut down at the dawn of what is supposed to be a life-long relationship. If this comparison does not hit the mark, it at least takes us a step closer to another, more pertinent, parallel: the unsuspecting bridegrooms were as maliciously set

up as Pallas, while fostering noble ideas of winning the *spolia opima*, was set up by experienced and superior fighter Turnus who ordered everyone else aside to have Pallas reserved for himself as a sure kill. Turnus has acted in a manner similar to the malicious and insidious way in which the *nefas*-planning daughters of Danaus entrapped their bridegrooms.

Taken in this way, the scene on the sword-belt confirms the tenor of the preceding narrative: Pallas' death was a premeditated homicide. So it is likely that the hideous (cf. *foede* 10,498), sinful (cf. *nefas* 497) crime depicted on the sword-belt is supposed to give the reader a confirmation on how to judge the slaying of its rightful owner. And it is the sight of this scene on the belt that will trigger Aeneas to switch back from mercy to punishment in the epic's final scene (12,938b ff.). Repulsed by Turnus' unethical, abominable conduct, and won over to the side of Pallas and his father by the poet's sympathetic presentation in Book 10 (and in Book 8), the attentive reader is to feel invited to agree with Aeneas' change of mind at the end of the work and to vote for revenge and punishment rather than for mercy.

My interpretation of the *ekphrasis*, being in agreement with and complementing the preceding narrative, further confirms the poet's negative portrait of Turnus. The Vergilian portrait, however, has proved unacceptable for members of the anti-imperial school, and so has its consequence of revenge, though it agrees with the contemporary *ultio* concept<sup>16</sup>. In view of the (allegedly) merciless behavior of Aeneas toward Turnus, the (allegedly not respected) suppliant, one has felt "uneasiness"<sup>17</sup>, or found the *Aeneid*'s final scene "disturbing"<sup>18</sup>, even missed "the comforting ethical closure ... *so yearned for*"<sup>19</sup>, and so one has concluded, guided by uninhibited subjectivity and wishful thinking, that Vergil cannot have meant the end of his work to be understood as he wrote it.

But what is needed methodologically for these interpreters is a Turnus in Book 10 who is presented very differently from the one I have demonstrated from Vergil's text on the preceding pages. Contemporary literary critics locate the quill for writing *their* Turnus – in the sword-belt of Pallas. I shall look more closely at three influential methodologies as they have been applied to interpreting the belt: New Criticism, Semiotic

<sup>16</sup> Cf., e.g., Caesar, B.G. 1,12,6 f., cited by Mutschler (2003, 103): By conquering the Tigurini, Caesar exacts the penalty (*poenas*) not only for the humiliating defeat of a Roman army and a consul's (L. Cassius') death, but also takes private revenge for the death of his father-in-law's grandfather, *qua in re Caesar non solum publicas, sed etiam privatas iniurias ultus est*. Aeneas' is of course not a purely private revenge (as is sometimes maintained), but it also fulfills both his obligation to a slain young ally (comparable to Cassius in the example from Caesar), and also the revenge obligation imposed on Aeneas' "right arm" by Father Evander (11,177–179). Further evidence will be offered in my major study of the *Aeneid*.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas 2001, 290.

<sup>18</sup> Clausen 1987, 100.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas 2001, 285. My emphasis.

theory, and a very different one: a combined philological-archaeological and political interpretation. All three have in common that they ascribe to the sword-belt's *ekphrasis* a meaning that lies *outside* the immediate context. As far as the literary critical scene is concerned, it is worth noting that, in addition to *ekphrasis*, today also *simile* is made to serve such extra-contextual purposes. R. Thomas, for instance, in his endeavor to "de-Augustanize the *Aeneid*" (as he puts it<sup>20</sup>), presents the logic-defying thesis that simile is "a vehicle for subverting the epic's authoritative voice"<sup>21</sup>. One is inclined to name Thomas the inventor of the *simile dissimile*.

Putnam added *ekphrasis* to the enterprise, claiming that both "are types of metaphor, offering us opportunities to *reinterpret the text* in which they are embedded, to *gain a new angle for the apprehension of its meaning*."<sup>22</sup> So *ekphrasis* is viewed as offering another critical tool with which to interpret *against* the grain of the main text instead of in its support.

Though claiming to be concerned also with "content and context", Putnam compresses his summary of the author's preceding narrative into a few words: "Turnus has met and killed in single combat the young protégé of Aeneas." (Do the words "has met" and "single combat" appositely render the author's compassionate focalization on young Pallas in recounting the killing?) Putnam further presents Turnus as "announcing ... that *the defeated got what he deserved*" (my emphasis)<sup>23</sup>. In truth, as was shown above, Turnus at 10,492 gloats that he is sending Pallas home *as he* (i.e., Father Evander) *deserves* him, *qualem meruit*, i.e., dead. Both by this mistranslation (refuted already in Page's commentary of 1894–1900)<sup>24</sup> and by leaving out Turnus' announced intent of *hurting the father (making him pay a high price) by killing the son*, Putnam has weakened the moral indictment that the authorial context had raised against Turnus.

But the epic's narrative organization is not of higher significance to the methodology of New Criticism, which allows verbal allusions and verbal repetitions to be independent from plot development: "linearity" of story line (which, Putnam admits, eventually leads from pious Aeneas to the golden age in the empire of Augustus), is said "in counterpoint"<sup>25</sup> to be complemented by "the poem's lyric or tragic dimension", which is assumed to be found also in the sword-belt's *ekphrasis*. The sword-belt's description, Putnam claims, is supported by and gains meaning *for the whole poem* through "circularity" and "repetition". In this way, the characterization of Turnus' act (defined as that

<sup>20</sup> Thomas 2001, XVIII.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas 1998, 288.

<sup>22</sup> Putnam 1998, 209 (my emphasis). Putnam must postulate that "ekphrases" are "open to a varied spread of interpretation as the master poem itself" (1998, 210).

