

VIRGIL'S NON-LINEAR NARRATIVE AND HIS *AENEID*'S
TWO VOICES*

by

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*A still small voice spake unto me,
"Thou art so full of misery,
Were it not better not to be?"*

*Then to the still small voice I said:
"Let me not cast in endless shade
What is so wonderfully made".*

Alfred Tennyson, *The Two Voices* (1833)

ABSTRACT: Half a century ago American scholars thought to discern two voices while reading the *Aeneid*, a private one of regret and doubt, a public one of triumph and glory. Since the *Aeneid*'s narrative is defined by two parallels, however, one looking backward, between Aeneas and Achilles, and another looking forward, between Aeneas and Augustus, one may ask various questions. Did Augustus enjoy being portrayed as such a double-bind hero as Aeneas? Or, did he let it pass only because Virgil was close to him? Friendship, indeed, plays a major role in the *Aeneid*. Moreover, it may determine one's survival, as the case of Virgil's friend Gallus, who held a very special place in Virgil's poetry before his *Aeneid*, shows. Actually, what is his new type of poetry, which attracted T.S. Eliot? What is so new in it, and is it really a "Christianised" reading as the detractors of Eliot claim which still makes the *Aeneid* such an inspiring text? Is it not the feeling that we no longer, or not only, hear about superhuman heroes from bygone eras but actually, or also, listen to human beings, see how their conflicts develop and how they are partially but only unsatisfactorily solved? The starting point is "Actium", shorthand for Octavian's war with Antony and Cleopatra, which establishes the *Aeneid*'s crucial parallel between Aeneas and Augustus.

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PROLOGUE

On 2 September 31 BC Gaius Julius Octavianus, adopted son and heir of the assassinated and deified Julius Caesar, defeats Mark Antony and Cleopatra VII at the battle of Actium. The last remaining (and by far the most prestigious and wealthy) Diadochian part of the Alexandrian empire becomes a Roman province. Henceforth the master of Egypt, Octavian receives the name of Augustus on 16 January 27 BC. Written around that time at his request, Virgil's *Aeneid* refers four times to Actium, though twice not by name, yet always at decisive moments.

At the start of the work Jupiter alludes to Actium, as does Aeneas' father Anchises in the middle of the work, both of them using geographical *antonomasia*¹: Jupiter predicts that Octavian will be welcomed by Venus as "weighted with the Orient's wealth" (I 289: "spoliis Orientis onustum"), which clearly denotes the pharaonic wealth of Egypt, and Anchises sees "the seven mouths of the Nile tremble in terror" at Octavian's approach (VI 800: "septemgemini turbant trepida ostia Nili"), which clearly refers to Egypt as well. Finally, we not only hear of Actium which is explicitly named, but also see it when Aeneas receives his new shield for his final battle from his mother, just before the last third of the text begins (VIII 675: *Actia bella*).

Each being a crowning achievement of their respective passages, these anticipatory references to Actium do not simply introduce a synchronic event into the *Aeneid*'s diachronic narrative. What is more, they establish the *Aeneid*'s crucial parallel between Aeneas and Augustus. Another (and our final) passage, in which Actium is spoken of suggests this parallel even more. In the *Aeneid*'s book III, Actium is one of the Trojans' stops while journeying to Italy (278–293). Having landed, the Trojans make offerings and celebrate solemn games (III 280: "Actiaque Iliacis celebramus litora ludis"). They stay for some time, winter comes and goes, an icy wind ruffles the water (III 284 f.: "interea magnum sol circumvolvitur annum / et glacialis hiems Aquilonibus asperat undas"). After dedicating a shield to Apollo and marking the event with a verse (III 288: "Aeneas haec de Danais victoribus arma"), they set sail northwards along the coast of Epirus².

The shrine of Apollo there, of which the Trojans catch sight (III 275), was restored and enlarged by Augustus, who "instituted at Nicopolis, the site of his camp, a large-scale festival called the Actian games"³. The games were celebrated

¹ A poetic device which became fashionable among Hellenistic poets in Alexandria, later to be copied by Callimachean poets in Rome: FARRELL 1991: 42–59. The three passages from the *Aeneid*'s books I, VI, and VII are discussed more fully below, in section IV.

² R.D. WILLIAMS (1962: 114 = 1972: 293) pointed to the inscription's irony, "with *victoribus* where *victis* would be expected". Surely, however, who would think this to be ironic except Augustus? Aeneas would hardly have perceived himself as a victor, but Augustus might have felt free to do so; perhaps, not without irony (*pour être grand il faut avoir été petit*).

³ R.D. WILLIAMS 1972: 292.

for the first time in 28 BC, and subsequently every four years. Virgil furnishes an ancient precedent for these games, which Augustus had instituted at Actium in memory of his great victory over Antony and Cleopatra, creating a pleasing parallel which links Augustus to Aeneas. In his *Aeneid*, the games foreshadow the much larger and more prestigious ones described in book V of the *Aeneid* book, held in honour of Anchises⁴. They conclude with an equestrian display (V 545–603), which played a prominent part in Augustus' organisations for the training of the young in Rome and Italy. Thus, Virgil again associates contemporary social events with the Homeric precedent, "and in the course of it Virgil could link the past with the present (as he very often does in the *Aeneid*)"⁵. He has already done so in the just mentioned short passage in book III of the *Aeneid*.

Choosing to pay tribute to Augustus' victory (whether voluntarily or not we cannot say), Virgil actually associated different places, confusing the real geographical situation and incorporating several places "into a single stop at Actium"⁶. In other words, by combining "Leucas and Actium into a single stage apparently without reconciling the geographical facts"⁷, Virgil created one imaginary memory place out of several real places. Such looking forward to Augustan practices and achievements while interpreting events of the legendary past "is entirely Vergilian"⁸.

The sequence of Actium – first alluded to by Jupiter, then by Anchises, finally to be seen on the shield, and in between to be literally passed by Aeneas and his comrades – establishes a storyline. Its major event, however, does not belong to the life of Aeneas. He just passes the place whose importance he ignores, yet somehow feels, honouring it by an inscription. Instead, the reader's attention is aimed directly at Augustus, and the author zeroes in on a major event in the Emperor's recent biography. Even when eventually receiving the shield, Aeneas could not have understood what is depicted. Virgil states his hero's unawareness in a prominent place. The closure of book VIII of the *Aeneid* shows Aeneas shouldering the shield (729–731): "such sights he admired on Vulcan's shield, his mother's gift, [...] uplifting on his shoulder the fame and fortune of his children's children" ("talia per clipeum Volcani, dona parentis, [...] attollens umero famamque et fata nepotum").

⁴ The games are not only spectacular but also modern, and "no attentive reader can fail to notice that the whole energetic culture of Augustan athleticism is replicated in the *Aeneid*" (HORSEFALL 2016: 139). Thus, the games establish "a major point of contact" between Aeneas and Augustus: "Nel campo atletico, il punto principale di contatto tra Enea ed Augusto è evidentemente il *lusus Troiae*: Virgilio sottolinea la continuità da Enea ad Augusto (5. 596–603)" (HORSEFALL 1991: 139).

⁵ R.D. WILLIAMS 1960: XI.

⁶ LLOYD 1957: 391.

⁷ R.D. WILLIAMS 1962: 111.

⁸ LLOYD 1954: 294.

The line in between (730) calls Aeneas *ignarus*, i.e. ‘not knowing’, ‘unaware’, yet “miratur rerumque ignarus imagine gaudet” can be translated either as “all unaware Aeneas takes pleasure in the pictures of things to come” or as “though ignorant of the events Aeneas takes pleasure in their representation”; the translation depends on whether *ignarus* is taken with *rerum* or is taken absolutely (for both usages we have parallels in Virgil). Apparently, there is an ambiguity here, a different perception aimed at by Virgil: “for Aeneas historical events are merely pictures while for the reader the pictures are descriptions of historical events”⁹. In other words, Aeneas did not get the message (how could he), but Augustus very much did; he knew the place well: a beautiful contrast.

If Virgil also read parts of book VIII to Augustus – we know that he did read parts of the *Aeneid*’s books II, IV, and VI – Augustus may have heard of it in retrospect during Virgil’s reading sessions, listening to Virgil’s promisingly sweet voice softly whispering into the Emperor’s ear. While Aeneas could not know what was meant by *Actia bella* (VIII 675) Augustus would have understood clearly what Virgil was driving at. Virgil did not only identify a place “off which Octavian (Augustus) won a naval victory over Antony and Cleopatra [...] which secured him the supremacy of the Roman world”¹⁰, but also depicted Aeneas and Augustus, both being founders of Rome, when they “need to resort to violence as they go about their careers”¹¹.

Aeneas, however, regrets violence. And even more intriguing than that is the observation that Virgil too is openly sympathetic to the effects of loneliness,

⁹ GRANSDEN 1976: 185. Aeneas, however, seems to be somewhat aware of what is to come. At the opening of *Aeneid* VI, the Trojans land at Cumae. Aeneas goes straight to Apollo’s temple to seek a prophecy from the Sibyl. At the entrance of a vast cavern from which the oracles issue, Aeneas prays. The Sibyl inside the cavern struggles with the god who possesses her. Finally, the entrances open mysteriously and she is heard in prophecy. Aeneas entreats her to enable him to visit his father in the Underworld, declaring that he is prepared for the ordeal of going if the Sibyl will be his guide (VI 105): “omnia praecepi atque animo mecum ante peregi” – “I have taken thought for all beforehand, and worked it out in my inmost heart”, as AUSTIN (1977: 74) translates. This line indicates apprehensiveness in its double meaning. Aeneas does anticipate things adverse, being fearful as to what may be coming, in the Stoic sense of a *praemeditatio malorum*: “he has counted the cost and is prepared” (FLETCHER 1941: 39): a definition of “heroism” in a way, “the deliberate facing of danger ‘grasped and gone through in the mind beforehand’” (PAGE 1894: 453). However, and this is the second layer so to speak, his apprehensiveness is indicative of his intelligence, perceptiveness, and discernment – which must reckon with something important that is to come. Since he is sent on a mission, what is to come in the future must have to do with his project, i.e. the founding of Rome. Or, as Jacques PERRET put it (1952: 134 f.): “Cette attente de l’avenir, cette tension permanente a pour effet de vider de sa réalité l’action présente elle-même, anticipée, révolue, dévorée, avant d’être vécue: Énée n’écouterait que d’une oreille indifférente les avertissements de la Sibylle: *omnia praecepi atque animo mecum ante peregi* ‘Je sais déjà tout cela; j’ai tout vécu à l’avance’ (*Aen.* VI, 105)”. This may sound as if the ubiquitous Aeneas lives in various time zones (like Marcel Proust while describing his protagonist Marcel in *Recherche*), which he does not – he simply, and miraculously, knows what is to come. He is gifted.

¹⁰ PAGE 1900: 245.

¹¹ PUTNAM 2011: 15.

suffering and defeat. He does interfere critically in the narrative as well as making his protagonist comment on it melancholically. Virgil may have used all the right words in describing his protagonist's accomplishment, how thrillingly grand Aeneas is, but was there not a different story in the tone of his voice?

I.

Actually, Actium may lend support to one major issue, or rather a trend, in Virgilian scholarship, i.e. the so-called two voices theory (or "Harvard school"). Indebted to their contemporary intellectual environment¹², though not defined by it¹³, a group of North-American Latinists in the 1950s and 60s claimed to hear in Virgil's *Aeneid* not only a public voice of triumph, but also a private voice of regret: "a characteristic Virgilian note of melancholy and nostalgia"¹⁴. Many a line in the *Aeneid* may hail the coming of a new age – nevertheless, a distressing tone can be discerned throughout. And Actium may well have provoked some second thoughts which were not necessarily heroic ones. Let us briefly look at some examples.

Under the cloud of such overwhelming sorrow which blots out all joy from his life, Aeneas even longs for death. While looking at the engravings of the Trojan War in the temple of Juno in Carthage, for instance, Aeneas is overcome with emotion, and speaks famously of "tears for passing things, things mortal that touch the mind" (I 462: "sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt"). Indicative of the hero's lingering conflict between faith and scepticism, this happens at the beginning of Aeneas' story, when he appears in the narrative for the first time. It happens again the last time he turns up in the *Aeneid*'s narrative, where Aeneas is again overcome with emotions, this time grief and anger. Something emotional determines his mind. By no means is he a weakling, but a constant wavering characterises him, a change that does not go away. Despite "the melancholy that seems to predominate"¹⁵, however, at this point in the narrative, though acknowledging something sad, Aeneas is not overwhelmed by sorrow (and neither is he at the very end of the *Aeneid*), because he believes – not quite rightly, as it turns out – that the inhabitants of the land to which he is driven by the storm feel sympathy for the Trojans' sufferings: "he dared to hope for safety", we hear, "for the first time while beneath the mighty temple in a grove", and "here he put surer trust in his shattered fortunes" (I 450–452):

¹² HARRISON 1990b: 5.

¹³ CLAUSEN 1995: 313. In retrospect, one may call this an attempt to 'de-Augustanise' the *Aeneid*, as STAHL (2015: 454) puts it. He, however, regards Virgil as "the trail-blazing, loyal supporter, the unconditional defender of Aeneas' latest descendant", i.e. Augustus (p. 458).

¹⁴ PARRY 1963: 69.

¹⁵ AUSTIN 1971: 157.

hoc primum in luco nova res oblata timorem
 leniit, hic primum Aeneas sperare salutem
 ausus et adflictis melius confidere rebus.

At the opening of *Aeneid* II, however, when asked by Dido to talk about his past, he makes a show of reluctance to begin his story, his “mind, remembering, recoils in grief, and trembles” (II 12: “animus meminisse horret luctuque refugit”). At this point in the narrative, he fears the grip of powerful emotions, shying away from recollecting his past and from going through its horrors. His “spirit ‘has started back’, and ‘is shivering’”¹⁶. A refugee, however, can hardly refuse to tell what a queen wants to know. Instead, he should be delighted to have been asked at all. Unstable Aeneas is even more than that; he falls in love with her.

Another example may illustrate our argument. When Pallas is killed by Turnus – a decisive event that anticipates the outcome of the poem, when Aeneas, suddenly and unexpectedly reminded of Pallas’ death, kills Turnus in the poem’s very last lines – it is the narrator’s voice who alienates the reader’s sympathy from Turnus, commenting and interrupting the narrative by interventions (X 501 f., 503–505). Foreshadowing the day when Turnus will bitterly regret this deed, he highlights the great grief and the great glory that accompany Pallas’ corpse (and anticipates the end of the *Aeneid*). Most movingly, Virgil addresses the dead hero as if he were still alive and returning home (X 507): “o dolor atque decus magnum rediture parenti” – “O you who will return (*rediture*) as a great grief and glory to your father”¹⁷. A few lines earlier Virgil broke into the narrative with his comment on the behaviour of people – like Turnus – when swept away by success: if there is *double entendre* intended, this could be interpreted as a warning to Augustus.

In fact, the figure of Pallas is a structuring element of the *Aeneid* in more than one sense. He establishes a second defining parallel for Aeneas, who eventually, more to his own than to the reader’s surprise, avenges his death. After Pallas’ death Aeneas launches a furious offensive, raging in mad anger, slaying a host of enemies (X 510–605), “matching that of Achilles after the death of Patroclus”¹⁸. In the following, the crazed Achilles kills many Trojans, including Hector’s brothers Polydoros (*Il.* XX 353–418) and Lykaon (XXI 34–138)¹⁹.

The death of Lykaon, however, is of such a heightened intensity that it could not have escaped Virgil. Lykaon, whom he had previously captured and sold, supplicates (thoroughly and perpetually) the frenzied Achilles, who kills him,

¹⁶ AUSTIN 1964: 32.

¹⁷ JORDAN 1990: 61.

¹⁸ HARRISON 1991: 201.

¹⁹ Ironically, Achilles rages all the more since he could not kill Aineias, who is protected by the gods. Aineias is supernaturally rescued, fated to survive the war, as Poseidon points out to him twice (*Il.* XX 336, 339). Achilles, however, is doomed (*Il.* XX 337).

throws him into the river, and makes a contemptuous speech over him, taking offence at him. In the *Aeneid*, eventually, it is the killing of Pallas, i.e. the remembrance of it which makes (suddenly and transitorily) the frenzied Aeneas slaughter Turnus, which marks the very end of the work, a speechless woe²⁰.

By killing Turnus, not only does Aeneas do as Virgil anticipated, but also the *Aeneid*'s second crucial complementarity is established, i.e. the one between Aeneas and Achilles. Both Aeneas and Achilles may regret their madness to a different extent, perhaps even feeling remorse, but both cannot rest until the enemy is dead – or as Achilles puts it, “until all of you have paid for the killing of Patroclus and the Achaeans, while I was not with them” (*Il.* XXI 133–135).

Not only Actium, which established the parallel between Aeneas and Augustus, but also this second crucial parallel of the *Aeneid* again lends support to the two voices theorists. Like Aeneas, Achilles was very much aware of the costs of war, and certainly, his life was defined by friendship, the loss of *it*, and the immense sorrow about *it*. Eventually, a transformed Achilles renounces his peer group's heroic code, the result of which is endless sorrow, which Aeneas much abhors, too. At least in those meditative moments he is not himself maniacally indulging in senseless killing.

Still, both heroes have more in common, not only a goddess as mother. At his first appearance, Achilles weeps, gazing out over the sea, alone calling for her (*Il.* I 349 and 357). Similarly, Aeneas at his first appearance does not much resemble a glorious hero either. He suffers, his limbs weaken with chilling dread, and he groans and cries to heaven, stretching both hands to the stars (*Aen.* I 92–94)²¹.

Continuing the Achillean path of narrative, Aeneas has to go far: “the Augustan hero has to develop (to be ‘Augustanised’, so to speak) from the rage of a Homeric (i.e., barbaric) fighter to civilized self-control and piety”²². This was not given to Achilles, a doubting zealot, immoderate, and fanatical²³. Augustus'

²⁰ To some readers, the *Aeneid*'s gloomy end may reflect the *Iliad*'s finale, and one may think of a parallel: “as no Greek rejoiced over the end of the *Iliad*” it may well be that never “any Roman was meant to rejoice over the end of the *Aeneid*” (NEWMAN 2015: 398). To support this observation, one may point at a parallel in the *Aeneid*, since Virgil seems to have anticipated this sad end, concluding the “Odyssean” half of the poem with the bitter death of Marcellus.

²¹ The last time Achilles is to meet his dead friend Patroclus, Achilles weeps again (*Il.* XXIII 105 f.). This happens in a dream, and Patroclus' soul returns, a faint material effluence from the man, his *eidolon*, a phantom: “all night long the ghost of poor Patroklos has stood over me weeping and lamenting”. Though never indulging in such “subjective and emotional outbursts as [...] Virgil” (GRIFFIN 1980: 103), Homer surely offered a model, i.e. a mentally unstable Achilles, heavily depending on his mother, as was Aeneas relying on his.

²² STAHL 1981: 159.

²³ Such doubting is an experience not unknown to modern military men either. Having returned from the colonial war in Angola, António Lobo Antunes, for example, spoke of himself as “Sou um SS com dúvidas, sou um seminarista em crise de consciência” (*Conhecimento do Inferno*, Lisboa 2004 [*Obras completas*, vol. III], p. 58, first publ. 1980). While intensely detailing his horrific

supposed ancestor Aeneas, however, could not remain like him. The Roman audience would not conclude in his favour.

II.

Somewhat surprisingly, in an earlier text of his Virgil skipped Actium while referring to the military exploits of Octavian, as his name was then. After Actium, Octavian went to Alexandria and later passed in triumph through Palestine and Syria. At the end of the “Praises of Italy” (*Georg.* II 136–176)²⁴, one of the best-known among the many Virgilian purple passages, Virgil refers to these most recent events (170–173): “maxime Caesar,/ qui nunc extremis Asiae iam victor in oris/ imbellem avertis Romanis arcibus Indum” (“O Caesar, who, already victorious in Asia’s farthest bounds, now you drive the craven Indian from our hills of Rome”). Apparently, the context is the Alexander-like conquest of the East, considered to be such a highly prestigious event that it may eclipse the Civil War, the end of which was marked by Actium.