<sup>23</sup> Putnam 1998, 189.

<sup>24</sup> "The explanation *talem remitto Pallanta qualem se remitti meruit* does violence ... to the Latin, for, though *remitti* may be fairly supplied from *remitto* after *meruit*, the addition of *se* is arbitrary;" etc. Page *ad* 10,492.

<sup>25</sup> Putnam 1998, 205.

of spoliation) by *foede* and *nefas* is acknowledged by Putnam but the characterization is also transferred to the actions of Aeneas, who is said to develop, from a suppliant before the Sibyl (in Book 6), to one who closes his eyes to suppliants, especially to Magus in Book 10 and to Turnus in Book 12 (“he symbolically kills ... the Sibyl”)<sup>26</sup>.

In the method of New Criticism, no detailed investigation is needed of the individual contexts from which the so-called verbal allusions or repetitions are harvested. In the epic’s final scene, Turnus is viewed “as a youth basely slaughtered”<sup>27</sup> (apparently, a “repetition” in the literary realm of “circularity”, amounting to another Pallas *foede caesus*). Some shadow has even to be cast on Pallas (with whom, as the earlier owner of the sword-belt, Turnus, as the new owner, shares being “in the position of a Danaid”!): “Vergil had given Pallas, too, before his death: an *aristeia* with some *ugly* moments.”<sup>28</sup> What *ugly* moments may Putnam have in mind? Vergil has painted the picture of an exemplary young leader whose rallying admonition (*monitu* 10,397) turns his fleeing troops around and whose battlefield success the authorial voice characterizes by *praeclara ... facta* (397 f.), and Pallas himself as a *decus magnum* (10,507), a great “glory” (transl. Harrison)<sup>29</sup>!

One sees: instead of the author’s perspective which offers one noble youth, one malicious killer, and, in the end, one justified avenger, we shall end up with two victimizers-turned-victims, both of less-than-perfect character. Such sweeping and simplifying leveling supposedly helps to establish a separate, non-Augustan ‘dimension’ of the *Aeneid*, – but at a price: it does away with the moral nuances that distinguish the complex and varied focalizations developed in the authorial narrative context. Bivocalism has here not developed a critical tool sufficient to establish what is often claimed to be a “second voice” in the *Aeneid*<sup>30</sup>. But it may be looked upon as helping along the road to de-Augustanizing the *Aeneid*.

<sup>26</sup> Putnam 1998, 204.

<sup>27</sup> Putnam 1998, 197.

<sup>28</sup> Putnam 1998, 193. My emphasis.

<sup>29</sup> Putnam elsewhere (1995, 209) expresses his “horror” at “Pallas’ grisly plea” that dying Turnus may still perceive victorious Pallas stripping off his armor (10,462 f.). Here we see the interpreter’s subjective yearning at work for a de-Romanized, “Gentle Vergil”, but Pallas’ “grisly” plea does not supply a methodologically sufficient reason to overrule the authorial apostrophe of the young hero, which at 10,509 includes “huge piles of (scil., killed) Rutulians”.

<sup>30</sup> Putnam, unable (like Thomas 2001, 295, and others) to deny the Augustan *Aeneid*, vigorously fights against “any incontrovertible, secure interpretation” (1998, 210; cf. “variety” p. 212) in order to open a door for the possibility of an un-Augustan reading. Here literary theories are welcomed as tools to overrule logic of plotline. Against interpreters’ agnosticism that may easily be used to justify methodological subjectivism, the argument of scholarly approximation is still valid, as for Vergilian studies pronounced by Gleit (1991, 33), viz., that a text’s meaning „in einem zwar unabschliessbaren, doch approximativ weitgehend realisierbaren Prozess eruiert werden kann“ (etc.).

Putnam emphasizes that Vergil bars features of *clementia* from his Danaid myth, such as Hypermestra, unlike her 49 sisters, sparing *her* bridegroom, Lynceus. The attentive reader of Book 10 feels like asking: how *could* Vergil have introduced clemency if Pallas shares the fate of the basely murdered bridegrooms and, unlike Lynceus, is *not* allowed to survive? But for Putnam Vergil may suppress clemency “just as Aeneas finally squelches any instinct to spare the suppliant Turnus”. So he sees “Turnus as a youth basely slaughtered and Aeneas as a type of Danaid enforcing the vendetta of her father.”<sup>31</sup> Putnam indeed appears, by means of *circularity* and *repetition*, to transfer Vergil’s picture of Pallas foully slain onto Turnus (while along the way assimilating Pallas to Turnus by assigning Pallas some – authorially uncorroborated – “ugly moments”), and Vergil’s picture of Turnus onto Aeneas. By appropriating the sword-belt (if I understand Putnam correctly)<sup>32</sup> Turnus is also taking on the former owner’s *role of victim*, and in the end the allegedly merciless Aeneas, “too, is a passive victim as well, *furiis accensus*, set aflame by inner demons.”<sup>33</sup> Putnam indeed ends up with three victimizers turned victims, the last one, however, being viewed as a merciless victim.

It does not take a leap of the imagination to see that, if a hypothesis – not to say: critical dogma – of “circularity” overrules plotline and close reading, the causal nexus between Turnus’ nefarious deed in Book 10 and Turnus’ punishment (*Pallas ... poenam scelerato ex sanguine sumit* 12,947 f.) is easily toned down and overlaid by “repetition” of the crime, this time committed by an allegedly merciless Aeneas himself. Such a reduction, however, invalidates the variety and simplifies the complexity of authorial perspectives that our interpretation of the narrative context has brought into evidence. To sum up, then: the *ekphrasis* on the sword-belt of Pallas does not appear fit to provide the interpreter with an appropriate critical quill on the road to establishing a non-Augustan dimension of the *Aeneid*.