Ending the Praises, Virgil turns to himself, stating something poetological about what he wanted to achieve. He tried to introduce a Hesiodic-sounding work to Rome, Virgil claims (II 176). He does so in a “golden” line, defined by chiasmic

experience in an earlier novel (*Os cus de Judas*, Lisboa 2004 [*Obras completas*, vol. II], first publ. 1979), Antunes, alluding to the same events, chose a mild tone in his letters to his wife, though (*D’este viver qui neste papel descripto: Cartas da guerra*, Lisboa 2005, edited by their daughters and published a quarter of a century later than the novels). The fact that they were supposed to be read by the army security service explains Antunes’ reserve, and a more intimate tone is to be expected in private letters, the more so as they were not intended for publication. To a reader of his novels, however, the illusory feeling of having previously read the same resembles the Virgilian “two voices”.

²⁴ Such praises of a particular place were a set-piece, made to show off, more indicative of its author’s technical abilities than of his personal, let alone intimate view. On the one hand, Virgil’s patriotic swagger (*Georg.* II 148, 161–164), as well as the unusual absence of any mythological element, suggest a more personal touch. Moreover, as “past, present, and future are fused” (MYNORS 1990: 119), this may reflect Virgil’s “deep personal feeling”. Finally, it is the text’s closure that may reveal a personal involvement more than usual in what has been stated in the Praises. On the other hand, being “not a poet accustomed to reproducing rhetorical topoi for use in the classroom”, Virgil characterises Italy with detail “which is hardly laudatory” (THOMAS 1988: I 180). Thus, in view of the “two voices” theory, which is concerned with the *Aeneid*, it may be worth pointing out that the “Praises of Italy” in his *Georgics* may serve as another example of Virgilian ambivalence, i.e. his distinguishing between a public and a private voice. Actually, the “Praises of Italy” are “obvious fiction, demonstrably in conflict with the reality of Italy” (*ibidem*). It would be unwise to acknowledge a happy cooperation between man and nature expressed by Virgil, who effortlessly combines the Golden Age and Italy, in other words, a misreading of his. Instead, “by creating ambiguities [...] and by departing from the tradition [...] Virgil has subtly expressed severe reservations about his own national environment” with which he is dealing (THOMAS 1982: 39). Given that perspective, it seems as if Virgil trained earlier on a small scale what he later developed much more largely, i.e. speaking with two voices.

and non-chiastic word-order. In this case, the adjectives precede the nouns, “with balancing references to the Greek tradition [...] and to the Roman application”²⁵: “*Ascraeumque cano Romana per oppida carmen*”.

Virgil, however, would not be Virgil if he were not expressing himself ambivalently, “leaving it to his readers to interpret his two-way lines as they wished”²⁶. For, at the same time as he refers to the topic of the *Georgics* which resembles that of one poem by Hesiod, he also alludes to the Hesiodic poetic technique as opposed to the Homeric one. At first sight, Virgil seems to speak of his work’s content as archaic, or authentic. On second thoughts, however, he does allude to his work’s literary form as young, or artificial, in short, Callimachean. There are two Hesiods in the *Georgics*, indeed²⁷.

Then in his *Georgics*, Virgil refers to Caesar as the greatest of all, who was already victorious in Asia’s farthest bounds. Virgil continues with a hyperbolic expression, stating that now Augustus is to drive all the easterners, derogatorily conceived of as by nature unwarlike, away from the Roman hills. We are to hear of this for a second time in the *Georgics*. Again put in a prominent place – and again effortlessly intertwining his poetic craft with Augustus’ warfare, linking both their lives’ fates in a Pindaric fashion, assuming both to be victors in their respective area – a similar allusion to Augustus’ eastern exploits closes the *Georgics* as a whole. While Octavian is depicted as thundering in war by the deep Euphrates, Virgil speaks of himself as having enjoyed unheroic leisure in Naples, singing of the care of fields, of cattle, and of trees, lavishing “all the golden day” while making his lines “wealthier in his reader’s eyes”, as Tennyson put it (IV 559–564):

Caesar dum magnus ad altum
fulminat Euphraten [...]
illo Vergilium me tempore dulcis alebat
Parthenope...²⁸

²⁵ THOMAS 1988: I 190 (and cf. p. 86 for the definition of the golden line).

²⁶ AUSTIN 1971: 110.

²⁷ Cf. FARRELL 1991: 27–33. As a writer’s writer, fascinated by words and phrases as such, appealing to readers interested in points of technique, Virgil surely was attracted by Callimachus, a congenial spirit. Virgil’s poetological *closure* to the hymnic Praises, for example, is reminiscent of a similarly poetological closure of Callimachus’ *Hymn to Apollo* (F. WILLIAMS 1978: 85–89). The poetological statement by Callimachus, however, was imitated by Virgil even before, again prominently, at the *opening* of his sixth eclogue (CLAUSEN 1987: 1–3). Thus, Virgil turns out to be reminiscent of himself again, reminding his reader of an earlier work of his.

²⁸ Since after entering Alexandria formally in August 30 BC, Octavian remained in the East and did not return to Rome until the autumn of 29, both passages are of the same apparent date (MYNORS 1990: 124).

Again, a beautiful contrast: this time between a slightly self-depreciating Virgil and the bold hero. Finally, the *paralipsis* of Actium in the *Georgics* – a *praeteritio* which makes conspicuous the absence – suggests its being reserved exclusively for the *Aeneid*'s poetic purpose of highlighting Augustus, as his name is now.

III.

Well-read Virgil created texts defined by a high level of intra- and inter-textuality²⁹. On the whole, his works give the impression of circular rather than linear movement. Concepts return and structure the text, while not following a straightforward narrative. The chronological order is suspended, when contemporary historical events (such as Actium) are anticipated by mythical figures (such as Jupiter, Anchises, and Vulcan, who put it on Aeneas' shield). Since Latin sentences need not develop their argument in a linear way either, they may well present a circular argument, too. Virgil's so-called golden lines, a chiasmic sequence of words belonging to, though put surprisingly far away from, each other, perfectly illustrate this. They show the order in which things are said to be of rhetorical rather than sequential significance. It may seem as if Virgil transformed a rhetorical microstructure into his narrative's macrostructure³⁰.

The circular effect achieved resembles overwhelming dizziness. Reading Virgil, you only seem to be on a straight stretch of road, but what you see blends into something else; it becomes blurred like a remembrance, and you can only see clearly what is far ahead, and moving towards you. Suddenly, however, while, for instance, vaguely remembering Achilles and some such Greek texts Virgil seemingly cannot do without, you are literally brought down to earth. As is the case with Actium, reality will kick in, anchoring some of the poem's passages to an actual place. This process prompts different memories, this time neither blurred nor literary ones, but those that are reminders of the brute facts, such as the crushing defeat of Cleopatra and Antony by Octavian, later to be called Augustus. How is Actium actually dealt with?

²⁹ Much material has gone into the seminal work by HORSFALL (1991), an English version of which has been published recently (HORSFALL 2016). HORSFALL uses the term "voice(s)" differently, though. To him, "voice(s)" mean(s) the "spheres of knowledge upon which the poet drew, amply, seriously, or casually and in passing" (2016: 145), or rather, the "riferimenti sottintesi a lunghi passi di altri autori, sovrapponendo [...] al testo virgiliano un nesso complicatissimo di allusioni" (1991: 145).

³⁰ A perfect golden line, however, "is not often used by Virgil, who apparently adopts it only where he evidently wishes his style to be particularly ornate and elaborate" (WINBOLDT 1903: 220). Instead, he "often uses lines which are very nearly golden, and many which have similar rhythm" (*ibidem*, 221). Ovid uses it more frequently, and Catullus "somewhat too freely" (*ibidem*).

IV.

First: In times to come, Venus, no longer troubled, shall welcome to heaven a Julius, descended from the great Julius, laden with Eastern spoils, weighed down with the Orient's wealth, as Jupiter says to her (*Aen.* I 254–296), with a smile kissing his daughter (I 289 f.): “hunc tu olim caelo, spoliis Orientis onustum,/ accipies securam”. Then, the gruesome gates of war, grim with iron and close-fitting bars, shall be shut fast, he continues (I 293 f.): “dirae ferro et compagibus artis/ claudentur Belli portae”, an expression not only metaphorically referring to the end of the civil war, but also literally to the gates of war that were in Janus' temple, which were closed by Augustus in 29 BC³¹.

Inside impious rage shall sit on his savage arms, Jupiter anticipates, with fury's hands bound by a hundred knots, groaning horribly with bloody lips (I 294–296):

furor impius intus
saeva sedens super arma et centum vinctus aenis
post tergum nodis fremet horridus ore cruento.

The intense image symbolises the difficult recovery of Roman standards. The blessings of universal peace are restored to a troubled world, and this was done by Venus' great descendant, Caesar Augustus³².

Second: In the underworld Aeneas meets his father Anchises (VI 679–751). Having explained the transmigration of souls to his son (724–751), Anchises introduces the pageant of Roman history (756–787), a showy parade that deals with the legendary three centuries between the arrival of Aeneas in Italy and the founding of Rome in 753 BC. Finally, Augustus as the second founder of Rome is introduced (792): he shall again set up the Golden Age in Latium, Anchises continues, “he shall spread his empire to a land that lies beyond the stars,/ beyond the paths of the year and the sun” (795 f.): “proferet imperium, iacet extra sidera tellus,/ extra anni solisque vias”. In the following lines, Anchises alludes to the victory over Cleopatra and Antony at Actium, claiming that “the mouths

³¹ R.D. WILLIAMS 1972: 182.

³² A few moments later in the first book, without the least prevarication, Aeneas introduces himself to his mother. She is disguised as a huntress, while he presents himself in his real character, the same in which he is often and invariably presented to the reader by Virgil, “too careful an antiquarian and scholar to ignore this traditional side of his hero's character” (MOSELEY 1925: 398). In his words (I 378 f.), “sum pius Aeneas [...] [...] fama super aethera notus” (“I am Aeneas the good [...] my fame is known in the heavens above”), there is “none of this paltry double-dealing, of this vile compound of ours, of verbal humility and real pride, of this our so fashionable seasoning of insolence with compliment”, cant badly suffered by some Victorians (HENRY 1873: 651). Revealing her deity, Venus disappears, but renders Aeneas and his comrade Achates invisible. They reach Carthage, where they admire Juno's temple. Aeneas gazes with tears in his eyes at the various Trojan pictures (I 441–493).

of the sevenfold Nile are against Augustus' coming, in tumult of terror" (798 and 800): "huius in adventum [...] et septemgemini turbant trepida ostia Nili".

Surprising for many reasons, Anchises' survey shows how thoroughly Virgil reworked the models from which he started, turning for sure his *Aeneid* into the *argumentum varium ac multiplex* as it is known to Virgil's biographer (§ 21). At first sight being clearly modelled on Odysseus' meeting with his mother³³, the passage talks about the judgement of souls. This is absent from Homer, but not unknown to him, for he mentions the Elysian plain as a place where Menelaos is to be sent to³⁴, and "where life is easiest for men" (*Od.* IV 565). In any case, it contradicts what Antikleia has to say about the dead soul (XI 219–222). The body's sinews no longer hold flesh to the bone, and as soon as life (*thymos*) leaves the white bones, the spirit (*psyche*) flies away like a dream³⁵.

Relating to matters Roman, the compellingly patchwork-like passage surprises again. It includes not only a glimpse of the kings of Rome (808–825), but also a list of republican heroes. Suddenly, the protagonists of the civil wars turn up, Julius Caesar and Pompey (826–835) – both having been assassinated quite recently (in 48 and 44, respectively). Something similar happens in Dante's *Divina Commedia*. A certain Ciaccio, known also to Boccaccio, recognises Dante accompanied by Virgil, reminding them of the fact that Dante was born before he, Ciaccio, died (*Inferno* VI 41 f.): "riconoscimi, se sai,/ tu fosti, prima ch'io disfatto, fatto". Furthermore, some popes are expected to arrive soon, among them Dante's contemporary Bonifacio VIII. A separate cave is reserved for them, situated much deeper down in Hell (XIX 54–57). The damned in Dante, as in Virgil, know the future.

Eventually, the list of heroes is resumed to glorify the family of Marcellus. A descendant of the famous Claudius Marcellus who repelled the Gauls in 222

³³ KNAUER 1964: 124–126.

³⁴ WILLCOCK 1995: 169.

³⁵ ROHDE 1898: I 55. Virgil draws largely on Pythagorean ideas, as does Pindar, for example, in his Olympian ode 2, 56–83 (BURKERT 1977: 446 f.), and to a much larger extent, Plato in his *Phaedo* 111 C–114 C (ROBIN 1983: LXXIV–LXXXII) and *Republic* 613 E–621 D (FLETCHER 1941: XII–XXIII). They were brought to Rome in a modified way by Cicero. Luckily for us, his *Somnium Scipionis* later became the beneficiary of a Neoplatonic commentary by Macrobius, in the fifth century. Thus, the text was preserved thereafter in conjunction with Macrobius' work. The *Somnium* is the only substantial extant portion of the second half of Cicero's *Republic*, published in the spring of 51 BC. The *Somnium* clearly echoes the Myth of Er which concludes Plato's *Republic*, but there are important differences. While the myth of Er refers only metaphorically to the physical nature of the universe, for Cicero, geography and astronomy are crucial. What the two works have most in common is a shared concern with justice and moral behaviour, "but Plato is interested in individual morality, while for Cicero the justice of an individual has no meaning apart from the state to which he belongs" (ZETZEL 1995: 15). And while Er's story is "deliberately fantastic and set in a far-off land" (*ibidem*, 223), Scipio's is the report of his own dream – which may have made it more attractive in the eyes of Virgil. Opinions vary, of course, regarding which source he draws on most (LAMACCHIA 1964: 262).

BC, married Octavia, sister of Augustus. The son of this marriage had been adopted by Augustus in 25 BC and married to his daughter Julia. Marcellus, however, died in his 20th year, 23 BC. Then his death – which now forms the upshot of the argument in Virgil – made a profound impression on Rome because Marcellus had been regarded hopefully as Augustus' successor. It was at this point that Octavia is said to have fainted, when Virgil read this passage to her and Augustus (from the biography, § 32). This need not be true, although Virgil's way of introducing Marcellus may well have had this result (*se non è vero, è ben trovato*). In fact, Virgil uses equivocal language, as he often does.

Expressing a wish, Anchises instantly realises its hopelessness: if only Marcellus could escape the early death to which he was doomed, he would be a true Marcellus, a worthy descendant of his great ancestor; if only the Fates would allow him to live long enough, Anchises says, which they will not, as he knows but does not say (VI 882 f.): “heu! Miserande puer, si qua fata aspera rumpas,/ tu Marcellus eris”. The subjunctive in the *protasis* expresses the hypothesis, the indicative in the *apodosis* indicates the certainty. Since “fate and ‘foreknowledge’ are associated”³⁶, what has to happen becomes identical with what can be known. Or, we assume *aposiopesis*, and imagine the speaker as having come to a sudden halt, unable or unwilling to proceed: “it is possible to regard the sentence as broken at *rumpas* and finished on a slightly different note from its beginning”³⁷. The *protasis* would then be left without any real *apodosis*. One would translate it as Rolfe HUMPHRIES did: “Poor boy,/ If you should break the cruel fates – if only/ You are to be Marcellus”³⁸.

In any event, in the end, Anchises' blurred and drugged-up vision leaves the reader in doubt about Rome's future. Although Marcellus seems to prefigure other of the *Aeneid*'s dying heroes, of which there are many, one cannot say whether Rome may finally be doomed, or whether Rome is saved, because a new Marcellus is already around, or is to come soon.

On the one hand, the passage created a sad moment. Since Marcellus was the designated heir to the throne, “his death pointedly symbolizes the death of the future”³⁹. On the other hand, Augustus “was by no means consumed with grief”, rather “exploited the death of his nephew for propaganda purposes”. Soon after an appropriate period of time, “Augustus married off his daughter Julia again”, and as early as 20 BC the first grandchild was born. Virgil was still alive and

³⁶ FLETCHER 1941: 100.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ HUMPHRIES' translation cited from SHACKLETON BAILEY 1986: 205. A few lines earlier, at VI 861: “egregium [...] iuvenem”, “the contemporary reader will already have reached this identification, quite without difficulty” (HORSEFALL 2013: II 605); now the reader is informed explicitly by the poet, along with Aeneas.

³⁹ TRACY 1975: 38.

may have witnessed how the role that had been held by Marcellus was gradually assumed by someone else⁴⁰.

Third: When Venus brings the new armour for Aeneas, he cannot gaze on it enough (VIII 608–625). The ensuing *ekphrasis* of the subjects represented on the shield (626–731) begins with Romulus and Remus suckled by the she-wolf. In the central place (675–713), Caesar drives Cleopatra in flight at Actium (675 f.): “in medio [...] Actia bella/ cernere erat”, etc. Other eastern operations are mentioned, too, such as India and all the Arabians, who turned to flee at that terror (705 f.): “omnis eo terrore Aegyptus et Indi,/ omnis Arabs, omnes vertebant terga Sabaei”. After the events, the Euphrates moved with more submissive waves (726): “Euphrates ibat iam mollior undis”. Vulcan had sculpted all these things, and “we must visualize simultaneously Vulcan’s representation, the actual river, and its image being carried in the triumphal procession” after Augustus’ return⁴¹.

To sum up: the three passages presented above are not isolated from each other. Instead, they form the *Aeneid*’s central organising principal. Jupiter in his first speech reassures Venus that Aeneas will reach Italy safely, which he indeed does. It is Aeneas who is to inaugurate Rome’s future, and “no contemporary could fail to detect in Aeneas a foreshadowing of Augustus”⁴². When Actium returns again, we discern a structural parallel. While the description in book VI, the *Aeneid*’s turning point, makes Aeneas merely see the future of Rome, “in the form of souls awaiting rebirth in Elysium identified by Anchises for Aeneas”⁴³, in book VIII, with the scenes from Rome’s history, from Romulus to Augustus, Aeneas “takes the future (depicted on the shield) on his shoulders”⁴⁴.

Once one of the “Harvard school” Latinists, Adam PARRY, asked “what was Augustus giving Virgil all those gold-pieces for?”⁴⁵ Well, it was Actium, was it not, or to be more precise, its inclusion in the *Aeneid*. This is the more obvious since, in the end, it is not Jupiter nor Vulcan let alone Anchises, but Virgil who imparts everlasting glory on his chosen subject – as he would render Augustus

⁴⁰ GLEI 1998: 121. Virgil, however, dared to remind Augustus of Marcellus, and Marcellus indeed prefigures other dying heroes. Unlike Propertius, who wrote an elegiac epicedium on Marcellus (III 18), Virgil reminded Augustus without ironic innuendo (RICHARDSON 1976: 391). Instead, “the pathetic beauty of Virgil’s lines is a glowing tribute to his memory” (FLETCHER 1941: 97). A friend would have done so, but also someone who only wished to ingratiate himself ever more, for whatever reason.

⁴¹ GRANSDEN 1976: 184.

⁴² SYME 1939: 463. Cf. SYME’s ch. XXX, on “the organization of opinion” (*ibidem*, 459–475). Even the fact that Mussolini and his gangsters pretended to have understood that, lavishly celebrating Augustus in the 1930s, does not prove it to be a misreading of the *Aeneid*. They carried it quite far: a sculpture of Aeneas in Mantova, Virgil’s birth-place, shows Mussolini’s features. SYME’s condemnatory view of Augustus is not independent of such contemporary political movements.

⁴³ GRANSDEN 1990: 44.

⁴⁴ OTIS 1964: 218.

⁴⁵ PARRY 1963: 70.

immortal by means of his *Aeneid*. For, “as long as the house of Aeneas dwells on the Capitol, and the imperial line holds sway”, he writes, “no day shall ever erase you”, i.e. “you” as an example of something noble and heroic, he says, “from the memory of time, if there be any power within my poetry” (IX 446–449):

si quid mea carmina possunt,
 nulla dies umquam memori vos eximet aevo
 dum domus Aeneae Capitoli immobile saxum
 accolet imperiumque pater Romanus habebit.

Virgil reserves this “most emphatic authorial intervention [...] and the only explicit reference to the power of his own poetry”⁴⁶ for a young couple of friends, Nisus and Euryalus, the “happy pair” (IX 446: *fortunati ambo*). Put at the close of their story (314–449), the statement is a prominent singularity. If it is not meaningless – and given Virgil’s distinction this is highly unlikely – the fact may suggest that there is something else at the centre of the *Aeneid*. This suspicion is shared by the two voices theorists. It might be called friendship, or, rather, sympathy and compassion. Something congenial, indeed, defines the relationship both between Aeneas and Augustus as well as between Aeneas and Achilles, and why not assume it, also the one between Virgil and Augustus.

Nisus and Euryalus, as well as Lausus or Pallas, form a group of dying heroes of the *Aeneid*, whom Marcellus prefigured and Virgil much deplores – who were they?

V.