Another prominent route of de-contextualizing the sword-belt’s message is the one taken by Gian Biagio Conte. Applying semiotic theory, he especially availed himself of the concept of connotation, which claims that a word or expression suggests or even implies a further meaning. Conte tried, with Servius (*ad* 2,55), to limit the meaning of *foedus* in Vergil to “cruel” (*crudelis*), excluding the moral nuance of “foul” (*turpis*). Such exclusivity is sufficiently refuted by Juno’s *foeda ministeria* (7,619), her opening of the Gates of War: breaking the divinely sanctioned peace is not just a cruel but it is a sinful, nefarious act<sup>34</sup>.

Defining a possible moral meaning of *foede* at 10,498 as “with ignominy” or “with shame”, “meaning that the young men died ingloriously” because “killed in bed and not

<sup>31</sup>Putnam 1998, 197. This of course underrates 12,939-941a, when Aeneas refrains from executing the death blow.

<sup>32</sup>Putnam 1998, 193.

<sup>33</sup>Putnam 1998, 206.

<sup>34</sup>Rightly OLD *s.v.* *foede* under (1) upholds the moral nuance for Aen. 10,498.

in battle”, Conte declares that such a meaning “would certainly be wrong”. Right he is, but he is apparently not aware that it is wrong in having transferred the adverb *foede* from the killers’ action to their victims’ suffering: “... the tone ... is set by ‘foede’ (barbarously): the poet’s intervention is characterized by his *pity* and his *horror*”, focusing on the bridegrooms’ “tragic fate”<sup>35</sup>. “Pity”, of course, being an amoral concept, can be felt also toward victims of a crimeless misfortune. In truth the adverb *foede* characterizes the act of *caedere* (*caesa* requires as agents the complement *ab uxoribus*), not the passive humans who are the objects of the slaying so nefariously performed by their slayers. The moral turpitude is indeed not that the bridegrooms were slain “so barbarously”, but that they were murdered nefariously, without a chance to live, *entrapped maliciously* in a way comparable to the manner in which Pallas was set up by Turnus in a hopeless, inescapable situation.

Having, by mixing up active killing and passive suffering, worked with a mistaken notion of the potential moral blemish indicated by *foede*, Conte gives the adverb the non-desecrating meaning of “so barbarously slain” (his translation of 10,498): “*foede* refers to the ferocity with which the array of the young men has been ‘*caesa*’, and that is why this deed is a nefas.”<sup>36</sup> “Ferocity” (scil., of dying) instead of malice or nefarious murder?

Where Conte does admit a sense of defiling in *foede*, he misapplies the word, transferring it outside its Vergilian context. He refers to “the sullyng profanation” associated in ancient culture “with the experience of having *seen* bloodshed.”<sup>37</sup> This takes the focus away from the murderers’ act to a (potential) viewer not mentioned in Vergil’s description of the sword-belt’s scene. When Conte cites, e.g., aged King Priam who complains that Pyrrhus has made him watch his own son’s death, *patrios foedasti vulnere vultus* (2,539), the shameful still lies with the killer’s act, not with the watching father who himself likewise is the slayer’s victim. And Aeneas does not mean to say that he himself is being defiled (2,501 f.), when watching slaughtered Priam with his blood “defiling” (*foedantem*) his own altar fires. Conte’s example here does not exemplify what he wished it to exemplify.

The difficult *foede* having been transferred out of its murderous Vergilian context, Conte makes one more *contra-contextual* assumption (an addition of his own to Vergil’s text): as the murdered bridegrooms must have been disappointed in their joyful expectations when suffering their premature death (“brutally betrayed in their illusion of happiness”), so Pallas, encouraged by success and victory, is said to be cut off in *his* “beautiful illusion”: “Turnus’ superior force destroys the *confident hope* that courage will suffice for victory.”<sup>38</sup> This is extra-textual speculation: there was *no* confident hope

<sup>35</sup> Conte 1986, 187. My emphasis.

<sup>36</sup> Conte 1986, 187.

<sup>37</sup> Conte 1986, 187 f. My emphasis.

<sup>38</sup> Conte 1986, 189. My emphasis.

(or “beautiful illusion”) when Pallas, without flinching, faced the approaching superior ‘lion’ and decided to throw his spear first, before Turnus would do the same, in an attempt “if somehow chance would favor him in his daring, in the situation of *unequal strength*” (10,458 f. si qua = εἰ πῶς, “hope against hope”, Harrison *ad loc.*).

Nor does it help Conte’s case that, failing to distinguish different perspectives, he introduces Father Evander deploring “the naïve, bold enthusiasm of a youth and the love of glory that had excited Pallas during his first experience to war”. Uninformed Evander is tragically mistaken (11,154–157): his son did not die in consequence of youthful, incautious (cf. *cautius* 11,153) daring, but was maliciously sought out and attacked by a superior enemy in a pseudo-duel not of his own choosing; and, in clear awareness of his own inferior strength, he chose not to run away but met his death open-eyed, wishing not to be a dishonor to his father (10,450). “Naïve, bold enthusiasm”? “Beautiful illusion”? Rather, courage in a hopeless situation.

But Conte, having eliminated the moral component in *foede* in favor of a *general* tragic horror, expands on his counter-contextual idea of “deaths suffered with naïve confidence, with disenchantment.”<sup>39</sup> Finding that in Vergil’s “own cultural reality” there is “a closeness” between “youths destroyed by *mors immatura* (death before maturity)” and “death before marriage” (a “theme” richly evidenced in Greek as well as Roman literature), he pronounces “a creative mechanism whose significant elements have the same function in the anthropological system as in Vergil’s text.”<sup>40</sup> So Conte concluded that death-before-marriage represents a *species* of the *genus* premature death, and that the “proximity of Pallas’ destiny to that of the young bridegrooms” is “a typical mechanism of literary connotation.” So, then, if the sword-belt shows maliciously set-up and murdered bridegrooms, this means no more than “premature death”, and by the “mechanism of literary connotation” we must retroactively understand Pallas’ death also as tragically premature – and not in the first place as a *nefarious* killing, *impressumque nefas* (10,497)? Like New Criticism’s predilection for (allegedly) context-independent verbal repetitions, so the ‘connotation’ concept of Semiotic Theory does not protect its practitioner from doing violence to the text he claims to interpret. The consequence *once more* is an undifferentiated, *generally* tragic outlook of Vergil’s epic, discounting the possibility that the authorial voice may often be taking sides in matters of human compassion.