Having operated successfully in enemy territory, Nisus and Euryalus are finally discovered. The light flashing on the helmet which Euryalus has taken as part of the spoils reveals their presence to a band of Latin cavalry. Nisus gets away, Euryalus is caught. Nisus returns but cannot save him; when Euryalus is killed Nisus rushes in to revenge him; killing his friend’s assassin, Nisus meets his death. Virgil expresses an intense feeling of futility and waste, describing Euryalus’ death in a heightened, perhaps Stesichorean tone⁴⁷, comparing him to “a purple flower that, severed by the plough, falls slack in death”, or to “poppies that bow their heads, when weighted down by sudden rain” (IX 435–437):

purpureus veluti cum flos succisus aratro
 languescit moriens, lassove papavera collo
 demisere caput, pluvia cum forte gravantur.

⁴⁶ HARDIE 1994: 153.

⁴⁷ Herakles kills Geryon, and Geryon “bent his neck over to one side, like a poppy which spoiling its tender beauty suddenly sheds its petals”, or “like a poppy that spoils its delicate shape, shedding its petals all at once”, etc. The text comes from papyrus fragments, combined and edited by BARRETT and PAGE (1973).

Another youth who dies for a loved one, Lausus, who was so “devoted to his unlovable father”⁴⁸, is commemorated in a similar way by Virgil, as is Euander’s son Pallas. Both young heroes die in the tenth book (X 507–509 and 791–793, respectively). Lausus, the son of the impious Mezentius, killed by *pious Aeneas* (783), is to be praised by the poet so that “ancient days may win credence for such prowess” as his (792)⁴⁹: “si qua fidem tanto est operi latura vetustas”, i.e. “if some antiquity (*si qua vetustas*) is going to confer (*est latura*) credibility (*fidem*) to so great an exploit”⁵⁰. On Nisus and Euryalus Virgil was more elaborate, exemplifying the major theme of his *Aeneid*, which “as a whole tells of suffering and heroism in the remote past whose fruits endure to the present”⁵¹.

At the very end of the *Aeneid*, Pallas’ fate is revenged by Aeneas. Having “perpetual guidance lavished upon”, this “slave of duty [...] as he stamps himself”, who “throughout all hazards of his high mission” always appeared “sober, steadfast and tenacious”, “neither splendid nor striking”⁵², finally Aeneas is driven by his own strong emotions. For a split second they become too much to bear. Acting accordingly while being perfectly aware of it, he slaughters his arch-enemy Turnus, turning out to be anything but an unemotional and infuriatingly matter-of-fact hero, though paradoxically not losing control⁵³.

It took Virgil and his protagonist some time to get there. Aeneas’ mental voyage, however, is different from that of Achilles in the *Iliad*. Achilles was transformed by the events: on the one hand betrayed by his peer-group, on the other feeling guilty of, or at least responsible for his best friend’s death. Aeneas, however, only reveals the other facet of his character: while he may well pass as pious and inclined to the angelic, he is also a savage brute. Indeed, the bipolar Aeneas has another frame of mind than Achilles. Achilles’ erratic behaviour, his extravagant narcissism wedded to a lack of discipline, and a pattern of an arguably stubborn disposition made him an outcast – in the eyes of his fellows. However, it was he alone who kept up the standards of decency and compassion – which is what Aeneas shares with him. In the end, returning Hector’s corpse to his father, with whom he cries, Achilles was moderate and showed sorrow for the suffering of others⁵⁴, which Aeneas does too. Finally, Achilles is brave and adult, while Agamemnon remains excessive and selfish, an example

⁴⁸ R.D. WILLIAMS 1973: 373.

⁴⁹ HARRISON 1991: 261 f.

⁵⁰ JORDAN 1990: 74.

⁵¹ HARDIE 1994: 153.

⁵² SYME 1939: 462.

⁵³ Thus, Virgil foreshadowed what was to become the basic proposition of the modern novel, i.e. “the expression of diametrically opposed attitudes within human beings” (STOKES 1995: 102, citing Yukio Mishima).

⁵⁴ See Jasper GRIFFIN’s ch. 4 on “death, pathos, and objectivity” (GRIFFIN 1980: 103–143).

of vulgarity and egoism – a childish coward of the first order. The worst qualified to become a leader, on his return savagely slaughtered by his monstrously clever and abysmally heartless wife, a well-matched, brutish character if ever there is one.

Virgil's civilised poetry may differ greatly from Homer's. Nevertheless, Virgil's Aeneas seems to continue the path taken by Homer's Achilles, i.e. their rejection of the heroic code and their shying away from brutishness for its own sake. Both Homer and Virgil may leave their readers fascinated and bewildered. Virgilian Aeneas, however, is distinguished by always mirroring Augustus. At least to some of the *Aeneid*'s early readers it must have appeared so. It cannot be otherwise for, in the *Aeneid*, a "mythical" figure (the legendary Aeneas) not only relates to a "historical" person (the contemporary Augustus), but also defines him, prefiguring him. Both may belong to different worlds, but they come close to each other, neither of them being what he seems to be – a characteristic trait both have in common. Neither was Aeneas always sober, steadfast and tenacious, and nor is Augustus. Both, however, were splendid and striking, and still are, because of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

After Actium, Augustus was divested of all he had been, as Aeneas was, when arriving at Rome. Both their origins have become remote, as was their destiny. They needed friends, desperately, and acted upon that need. Where are we now, exactly?

VI.

Ruling over many subordinate truths, Virgil's imagination combined myth and history, past and present. The case of Actium gave him the unique chance to establish such a special relationship between myth and history, past and present, linking Aeneas and Augustus inextricably together, making them reflect each other. Actium helped him to do so, and Actium illustrates how the structure of the *Aeneid* "is simultaneously diachronic (moving through narrative time) and synchronic (a stasis in which a Homeric hero, Augustus and events and characters in between, are presented in the simultaneity of a single discourse)"⁵⁵. A moment of stasis is created, interrupting the narrative's motion, which implies a state of contemplation, detached from the *kinesis* of life.

The war of Actium had been fought and won, "the menace to Italy's life and soul averted"⁵⁶. At this decisive moment in history, poets, historians, and artists were at Octavian's side, helping to establish the glorious image of Octavian as peace-bringer and defender of Roman tradition. Among them were Virgil, and also Horace. Octavian's trusted friend and diplomatic agent Maecenas was on

⁵⁵ GRANSDEN 1990: 46.

⁵⁶ SYME 1939: 304.

the watch for talent and gathered an assortment of poets, “offering protection, counsel and subsidy”⁵⁷. Horace is to dedicate to him his first collection of *Odes* (*Carm.* I 1, 1 f.): “Maecenas atavis edite regibus,/ o et praesidium et dulce decus meum” (“Maecenas, sprung from royal stock,/ my bulwark and my glory dearly cherished”)⁵⁸. After Maecenas, the second poem of Horace’s first collection is dedicated to Augustus, and the third to Virgil, setting out for Greece⁵⁹.

About a year after the victory at Actium, around 29 BC, Virgil, then aged forty, began work on the *Aeneid*. Whether he was a naive idealist, or a fanatical propagandist, whether he believed in Augustus’ mission or whether he was just ordered to do so and to put *it* into words, we do not know. We cannot even say what *it* might have been, or by whom and how exactly Virgil was approached because of *it*. It is more likely than not that there was a mix of feelings about *it* on his side. Virgil may well have entertained contradictory emotions, in the same way as Aeneas, acting on sometimes one, sometimes the other of two opposites, or even the extremes.

Since, however, playing in the team is always more important than the game, provided that you play together with men like yourself, Virgil did not refuse. Once, as a young man, he wrote a poetic refusal (*Ecl.* 6), as did Horace (*Carm.* I 6 and II 12), and it later became fashionable with Propertius (III 3) and Ovid – again something Alexandrian, inaugurated by Callimachus (*Aetia* fr. I 1, 17 f.). Now, nothing prevents us from assuming that “his strong patriotism and natural piety caused him to accept, with a sense of religious devotion, the task to which the Emperor Augustus now invited him”⁶⁰.

Or was the truth – like so many truths – not any of the envisaged possibilities?

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, 253.

⁵⁸ Published in 23 BC, Horace’s collection contains poems written from 31 onwards. Curiously enough, the first poem is not only characterised by a catalogue of different ways of life – as if they were at Maecenas’ disposal (as in fact, they were), but also ends with a confession – Horace wants to be ranked among the lyric bards (I 1, 29–36), a claim he repeats in the collection’s last poem as a wish fulfilled (III 30, 1 f.): “exegi monumentum aere perennius/ regalique situ pyramidum altius” (“I have finished a monument more lasting than bronze and loftier than the Pyramids’ royal pile”). Somehow forced after his father’s farm was confiscated after Philippi (42 BC) – a fate he was to share with Virgil – Horace made the right choice indeed. After his victory poem hailing Augustus’ triumph at Actium (I 37), he hints at Actium again. Alluding to the Pyramids at the opening of the collection’s closing poem, he subtly compares his achievement to that of Augustus, who won Egypt.

⁵⁹ This *propempticon* for Virgil contains the ambiguous “nothing is too arduous for man” (I 3. 37: “nil mortalibus ardui est” – the Horatian curse, needed by tradition for a *propempticon* (COMMAGER 1962: 119 f.), and, at the same time, an allusion to what is to be expected by Virgil: an over-determined statement, giving expression to more than one desire.

⁶⁰ DUNLOP 1949: 6.

VII.

What we can surely state is that Virgil somewhat reluctantly worked on the text⁶¹. Despite being or perhaps because he was at his zenith, he rather frustrated the whole enterprise by delaying it, having or simulating a serious writer's block. Though urged by Augustus, who even threatened Virgil in jest, to send to him the work's outline or whatever passage of it he had at hand – “supplicibus atque etiam minacibus per iocum litteris”, etc. (from the biography, § 31), Virgil would not be moved. A friend might behave in this way, while others would have had to die for it. However, since words went unpunished, as Tacitus writes, and only actions were prosecuted (*Ann.* I 72, 2: “facta arguebantur, dicta impune erant”)⁶², and since Virgil would certainly not have dreamed of any kind of defamation or treason – why did not he write what he was asked to do?

Other well-known facts may be adduced to corroborate the impression he must have made. To begin with, the *Aeneid*'s text is complete but unrevised. Virgil left some sixty lines incomplete, to which supplements were forged quite early; ten such lines occur in the *Aeneid* II, “more than in any other book”⁶³ – which is somewhat odd, because Virgil chose this book for recitation, which might imply that he regarded it as finished. Since some of these half-lines appear quite effective in themselves, they may indeed be deliberate innovations. Such inconsistencies “might be a part of Vergil's poetic technique rather than a result of his failure to polish the poem before his death”⁶⁴. They may result as well, however, “from Virgil's method of composition and from the lack of final revision”⁶⁵.

In fact, tradition has it that Virgil did not want to have the manuscript published (from the biography, § 39–41). Being terminally ill, he wanted to burn the manuscript: “igitur in extrema valetudine assidue scrinia desideravit, crematurus ipse”. Nevertheless, after the author's unexpected death, two friends of his published the poem on Augustus' instructions. Virgil fell ill on a trip in Greece, where he wanted to stay for three years; Horace's prayer in his *propempticon* (*Carm.* I 3, 5–8) that “the ship may preserve the half of my own soul” (“navis, [...] precor, [...] et serves animae dimidium meae”) was of no use; for

⁶¹ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, for example, writing a Roman history from the beginnings to the First Punic War, was far more prolific. Twenty books are filled with his elaborate rhetorical composition. He taught at Rome (30–8 BC), where he was the leading spirit of a literary circle. It is likely that he was somehow approached by Maecenas too (who died 8 BC).

⁶² The famous words come from a passage in which Tacitus deals with the Tiberian treason-trials in AD 15. Regarded as “broadly true” (GOODYEAR 1981: 150), they may characterise the conditions prevailing throughout the lifetime of Virgil too.

⁶³ DUNLOP 1949: 5.

⁶⁴ O'HARA 2010: 102.

⁶⁵ AUSTIN 1971: 175.

chronological reasons, however, this poem cannot refer to the voyage in question. Apparently, Augustus was not unsatisfied with Virgil's work, rather being in desperate need of it, perhaps even liking being portrayed as *Aeneas redivivus*. In any event, the unfinished state is due to Virgil's way of writing, composing hesitatingly and working intermittently.

At least, we are told so by the author of an ancient biography of his. First Virgil wrote a draft, then he began to compose verses in blocks, not necessarily in order, leaving certain lines unfinished so as not to hold up the flow of composition (§§ 22–24). Thus, some portions of the earlier books may well have been written after some of the later sections. It is to be observed, however, that nothing from the second half of the poem is recorded as having been read to Augustus, while parts of the first half surely were. Virgil himself selected book VI, the poem's keystone, book IV, the tragedy of Dido (highly characteristic of the whole epic's tone), and book II, in which Aeneas tells of the Wooden Horse and his escape from Troy, losing his wife, yet rescuing his father and son (from the biography, § 32).

When Augustus had returned after his victory at Actium, Virgil already read the *Georgics* to him. Augustus was relaxing after the earlier events, and Virgil read over four consecutive days. Whenever Virgil's voice failed, Maecenas took up reading in turn (from the biography, § 27): "Georgica [...] reverso post Actiacam victoriam Augusto [...] per continuum quadriduum legit suscipiente Maecenate legendi vicem, quotiens interPELLARETUR ipse vocis offensione". Virgil was gifted with a beautiful voice, we hear in the following (§ 29): "pronuntiabat autem cum suavitate, cum lenociniis miris": an allurements, a sweetness for sure, perhaps also a blandishment⁶⁶. From this biography of Virgil we hear that the canon of Virgil's authentic works consists of three books: the *Eclogues*, the *Georgics*, and the *Aeneid*. This is somewhat confirmed by in the inscription on his tomb, "known early and widely"⁶⁷: "cecini pascua rura duces" – "Shepherds inspired my song, farmers, and princes at war"⁶⁸.

The *Eclogues* as well as the *Georgics* were indeed inspired by Greek models, as is the *Aeneid*⁶⁹. Yet the difference between the *Aeneid* and the other two

⁶⁶ Looking back on his life, Ovid regrets very much not having heard it (*Trist.* IV 10, 4): "Vergilium vidi tantum" – "Virgil I only saw" (GREEN 2005: 269 f.). A subtle spirit, Ovid may well have been implying that the sound of Virgil's works, i.e. their poetic technique, seemed to him more satisfactory than their themes. Ovid's statement, however, has two parallel values because Ovid is also alluding to his own poetry. He was forced into exile by Augustus because of the theme of one of his poem's, or rather, more because of its theme than its manner (*Trist.* II 207): "two crimes have brought me ruin, a poem and a blunder" – "perdiderint cum me duo crimina, carmen et error", as he states in his ironic plea for mercy (GREEN 2005: 221).

⁶⁷ HORSFALL 1995b: 21.

⁶⁸ DUNLOP 1949: 4.

⁶⁹ For the general picture, see KNAUER 1964: pl. 5; for a case study, CAIRNS 1989: 215–248.

works is that the *Aeneid* “is a narrative of human actions whereas *Eclogues* and *Georgics* are not narratives in this sense at all”⁷⁰. Virgil bid farewell to them by a curious, innovative device, uniting both the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics*. The last line of the latter echoes the first line of the former.

Signing off the *Georgics*, Virgil looks back on the boldness of his youth (*audaxque iuventa*), his days of inglorious leisure (*ignobilis oti*), when he played his youthful shepherd songs, and sang to Tityrus, under the spreading beech, when Naples nourished him (*Georg.* IV 563–566):

illo Vergilium me tempore dulcis alebat
Parthenope, studiis florentem ignobilis oti,
carmina qui lusi pastorum audaxque iuventa,
Tityre, te patulae cecini sub tegmine fagi.

The *Georgics*'s closure only slightly and necessarily alters the beginning of the *Eclogues*, the opening lines of which present Tityrus “in the complete pastoral setting”⁷¹, where he lies in the shade of the spreading beech tree, practising his pastoral Muse on a slender pipe (*Ecl.* 1, 1 f.): “Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi/ silvestrem tenui musam meditaris avena”.

Virgil's boldness consisted in being the first to attempt bucolic poetry in Latin after the model of Theocritus. He had already prominently claimed to have done so at the opening of *Eclogues* 6, thus in the *Georgics* reminding his reader of his own earlier *Eclogues*, not only of the first but also of the sixth poem, which prominently opens the second half of the collection of ten. Both the first and the sixth poem are related by *tenuis*, which refers to the Callimachean concept of poetry “on a small scale” (from the poetological opening of his *Aetia*, fr. I 1, 11), developed in conscious reaction against full-scale epic writing⁷². Quite obviously, *Ecl.* 6, 8: “agrestem tenui meditabor harundine Musam” (a perfect golden line) echoes *Ecl.* 1, 2, signifying a concept of poetry as conceived by Callimachus: “His pastoral poetry, Virgil implies, though ostensibly Theocritean, is essentially Callimachean”⁷³.

Virgil unified his (early) work retrospectively in the *Georgics*, imagining himself as the person who performed (*lusi ... cecini*, “I played and sang”), while then, in the *Eclogues*, he was addressed as such a performer (*meditaris*, “you work over a song in performance”). Nevertheless, despite being unified, the two poems or the collection of them can hardly be more different. Regarding their

⁷⁰ OTIS 1963: 218.

⁷¹ R.D. WILLIAMS 1979: 91.

⁷² Half a century ago, Wendell CLAUSEN exposed how the Romans received Callimachean poetics (CLAUSEN 1964a). An enormous amount of studies followed; for a Hellenist's point of view Gregory HUTCHINSON's chapter on Roman poetry may serve as a starting point (HUTCHINSON 1988: 277–354).

⁷³ CLAUSEN 1994: 175.

form and content, “the eclogues are art for art’s sake, self-referential worlds depicting [...] young poets at play, in love with love and art, [...] creating a private world”⁷⁴, while the *Georgics* are deeply moral, dedicated to man at work, collective and social⁷⁵.

Already to an anonymous author in antiquity Virgil appeared as a poet who self-consciously moved on. He composed the four lines which precede the *Aeneid*.

Was it Virgil himself?

VIII.

Whoever wrote them shared the feeling that the end of the *Georgics* is an auto-referential self-mirroring, forming part of a larger work in progress, in the course of which Virgil may return to something already visible or discernible, or may enlarge on something already having been or still being the subject of a poetic work of his.

The unknown connoisseur composed an intriguing new proem to the *Aeneid*⁷⁶, on which the poem’s genuine opening lines follow, about the arms and the man, “*arma virumque cano*”, etc.:

Ille ego, qui quondam gracili modulatus avena
carmen et egressus silvis vicina coegi,
ut quamvis avido parerent arva colono,
gratum opus agricolis, at nunc horrentia Martis
arma virumque cano...

I the man who once versified on my slender pastoral pipe and then, abandoning the woods, taught my native fields to obey the farmer’s eager demands, and the poem pleased them, now bristling arms and the man I sing...

It is tempting to think of Virgil as the author of these four lines – and already in antiquity some considered these lines to be genuine (from the biography, §42). The fact that Virgil does speak twice himself about his new project, thus announcing the *Aeneid*, speaks in their favour. He does so for the first time in the

⁷⁴ GRANSDEN 1990: 19.

⁷⁵ Yet in the *Eclogues*, taking the bucolic form, characters, and language from Theocritus – *Ecl.* 5 and Theocritus’ first poem, for instance, come quite close (CLAUSEN 1994: 152 f.) – Virgil had already moved on. So far as true pastoral is concerned, there is a parting of the ways, when he “proceeded to write, for example, the history of his personal misfortunes” (DUNLOP 1949: 2). He does so in *Ecl.* 1 and 9, texts that speak about “the harsh reality of land-confiscations” (CLAUSEN 1994: 29 f., 266), a dark, deep, underhanded plotting. His father’s farm (like the one owned by Horace’s father) was among those confiscated after the battle of Philippi (42 BC), to be distributed to the veterans of Octavian and Antonius for services rendered in the civil war.

⁷⁶ GRANSDEN 1990: 21.

work preceding the *Aeneid*; he then repeats the announcement in the text of the *Aeneid* itself, in a performative present tense, i.e. at the same time announcing and fulfilling, declaring and realising.