While Conte as an interpreter confidently claims that the philologist “simply assumes the function of the receiver programmed by the text of Virgil”<sup>41</sup>, the guiding ac-

<sup>39</sup> Conte 1986, 190.

<sup>40</sup> Conte 1986, 192.

<sup>41</sup> Conte 1986, 194. It is informative to see that the example Conte chooses “to confirm this approach” is likewise misunderstood by him. He claims that Aeneas, while looking at the pictures of Juno’s temple in Carthage, is absorbed by gazing at the warrior queen Penthesilea at the moment when Queen Dido appears, and that the “connotative power” of Penthesilea

cents and rich nuances the poet included in his preceding narrative are lost, sacrificed to a leveling reduction. Even if Vergil utilizes such literary differentiations for the prerogative and benefit of the Trojan (i.e., ultimately, for a pro-Augustan) perspective, we as his interpreters do not have the right to discount such a bias.

However, if one is on the path to a “de-Augustanized” *Aeneid*, it is of course helpful to see, with Putnam, criminality deflected away from Turnus (declaring him, too, a victim) and attached to Aeneas (reading him as a merciless killer); or, one may (with Conte) interpret *foede* instead of as “nefariously” (scil., slain) as generally indicating a tragic situation of premature death suffered by the not-yet-married: this, too, takes away from the authorial depiction of Turnus’ criminal intent and will more easily allow him to be seen as a victim. Conte himself falls victim to his Semiotics-based theory of discontinuous ‘foci’ through which the poet allegedly grants equal rights and consideration to the perspectives of Aeneas as well as of Turnus (and of others: “Every point of view is a center of independent perception”). What Conte would wish to establish is that Vergil “introduces *relativity*”, offering “the multiplicity of *relative* truths coexisting in the text”; a necessary postulate of course being that “... the dramatic component never goes deeper than the text’s *surface structure*; it never effects the shaping of the deep content,” his “polyphonic” way of writing producing a “polycentric” text in a world where “the truth is no longer just one truth.”<sup>42</sup> One sees: the epic’s narrative architecture has to be declared unimportant or even non-existent so the resulting fragments may be assigned each an independent value of their own<sup>43</sup>. Because of Conte’s

(later killed by her – potential – lover Achilles; but Vergil does not mention it) points to “the present context” of love and death (of Dido).

Though correctly translating *haec* (1,494) by “these things”, his interpretation unduly narrows the meaning as if the text says *haec ... miranda videtur*. The plural forms *haec* and *videntur* (470) summarize *all* the scenes from the Trojan War Aeneas has been viewing with so great emotion, and not the warrior queen only: His tears (*lacrimans* 410) and groans (465, 485) concern the suffering of the Trojans and their allies. (Besides, Penthesilea’s “cruel end at the hands of a lover” [rather: a *potential* lover] rashly preempts a correct interpretation of *Aeneid* 4.)

<sup>42</sup> Conte 1986, 152 f. 161 f. (my italics). A simple case contradicting Conte here by showing the importance of the dramatic component or plotline for “the deep content” is offered in Book 1: the split of Aeneas’s fleet into two parts caused by Juno’s sea storm allows the poet to let Aeneas appear before Dido *after* Ilioneus has sung his praises before the queen and *after* she has expressed desire for his presence. *coram, quem quaeritis, adsum, / Troius Aeneas*, (595 f.). Plotline is artfully employed here to reveal who is the protagonist in the limelight of this theatrical entry, and who is going to play second fiddle in the epic’s distribution of weights. No “coexisting *relative* truths” here!

<sup>43</sup>This aspect is eagerly seized upon by C. Segal, who in his *Foreword* (14) praises Conte for finding in Vergil “a new ‘polyphonic’ epic that not only incorporates multiple viewpoints but even allows contradiction and incoherence as a *fundamental part* of its multi-layered texture” (my italics). Logically and rhetorically trained Vergil incoherent?



(and also, Putnam's) widely ranging influence, it was necessary for once to expose the baneful consequences that arise from disregarding a narrative's artful imbalances produced by preferred (or less favoring) focalizations (as in the case of Pallas and Turnus; and also, as will be shown in my major study, of Aeneas and Lausus *versus* Turnus and Pallas).

Though (as shown above) patently erroneous, Conte's treatment of Pallas' sword-belt has not remained without followers<sup>44</sup>. Conte's American editor and promoter, C. Segal, recommended the chapter on Pallas' sword-belt as "sharply focused"(!), even maintained that "Here Conte's approach complements the text-immanent reading that has dominated the American critical scene" (etc.), stating that "the representation of the murdered bridegrooms" is "the signal of a whole cultural code of mourning the premature death of the young."<sup>45</sup> Once again, an extra-contextual approach has proved misleading to the extent that it is out of touch with the authorial intent (and a clearly nu-

Thomas (rendering Conte's message by saying 'there is no overarching "epic"' [Conte 187]) welcomes Conte's dissolution of the *Aeneid's* architecture for his own vain endeavor to "de-Augustanize" (2001, XVIII) Vergil, specifically to level the poet's moral distinction between pious Aeneas and treaty-breaking Turnus: "We can see the world through the eyes of ... Aeneas, or *we can choose* to look from the very different perspective[s] of ... Turnus. Either way of reading remains *an option*, and *Virgil impels us to neither*" (Thomas 2001, 296; my italics). How blunt would the narrator of Book 10 (and Book 12, for that matter) have to be to "impel" this Conte-follower to give up his belief in arbitrary interpretative "options"?