Virgil does so prominently and not the least in a recondite or obscure way. He does so in two places which mirror each other, i.e. in the two second prefaces⁷⁷, holding the same place in their respective works, opening its second half (as it was already in the *Eclogues*, where eclogue 6 announced something poetological). They may illustrate how much Virgil has woven into the texture of his verses. The second proem to the *Georgics* mentions a proposed poem, described allegorically as a temple, in which Caesar is to be the deity (*Georg.* III 16): “in medio mihi Caesar erit templumque tenebit”, a Pindaric expression carrying Ennian overtones⁷⁸. The second proem to the *Aeneid* promises that the story now to come will be greater, according to the greater task Virgil undertakes (*Aen.* VII 44 f.): “maior rerum mihi nascitur ordo,/ maius opus moveo”. Employed to enhance the dignity of the subject, both lines envisage and speak of the same – the glory of Augustan Rome; again, an achievement largely dependent on the poet’s involvement.

However, these lines from the *Aeneid* reflect an earlier Virgilian poem from the *Eclogues*, this time one that differs remarkably from the rest of the collection. Again it can be observed that Virgil’s texts not only refer to, but also highlight each other, shedding further light on each of them, bringing them into an

⁷⁷ Such proems in the middle are considered to “point [...] towards the Alexandrian character of this technique” (CONTE 1992: 157).

⁷⁸ The metaphorical language, its heightened and solemn tone, is indebted to Pindar, who conceived his texts to be architectural works. Using a performative future tense (as Virgil does with *erit*), Pindar admonishes himself “let us like builders construct a palace for men to wonder at” (*Olymp.* 6, 1–3). Pindar’s typical “intertwining of the victor’s and the poet’s achievement” (KIRKWOOD 1982: 85) is copied by Virgil too. Virgil, however, need not have read Pindar extensively, for he might have got this architectural simile from Callimachus. It is likely that he used such an expression in an epinician and somewhat Pindaric context, situated at the same relative point of his *Aetia*, opening its third book (THOMAS 1983: 97–99). While such observations may appeal to a Hellenist, a Latinist may well point out that the language of the immediately preceding lines (9–15) is reminiscent of Ennius, Virgil’s most important forerunner in the field of Epic poetry. Speaking of a “winner” (*victor*), Virgil apparently combined epinician language (*Georg.* III 8 f.: “temptanda via est, qua me quoque possim/ tollere humo victorque virum volitare per ora” – “I must essay a path whereby I, too, may rise from earth and fly victorious on the lips of men”) with an image developed from Ennius (*Epigr.* 18: “Nemo me lacrumis decoret nec funera fletu/ faxit. Cur? volito vivus per ora virum” – “Let no one honour me with tears or on my ashes weep./ For why? Alive from lips to lips of men I go a-winged”): “an echo of Ennius’ epitaph upon himself” (MYNORS 1990: 180; a collection of *similia* both Greek and Latin in THOMAS 1988: II 39–42). Cicero discusses Ennius’ epitaph (*Tusc.* I 34), citing Ennius as an example of those poets who demand the reward of fame from those whose fathers he had rendered famous (“mercedem gloriae flagitat ab iis, quorum patres adfecerat gloria”). Already Virgilian scholars in antiquity noted how much Virgil “borrowed” from Ennius. In fact, Virgil took over many lines or parts from Ennius, “but never a whole line without changing at least one word” (SKUTSCH 1985: 13), as he did in the case considered here too.

ever-changing perspective, a labyrinth intricate and puzzling, forbidding linear movements. The expression used in *Aeneid* VII 44 is reminiscent of *Ecl.* 4, 5 which announces that the great line of the centuries is beginning anew: “*magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo*”. The fourth eclogue, which can be dated to 40 BC⁷⁹, deserves special mention because it is a political and philosophical prophecy, describing the imminent birth of a divine child, in whose lifetime the golden age will return. In this eclogue there is no dialogue, there are no characters, but the poet speaks in his own voice, announcing in the first line, in a performative Pindaric self-appeal⁸⁰, that he is about to sing something on a bigger scale, a somewhat loftier strain (*Ecl.* 4, 1): “*paulo maiora canamus*”. This line from the “messianic eclogue” as it is sometimes known⁸¹, again confirms the proposed theme – the glory of Augustan Rome⁸².

As does *Ecl.* 4, so *Ecl.* 6 also extends the normal boundaries of the pastoral, introducing a contemporary of his. Apparently, Virgil’s mixture of diachronic and synchronic story-telling had been present since his youth. Covering an astonishing span of subjects, Virgil introduces the contemporary statesman and poet Cornelius Gallus (*Ecl.* 6, 64–73). He introduces him again in the final eclogue 10, with which the sixth is closely linked: the real Gallus comes into the pastoral, literary world (*Ecl.* 10, 2), a man who composed bucolic poetry. Gallus speaks of it (*Ecl.* 10, 51: “*modulabor avena*”) as if he had read Virgil (*Ecl.* 1, 2: “*meditaris avena*”), though he renounces bucolic poetry, bidding farewell to it, succumbing instead to the power of love (10, 69): “*omnia vincit Amor, et nos cedamus Amori*”⁸³.

There are other such glimpses of the real world in these two and other poems from the *Eclogues*, and we hear of fellow-poets such as Varius and Pollio. The former co-edited Virgil’s *Aeneid* (tampered with the text, exchanged the *Aeneid*’s book II and III, condemned the four opening lines); *Ecl.* 4 was addressed to the latter (before Maecenas started to do so, Pollio was helping Virgil, suggesting he write bucolic poetry, and also enjoying Horace’s friendship). Concluding the collection of *Eclogues*, Virgil, however, chose Gallus, who is at the focus of “the most original and in many ways strangest of all the *Eclogues*”⁸⁴. Rejecting

⁷⁹ R.D. WILLIAMS 1979: 105.

⁸⁰ GERBER 1982: 42 f.

⁸¹ MAYOR 1907.

⁸² GALINSKY 1996: 91–93.

⁸³ Eventually, Virgil confesses his love for Gallus, which is growing hour by hour, “as fast as in the dawn of spring shoots up the green alder” (*Ecl.* 10, 73 f.): “*Gallo, cuius amor tantum mihi crescit in horas, / quantum vere novo viridis se subicit alnus*”. At the end of the *Georgics* (IV 453–527), the verses of a song about Orpheus and Eurydice, a Callimachean epyllion *par excellence* (MORGAN 1999), “strongly suggest” that Virgil was still looking to Gallus’ poetry (THOMAS 1988: II 226).

⁸⁴ R.D. WILLIAMS 1979: 129.

Arcadian escapism, Virgil portrays Gallus' disillusionment with Arcadian consolation – and since he identifies with Gallus, Virgil cannot but mean himself: “Whatever view we take of this, it is a despondent note that Vergil chooses to sound his farewell to the genre”⁸⁵. Again it can be observed that Virgil's farewell to his youth, by unifying the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics* in the latter work's *sphragis*, was preceded by himself, when he bid farewell to his bucolic beginnings at the end of his *Eclogues*⁸⁶.

Now that the poet had not only left his past behind but also was aiming at something extraordinary, what are we going to get from him in his *Aeneid*? Could he deliver?

IX.

On a hitherto unprecedented grand scale among Virgil's works, the *Aeneid* is divided into twelve books, each of between 700 and 1,000 lines. The first half, books I–VI, describes Aeneas' journey from Troy to his new home in Italy, “the predominantly individual experience of the man”. They contrast with “the predominantly social experience of arms”⁸⁷ as narrated in books VII–XII, which describe action in Italy, including his killing of Turnus, a rival suitor to the Italian princess Lavinia. In the final duel Aeneas has Turnus at his mercy, and might have spared him. But he recognises a sword-belt which Turnus had stripped from a young hero's body after he had slain him (X 439–509). Aeneas remembers how the hero's father, Euander, prayed, asking Aeneas to take vengeance on Turnus (XI 176–181), and he plunges the sword in. As he had already done earlier, upon learning of the death of Pallas, Virgil gives way to reckless frenzy: “However reluctantly (and he *is* reluctant), Aeneas must eventually discharge this debt of honour”⁸⁸.

⁸⁵ COLEMAN 1977: 297.

⁸⁶ In addition, one may read one of the *Georgics*' crucial lines, often made to say what they do not, as a reference to this farewell. However, that brutish work and grim toil may overcome all difficulties, is only one reading of *Georgics* I 145 “labor omnia vincit”: only if we assume that *labor* was meant quite literally, referring to the field's labour, the peasant's toil, denoting in a kind of *pars pro toto* the *Georgics*' major theme as a whole, i.e. the glorification of hard work – which it need not (THOMAS 1988: I 92 f., and MYNORS 1990: 29 f., exceptionally agree on that). For, a poet who produces such densely interrelated texts as the collection of the *Eclogues* is (DAVIS 2012), such a poet cannot be reduced to any one-dimensional statement. Rather, a translation consonant with the poem may render the line as meaning “insatiable toil occupied all areas of existence” (THOMAS 1988: I 93), a sentiment expressed by Theocritus, who makes one of his shepherds state that “it is poverty alone that awakes the arts” (21, 1). Already before him, it is a commonplace set out at length by Greek classical poets (GOW 1952: II 370).

⁸⁷ Both quotations from BROOKS 1953: 260.

⁸⁸ GRANSDEN 1991: 87.

This flash-like memory is reported at the very end of the *Aeneid*, where quite literally “the belt flashed with its well-known studs”, i.e. young Pallas’ belt (XII 942 f.): “notis fulserunt cingula bullis/ Pallantis pueri” – as the flashing on Euryalus’ helmet revealed him to the enemy (IX 373 f.): “et galea Euryalum sublustri noctis in umbra/ prodidit immemorem radiisque adversa refulsit” (“and in the glimmering shadows of night his helm/ betrayed the thoughtless Euryalus, as it flashed back in the light”). The dying Turnus is said to have had his limbs relaxed with chilling terror (XII 951): “solvuntur frigore membra”. This phrase – used only twice in the poem – links Turnus with Aeneas, for it was used earlier of him, describing Aeneas at his first appearance in the poem (I 92). Then, it was Aeneas’ limbs that fell slack with chill, and were numbed in cold fear: a reaction that indicated Aeneas’ human frailty then, which contrasts strongly with his ruthless determination now. A long way, even for a gifted man, or should we call it rather a sudden reversal?