Another pillar for holding up Thomas' interpretative umbrella is taken from V. Pöschl's book (1<sup>st</sup> edition 1950, 2<sup>nd</sup> 1964; Thomas 2001, 295). Pöschl redeemed his own Nazi past (cf. DNP 15,2, 314. 319; Wlosok 2001, 371 f. 375 f.) by constructing, also against the "political delusion of the twentieth (century)" (!) a supra-national, even Christianized, poet of "mankind poetry" (*Menschheitsdichtung* 1964, 39); his directions for "the great geniuses of mankind" (*die grossen Genien der Menschheit* 175) are that they have to be "infinitely above" partisanship such as instantiated by "the derogatory interpretation of the Turnus-Gestalt" (*herabziehende[n] Deutung der Turnusgestalt* 175). This is fodder for Thomas of the Harvard School: By declaring Vergil a "great genius of mankind" (and who could contradict this classification?) one can, without reference to the text, *a priori* deduce Vergil's positive judgement of Turnus. The only thing still needed are a number of more or less decontextualized passages (see Thomas 1998). The present writer hopes to escape the accusation of being "hyper-logical" when pointing out circular reasoning (see also note 46).

<sup>44</sup> Among Conte's followers is even Horsfall (1995, 212): "I should like to believe that Conte is right and that it (scil., the scene on the sword-belt) underlines the untimeliness of Pallas' end." See also Harrison 1998, 227: "The most influential recent interpretation ... is justly that of Conte ... . He argues that the violent *mors immatura* of the young Pallas without the chance to marry is closely parallel to the fate of the sons of Aegyptus, similarly deprived of the hope of maturity and progeny through their murder by the Danaids, and that it is this which makes Turnus' action in killing Pallas a *nefas*." Instead of interpreting the sword-belt scene in light of the poet's narrative, Harrison too imposes a (non-pertinent) element from the sword-belt upon the narrative, – an element which the poet apparently 'forgot' to mention: in addition to being nefariously killed, Pallas might also have had wedding plans!

<sup>45</sup> Charles Segal in Conte 1986, 15.

anced intent there is, as we have shown). Where “the application of contemporary critical and semiotic theory to literary texts” (to quote from the volume’s jacket) supplants (rather than “complements”) precise linguistic observation of authorial text and meticulous tracing of context, a dangerous precedent is created not only for reading the remaining Books of the *Aeneid*, but for philologically and critically stringent interpretation everywhere. It is unfortunate (but eye-opening) that the late 20<sup>th</sup> century’s critical scene required extensive and detailed analysis of erroneous and miso-logical (not to say ‘hypo-logical’<sup>46</sup>) pseudo-methodologies for re-opening access to authorial intent (which, according to Gleit<sup>47</sup>, is evidenced by the author’s intent to communicate).

After interpretations affiliated with New Criticism and Semiotic Theory, two cases of a different approach of dealing with Pallas’ sword-belt and its meaning for the *Aeneid* must at least be touched upon here. This type of approach (occasionally mixed with others) may fittingly be called the archeological-philological and political one. It emanates from the philologist’s habit of drawing together widely scattered bits of information and assuming an underlying connection of meaning.

From a number of sources (prominent among them is Propertius’ elegy 2,31) we know that the area of the temple of Apollo on the Palatine Hill (the location of the Emperor’s residence, which was connected to the temple by a private covered ramp<sup>48</sup>) also held a Colonnade of the Danaids. In its *intercolumnia* statues were set up of the daughters of Danaus about to murder their young husbands (i.e., their cousins, the sons of Aegyptus, Danaus’ brother); a statue of their father, his sword drawn, was nearby (see especially Ovid, ars 1,73 f.). Definitely, those statues are not identical with the busts presently on display in the *Antiquario Palatino*.

Two questions posed by scholarship are of potential importance to the present investigation: first, the political meaning Augustus intended by including the statues within the wider temple area, and, second, the statues’ relation to the Vergilian murder scene on Pallas’ sword-belt.

First, then: “It goes without saying” (*Es versteht sich ... von selbst*) that the temple area “was equipped with a sophisticated pictorial program” (*mit einem ausgeklügelten Bild-Programm versehen war*), “which mirrored the self-representation of the new ruler.” (*in dem sich das Selbstverständnis der neuen Herrschaft spiegelte*). The quotation from Lefèvre’s opening section<sup>49</sup> outlines a basic premise shared by scholars who have investigated the colonnade for a possible Augustan meaning. Their results, however, vary widely. For the present purpose it suffices if I name only two.

<sup>46</sup> I use this term in response to Thomas’ rationality-defying complaint about “hyper-logical” interpretation (i.e., an interpretation that respects historical facts; Thomas 2001, 7).

<sup>47</sup> Gleit 1991, 18. 34.

<sup>48</sup> For a drawing of the ramp see Carettoni 1983, 48, Abbildung 6.

<sup>49</sup> Lefèvre 1989, 11. Lefèvre offers an extraordinarily detailed and documented investigation.

Lefèvre himself, assuming that the Danaids were here understood to act in *self-defense*, refuses to judge the murderous action of the *Verteidigerinnen* (as he calls them) as a criminal outrage (*Frevel*); but how does this square with *miseris* and *ausae* in Ovid's description of the colonnade:

*quaque parare necem miseris patruelibus ausae*  
*Belides ...?* (ars 1,73 f.),  
 where Belos' granddaughters *dared* to prepare death for their  
*poor* cousins.

The words *miseris* and *ausae* seem to indicate sympathy for the poor victims rather than approval of Lefèvre's "revenge or self-defense" – *Rache oder Notwehr*. However, Lefèvre views the sons of Aegyptus (of whom there apparently were no statues set up) in their pursuit of their prospective brides as *attackers*, and as such believes them to be a *symbol of the power* (*Sinnbild für die Macht*) which had recently threatened Rome and had been defeated by Augustus: the Danaids represent the triumph over Egypt (*über Antonius, Cleopatra und ihre Truppen*)<sup>50</sup>. It is only consistent that Lefèvre interprets the statue of Danaus with his drawn sword as representing Octavian-Augustus<sup>51</sup>.

Second, Lefèvre's take on Pallas' sword-belt in the *Aeneid*. He assumes that Vergil, "presumably under the impression of the colonnade program (*wohl unter dem Eindruck des Programms der Porticus*)", understood the myth in the same way: Pallas, being outrageously attacked, is to be equated with the Danaids; whereas Turnus, the attacker whose deed is to be viewed negatively, corresponds to Aegyptus' sons "whose shameful action (*nefas*) has found an ignominious (*foede*) end (*deren schändliches Handeln [nefas] ein schmähhliches Ende [foede] gefunden hat*)<sup>52</sup>". The message of the *balteus* then is that Pallas will be avenged (*Pallas wird gerächt werden*).

Lefèvre too has, though rightly seeing Turnus as the attacker, grammatically misapplied the words *foede* and *nefas*<sup>53</sup>: they cannot refer to any *preceding* misconduct of Aegyptus' sons (which supposedly would entail their disgraceful end, pointing ahead to Turnus' punishment). Rather, as was stated earlier by us, *nefas* is explained by the murder (*caesa*), and *foede* characterizes the malicious assault by which the Danaids killed their bridegrooms. Furthermore, Lefèvre's attempt to tie Vergil's *ekphrasis* in with his own evaluation of the temple area's archaeology amounts to an imported over-determination of a text that in itself displays an immanently consistent meaning. By exchanging victims and perpetrators of the Vergilian murder scene (the killed sons of

<sup>50</sup> Lefèvre 1989, 12–16.

<sup>51</sup> Lefèvre 1989, 25.

<sup>52</sup> Lefèvre 1989, 16.

<sup>53</sup> As a matter of fact, Lefèvre has assigned *foede* a double function, by having the word refer both to the „schmähhliches“ end of the Aegyptids and to the „freventlich“ killing of Pallas.

Aegyptus as actors, the killing Danaids as victims), he can assign the *ekphrasis* only the function of pointing to future revenge rather than of elucidating the context at hand, i.e., the wrongful death of the sword-belt's rightful owner.

The other 'political' interpretation of the sword-belt to be cited here is by S.J. Harrison, who signed on to Conte's mistaken premature-death theory: "The primary emphasis in the text at *Aeneid* 10.497-9 is on the tragic death of the victims, and the abomination of the death of unfulfilled youth, not on the criminality of the perpetrators."<sup>54</sup> So again: Vergil has apparently neglected to inform his readers of Pallas' wedding plans?

Comparing his interpretation of the Danaid myth to "its larger context in Augustan Rome", Harrison likewise moves from interpreting "the symbolic role" of the Palatine Danaid statues to, in a second step, once more considering the Vergilian sword-belt's *ekphrasis*. Stating first that "In all Augustan allusions to the Danaids, their deed is condemned, as indeed in Vergil's *nefas*"<sup>55</sup>, he proceeds to interpret the presentations on the temple doors of Palatine Apollo (Prop. 2,31): the attacking Gauls in 278 B.C. being driven from Delphi by Apollo's lightning, and Niobe over her children's bodies (punished by Apollo and his sister for her *hybris*). Harrison finds a "clear" "link with Actium": "there too ... Apollo took revenge on his enemies and supported his favourite Augustus." "Thus Palatine Apollo becomes the defender of civilization against barbarism," and the Danaids become "part of the scheme."<sup>56</sup> But, in contrast to Lefèvre, Harrison, supplementing an argument of Kellum, views the Danaids as standing not for Rome under Octavian, but for Cleopatra VII who married two younger brothers of hers and is said to have been involved directly in the killing of at least one of them. Danaus, who in Lefèvre's interpretation is equated with Augustus, in Harrison's scheme takes on the role of Augustus' adversary: "like Danaus, Antony urges a closely-linked female to barbarous deeds." All these associations, then, make the Danaids "a plausibly *specific symbolic* representation of contemporary enemies."<sup>57</sup>

As with Lefèvre's premise that the Palatine Danaids act in self-defense (or in revenge), so with the identifications Harrison suggests there is the problem that they cannot be verified. They even raise a practical question: if "the Danaids were taken from the cities and sanctuaries of the conquered" ("they may even have come from Alexandria itself"), how did the selection process work? Did Augustus give orders such as 'search Alexandria and get me a group of Danaids so they may represent my Egyptian adversary and her treasonous Roman associate?' This is hardly convincing. The Gauls and Niobe on the temple doors glorify the god's traditional punishment of human theomachic *hybris*, – which may (or may not) 'symbolize' contemporary events. They

<sup>54</sup> Harrison 1998, 230.

<sup>55</sup> Harrison 1998, 231.

<sup>56</sup> Harrison 1998, 232.

<sup>57</sup> Harrison 1998, 236. My italics.

may equally well be destined to support the new Augustan religiosity and the moral restraint it aims at.

But the case of Scopas' statue of Apollo as citharode<sup>58</sup> (not as the archer god!) definitely belongs to a different, wider context. Here I do not doubt that the statues of Apollo, Diana, and Latona (one of them even with a replaced head, Pliny, nat. 36,4. 24. 32) were sought out from different sources and assembled as a group. For by their configuration they show, as does Horace's *Carmen Saeculare* or the further dimension added by Vergil to his Actium battle scene (cf. *at.*, Aen. 8,714; also Propertius 4,6,69-84), the *post*-Actium 'New Age' perspective of the 'Palatine Triad', which banishes civil strife (Vergil's fettered *Furor impius*, Aen. 1,294 f.) and restricts War to the outside expansion of the Empire.

It appears methodologically dangerous to assume a securely interpretable "scheme" that would integrate every art object on the Hill to satisfy the desires of a proof-lacking symboloscopy. What would under this assumption the sun god's chariot on the temple's roof stand for? Perhaps victorious Actian Augustus himself? What about the chandelier from Alexander's Theban booty that hang in Apollo's temple (Pliny, nat. 34,8. 14)? I shall return to the question below.

Returning to his own (Conte-influenced) take on the *Aeneid*'s sword-belt passage, Harrison finds that it does *not* fit in with the political propaganda he assumes (or rather: hypothesizes) for the Palatine Danaids: "The *triumphalist* discourse of post-Actian celebration, represented in the iconography of the Palatine complex, is reappropriated by Vergil to serve a more meditative and tragic view of war."<sup>59</sup> "Reappropriated"? Only through Conte's, linguistically imprecise, understanding can one arrive at a Vergilian correction of the alleged message issued by the Palatine Danaids. The underlying assumption again is that a passage one finds difficult to interpret may stand in reference to an extra-contextual message. So: an erroneous (since extra-contextually conceived) understanding of the sword-belt scene clashes with the presumed political meaning of the portico (to which Pallas' sword-belt "*very likely*" [my italics] "alludes")? Harrison himself appears to feel uneasy about the resulting contradiction-in-terms when he declares the poet critical toward Augustan propaganda, "though Vergil can of course turn on Augustan triumphalism *when required* (as on the Shield of Aeneas in *Aeneid* 8)"<sup>60</sup>.

Obviously, Harrison is not aware that the idea of being "of course" able to "turn on" (or off) Augustan propaganda "as required" throws open a core problem of the bivocalist approach (to which his thinking here shows considerable affinity): if Vergil's alleged "second voice" is being construed in contradiction to his work's dominant story line with its open propaganda (what Harrison calls "Augustan triumphalism"), and the second voice is claimed to be the poet's true voice, then the poet's 'turning on as re-

<sup>58</sup> Harrison 1998, 236.

<sup>59</sup> Harrison 1998, 237. My italics.

<sup>60</sup> Harrison 1998, 237. My italics.

quired' of the first voice amounts to an opportunist's deportment, – hardly a compliment to a poet who received his share of official (including financial) support in his lifetime.

Another problem of bivocalism that is likewise breaking out into the open here is the critical misconception on which the idea of 'turning on' (or off) the propaganda faucet is based: it isolates propagandistic passages ("the Shield of Aeneas in *Aeneid* 8"; one may easily add Jupiter's revelation to Venus in *Aeneid* 1, or Anchises' vision of Rome's future in *Aeneid* 6 – all three culminating in Augustus) as if ideological passages are not part of the poetic design but can be broken loose and read in isolation from (even in contradiction to) their overall context. The underlying critical concept is a non-binding and, therefore, ultimately un-obliging story-line, studded on the one hand with propagandistic highlights and on the other hand with counter-indicative 'symbolic' or 'metaphorical' passages. It is a concept of compositional incoherence (not to say illogicality), which allegedly allows to place those 'symbolic' passages outside the story line and even to interpret them counter-contextually.

The error of such a 'concept' (if one may call it that) lies in underrating, even discounting, the compelling consistency of the surrounding narrative, – three of the four examples I have analyzed (Putnam, Conte, Harrison) may be seen as attempts to evade the (apparently, unwelcome) reality that would force the interpreter to concede that the poet's voice is not impartial.

Having taken my reader on what may seem to have been a long detour, I nevertheless hope to have confirmed and secured the principle of immanent consistency in reading the *Aeneid*. The three types of critical approach discussed (new critical, semiotic, archaeological-philological-political) have in common that in their account they have not sufficiently observed Vergil's preceding (and, also, following) detailed narrative and its focalization(s). Instead, they each have imposed a foreign aspect on a contextually *verifiable* meaning. No case can be made here for authorial ambiguity (not to mention multivalence or polysemy) – as can be made, on a strictly logical basis, for many an elegy of Propertius, Vergil's regime-critical contemporary<sup>61</sup>.

Earlier, I remarked on the philologist's inclination to find common ground in widely scattered bits of information, which in the two last cases meant connecting a literary text to a hypothetically reconstructed and interpreted archeological monument. It appears to me that *the premise itself* of a unified ideological design of the whole area surrounding temple and palace is not sufficiently secured. It is Ovid who (in addition to Propertius' description of the temple itself and its forecourt, 2,31) provides us with the most details of the palace area on the Palatine Hill. This is in the opening elegy of the third Book of his *Tristia*, where he also almost *verbatim* repeats a pentameter from his

<sup>61</sup> On logically verifiable ambiguity in Propertius, see Stahl 1985, *passim*.

earlier description of the Danaid portico (trist. 3,1,62 ~ ars 1,74). In the earlier passage, the portico ranks with others as an ambulatory space where the young man can look for girls. It must therefore have been a larger construction (perhaps on *substructiones*), probably extending the palace area toward the river (the exact blueprint is not known).

The difficulty in attributing an ideological slant to the Danaid portico becomes apparent if one reviews content and context of Ovid's elegy Tr. 3,1<sup>62</sup>. This elegy, mouth-piece for its author, like others that try to induce the Master of Rome to issue a more lenient edict for the relegated poet, displays a thick adulatory tone, giving praise to many a prominent edifice or decorative detail on the Palatine. Augustus' palace is viewed as Jupiter's domicile (3,1,35 ff.), the oak wreath over its door (the *corona civica*, awarded Augustus for having saved the citizenry) taken as indicator of the god. The two laurel trees at the palace entrance are interpreted as signs of the ruling family's triumphs or, alternatively, as expressing the love of the "Leucadian god" (= Apollo, who is the victory granting god with a famous temple on Leucas near Actium<sup>63</sup>), etc. (39 ff.).

At lines 60 ff., the visiting book (all the time standing in for its creator) is led up the stairs to the "unshorn god's white (marble) temple" (no explanation necessary because the political reference to the victory of the Leucadian god at Actium was already given in line 42 before). Then, without any comment added, there follows the purely topographical information (en route to the Palatine libraries, which are added by mere *-que*, 63):

*signa peregrinis ubi sunt alterna columnis,  
Belides et stricto barbarus ense pater* (trist. 3,1,61 f.)

where the statues are, alternating with imported (marble) columns,  
Belus' granddaughters and their foreign father, his sword drawn.

If there actually existed a well-known and acknowledged public association of the Danaid monument with the political parties involved in the Battle of Actium, would Ovid, considering the detailed adulatory character and monumental references of this elegy, have let the chance of further praise slip by unused?

It appears safe to say that the sword-belt of Pallas did hold his sword, but no quill for critics who underestimate the logic and consistency of Vergil's thought sequence, action line, and narrative emphases. The *ekphrasis* cannot be de-contextualized; it illustrates and, so, secures the narrative's focal point.

Pittsburgh

H.P. Stahl

<sup>62</sup> On the special situation of this adulatory elegy among other less regime-friendly poems, see Stahl 2002, 273 f.

<sup>63</sup> On the topographical difficulties, see Stahl 1998, 49–69.

## Works Cited:

- Austin, R.G. 1971. *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Primus with a Commentary by R.G.Austin.*
- Cancik, H. *Der Neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike.* ed. Cancik, H. und H. Schneider. Stuttgart 1996–2003. (quoted as DNP)
- Carettoni, W. 1983. *Das Haus des Augustus auf dem Palatin.* Mainz.
- Clausen, W. 1987. *Virgil's Aeneid and the Tradition of Hellenistic Poetry.* Sather Classical Lectures 51. Berkeley.
- Conte, G.B. 1986. *The Rhetoric of Imitation: Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and Other Latin Poets.* Cornell Studies in Classical Philology 44. Ithaca/London.
- Glei, R. 1991. *Der Vater der Dinge: Interpretationen zur politischen, literarischen und kulturellen Dimension des Krieges bei Vergil.* Trier.
- Harrison, S.J. *Virgil, Aeneid 10, with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary.* Oxford, 1991.
- id. 1998. "The Sword-Belt of Pallas: Moral Symbolism and Political Ideology (*Aen.* 10.495-505)." In: Stahl, H.P., *Virgil's Aeneid. Augustan Epic and Political Context.* Edited, with an Introduction, by Hans Peter Stahl. London. 223–242.
- Horsfall, N. 1995. *A Companion to the Study of Virgil.* Edited by Nicholas Horsfall. Leiden 1995.
- Lefèvre, E. 1989. *Das Bildprogramm des Apollo-Tempels auf dem Palatin.* Konstanzer Althistorische Vorträge und Forschungen, Heft 24. Konstanz.
- Mutschler, F.-H. 2003. „Caesars Kommentarien im Spannungsfeld von sozialer Norm und individuellem Geltungsanspruch.“ In: *O tempora, o mores! Römische Werte und römische Literatur in den letzten Jahrzehnten der römischen Republik.* Beiträge zur Altertumskunde, Band 171. München/Leipzig. 71–91.
- Page, T.E. 1894-1900. *Aeneid.*
- Pöschl, V. 1964. *Die Dichtkunst Virgils: Bild und Symbol in der Aeneis.* 2nd enlarged ed. Berlin.
- Putnam, M.C.J. 1995. *Virgil's Aeneid. Interpretation and Influence.* Chapel Hill 1995.
- id. 1998. *Virgil's Epic Designs. Ekphrasis in the Aeneid.* New Haven.
- Quinn, K. 1968. *Virgil's Aeneid: A Critical Description.* London.
- Segal, Charles, 1986. „Foreword.“ In: Conte, G.B. 1986. *The Rhetoric of Imitation: Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and Other Latin Poets.* Cornell Studies in Classical Philology 44. Ithaca/London. 7–17.
- Stahl, H.P., 1981. "Aeneas, an 'Unheroic' Hero?" In: *Arethusa* 14, 1981, 157–177.
- id. 1985. *Propertius. "Love" and "War": Individual and State under Augustus.* Berkeley.



- id. 1990. "The Death of Turnus: Augustan Vergil and the Political Rival." In: Raaflaub, K.A. and M. Toher, edd. *Between Republic and Empire. Interpretations of Augustus and his Principate*. Berkeley. 174–211.
- id. 1998. "Political Stop-overs of Poetical Travel Routes: From Battling Harpies, to the Battle of Actium (Aen. 3. 268-293)." In: *Vergil's Aeneid: Augustan Epic and Political Context*. Ed. by H.P. Stahl. London. 37–84.
- id. 2002. "Sneaking it by the Emperor: Ovid Playing it Both Ways." In: *Noctes Atticae: 34 Articles on Graeco-Roman Antiquity and its Nachleben. Studies Presented to Joergen Mejer on His Sixtieth Birthday March 18, 2002*. edd. B. Amden et alii, Copenhagen. 265–280.
- Thomas, R.F. 1998. „The Isolation of Turnus (*Aeneid*, Book 12).“ In: *Vergil's Aeneid: Augustan Epic and Political Context*. Ed. by H.P. Stahl. London. 271–302.
- id. 2001. *Virgil and the Augustan Reception*. Cambridge.
- Williams, R.D., 1972/1973. *The Aeneid of Virgil*. Edited with Introduction and Notes by R.D. Williams.
- Wlosok, A. "Viktor Pöschl". *Gnomon* 73, 2001, 369–378.
- Zanker, P. 1987. *Augustus und die Macht der Bilder*. München.