Pallas’ father, Euander, provides another example of this particularly Virgilian mixture of time, or his “deliberate use of anachronism, intended to emphasise the antiquity and continuity”⁸⁹ of Roman history, from Aeneas to Augustus. Euander, too, was led by destiny to Rome, a fact that parallels as well as prefigures that of Aeneas. It is Euander who was used by the Romans to supply a legendary connexion between Greece and Rome, giving an aetiological explanation of place-names, showing Aeneas around in contemporary Rome, as it is known to Virgil and Augustus. Euander takes Aeneas on a tour to places destined to become famous in Roman history. The tour is conducted through a city not yet built (VIII 306–369), and Virgil quite often speaks in his own person, adding comments and information which Euander could not have known, thus “linking the legendary past with the Rome of history and the age of Augustus”⁹⁰. Having walked with Aeneas from the Ara Maxima to the Porta Carmentalis (306–336), Euander points out notable landmarks inside the city (337–369), which is the city of Virgil’s own time⁹¹.

⁸⁹ GRANSDEN 1976: 123.

⁹⁰ R.D. WILLIAMS 1973: 245.

⁹¹ Eventually, Euander leads Aeneas to his own house, welcoming him with words that became proverbial since (VIII 364 f.): “aude, hospes, contemnere opes et te quoque dignum/ finge deo, rebusque veni non asper egenis” (“my guest, dare to despise riches and try to deserve/ divinity, and come not disdainful of our poverty”). Words seemingly addressed to the Augustan hearer of the poem, words that make “the speaker a mouthpiece of the poet” (GRANSDEN 1976: 132). Unfortunately, Virgil does not say where Euander’s quarters are, though the text seems to point to a site on the slope of the Palatine. If that were the case “there is another foreshadowing of the future: for in his own time [...] that was the position of Augustus’ house” (FORDYCE 1977: 246). The whole passage is thoroughly examined by STAHL (2015: 251–345, concluding with a map). It turns out that three areas are visited which, “in the years Vergil worked on his *Aeneid*, were major construction sites”, where Augustus “completed the program of Julianizing the cityscape, which his adoptive father, C. Julius Caesar, had begun” (STAHL 2015: IX).

The repeated use of “*solvuntur frigore membra*”, however, not only connects the two decisive heroes, but also “is a marker of Aeneas’ transformation”⁹². A terrified victim has become an angered avenger. Then, he wished he had met death in battle (I 94–101), in comparison with which “death by drowning [...] was death lost and thrown away – death redounding neither to one’s own honour, nor to the advantage of one’s country or the world”⁹³. Then, Aeneas praised those who died “before their fathers’ eyes at Troy” as “three or four times blessed” (I 94–96): “*o terque quaterque beati, / quis ante ora patrum Troiae sub moenibus altis / contigit oppetere*”. Now, he kills as if he were in battle, going berserk, annihilating Turnus’ blazing intensity:

When the epic opened it was Aeneas’ turn to shudder with cold as the winds [...] threatened imminent death (*solvuntur frigore membra*: I, 92). Now, as the poem reaches its climax, it is one of Virgil’s most bitter and cogent ironies that he uses this very phrase at the exact moment Aeneas becomes the personification of avenging wrath and brings death to Turnus. The wheel has come to full circle⁹⁴.

As it was then (I 92), now again there is a ring of bewilderment and sorrow attached to the line, in which the soul of Turnus passes with a resentful moan to the shades below, and “the emphasis centres not on the triumphs of Aeneas but on the tragedy of Turnus’ death”⁹⁵. In the end there is no sense of triumph at all: “The poem ends with an outburst of savage sorrow and a death”⁹⁶. At least, for those who hear two voices. Similar to his final appearance, already when he first turned up and delivered his strange speech on his unfulfilled death-wish, Aeneas seems profoundly melancholic⁹⁷. He appears to be a tragic hero, doubting the mission he has to carry out while being tragically bound to do it, as was Achilles. But he also shows himself to be a multi-faceted character, just as a tragedy portrays its protagonists, evolving and revealing their frame of mind, making them confront events or people that make them doubt.

X.

Virgil is reticent in revealing his hero completely though, and “Aeneas we only see in half-glances, half-revelations”⁹⁸. That Virgil was much concerned with tragic themes did not escape his fellow-writers, one of whom called him

⁹² TARRANT 2012: 341.

⁹³ HENRY 1873: 330.

⁹⁴ PUTNAM 1965: 200 f.

⁹⁵ R.D. WILLIAMS 1973: 509.

⁹⁶ CLAUSEN 1964b: 145.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, 140, 142.

⁹⁸ AUSTIN 1951: 14.

cothurnatus, as if he were wearing buskins like the actors on a stage; and on the famous Roman mosaic found at Hadrumetum in North Africa, produced a century after his death, there are two Muses behind Virgil: on his right the Muse of History, Clio, but on his left Melpomene, the Muse of Tragedy. Clio reads to him while Melpomene listens, holding in her left hand her tragic mask.

The story of Dido and Aeneas is imbued with such a sense of drama⁹⁹. Aeneas is to see Dido again in the sixth book, meeting with her shadow, her wound still fresh (VI 450), her silence being modelled on that of Ajax in Odysseus' Nekyia (*Od.* XI 463 f.). Dido – who killed herself after Aeneas left for Italy, bound on his mission, cursing “the changeful thing called woman” (IV 569 f.) and obeying a god's command, “whoever he may be”, surrounded by cheerful comrades (IV 576 f.)¹⁰⁰ – Dido is unforgiving. Instead of railing at him, however, she merely snubs him: “perhaps the most telling snub in poetry”¹⁰¹. This encounter again reveals Aeneas' frailty, telling us about his attitude. Aeneas does not forgive himself, although all that he has done has been in compliance with destiny¹⁰².

Another famous incident confirms Aeneas' fragile frame of mind. Setting sail for Italy, he is caught by a storm and swept away south, to the coast of Africa near Carthage. Telling him where he is (I 335–371), his mother Venus comforts him. Having revealed herself in all her beauty, she floats away (402–417). From a hilltop, Aeneas and his companion Achates marvel at the sight of the Carthaginians building their city. They find a grove in the heart of the city, where a temple to Juno is built (441–493). On its walls they see depicted many scenes from the Trojan War¹⁰³. Awaiting queen Dido, Aeneas scans each object, marvelling at the city's wealth. Seeing in due order the Trojan battles, he stopped and, weeping, cried (I 459 f): “constitit et lacrimans, ‘quis iam locus’, inquit, ‘Achate,/ quae regio in terris nostri non plena laboris’” (“what land, Achates, what tract on earth is now not full of our sorrow”), and he continues with a line that sounds like the *Aeneid*'s leit-motif (I 462): “sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt” (“there are tears for passing things, things mortal touch the heart”)¹⁰⁴.

⁹⁹ KÖNIG 1970: 164–232.

¹⁰⁰ They are cheerful “as they do the god's bidding” (AUSTIN 1955: 170).

¹⁰¹ ELIOT 1945: 21. Cf. THOMAS 2001: 18: “Eliot's chief focus on the text of Virgil [...] a passage whose interpretation is far from closed”.

¹⁰² Derivative T.S. Eliot, whose writing on Virgil is not entirely free from an “autobiographical undercurrent” (REEVES 1989: 158), considered this “to testify to civilised consciousness and conscience” (*ibidem*), as opposed to some purely local or tribal code of manners; in short, to provincial, parochial, primitive custom.

¹⁰³ Cf. R.D. WILLIAMS 1990.

¹⁰⁴ Decidedly, the readers' sympathies lie with those who suffer, the lonely, the defeated (CLAUSEN 1964b: 143), to whom there is but one comfort, as Aeneas puts it (II 354): “una salus victis, nullam sperare salutem” (“the lost have only one safety, to hope for none”), “i.e. to fight with the courage of despair, and to sell one's life as dearly as possible” (DUNLOP 1949: 72).

Two points connected by the narrative, however, deserve to be indicated. The first time we meet him, why does Aeneas fear a storm so much as to become despondent? A storm that would not have scared a “thousand young Englishmen, and as much Dutch women”, as SAINTE-BEUVE put it, citing Saint-Évremond: “car il y a mille jeunes garçons en Angleterre, et autant de femmes en Hollande, qui s'étonnent à peine où le héros témoigne son désespoir”¹⁰⁵. And the last time we meet him, why does he hesitate in the very last moment before killing Turnus?

Both moments exhibit an un-heroic, perhaps even an anti-heroic attitude¹⁰⁶. Seemingly, Homer is not the matrix, the all-pervasive sub-text of the *Aeneid*, which turns out to be something else, or something more, than a thorough reworking of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Nevertheless, the *Aeneid*'s meaning depends on these two texts, which it absorbs and transforms: a Virgilian paradox, or rather a true Virgilianism that can be observed in his *Eclogues* and *Georgics* as well¹⁰⁷. As much as Aeneas corresponds to Odysseus, when they both address themselves (*Aen.* I 94b–101 and *Od.* V 299–312 show even verbal parallels in I 94b–96 and V 306 respectively), Virgil makes the focus shift decidedly. Then Odysseus laments the loss of glory from death in battle if he drowns, “while Aeneas thinks of the brave men who are dead when he lives”¹⁰⁸. Thus, Virgil makes his readers move on from Odysseus' vainglorious selfishness to Aeneas' compassionate disposition – which may well be called a process of civilisation. We, as secondary readers, can observe Virgil doing so, as already his Roman, and primary, readers might already have done right from the beginning of the *Aeneid*, in Aeneas' first speech.

Assuming that Aeneas' words at his first appearance were not spoken out of momentary despair, but instead believing that “Aeneas' words are true for all his life”¹⁰⁹, one cannot but think that they reveal a self-conscious personality up to this point not known to epic poetry. He is neither the sulking Achilles of

¹⁰⁵ SAINTE-BEUVE 1857: 239.

¹⁰⁶ Before Brooks OTIS' introductory chapter “From Homer to Virgil: The Obsolescence of Epic” (OTIS 1963: 5–40), Jacques PERRET seems to have been the first modern scholar to have discussed this concept, in his brief sketch “Le caractère d'Enée” (PERRET 1952: 133–140). As PERRET indicates, though, it is well known to earlier French literary criticism; on the term's “archaeology” briefly STAHL 1981: 160.

¹⁰⁷ It is this Virgilian insistence on tradition that attracted ELIOT. He called it “maturity of mind” (ELIOT 1945: 19), with which he associated “maturity of manners and absence of provinciality”, and eventually also “maturity of language and style” (*ibidem*, 20 f.). At around the same time as ELIOT lectured on Virgil, he was for the first time considered to be a Virgilian poet himself. ELIOT's friend W.F. JACKSON KNIGHT, at that time an important figure in the Virgil Society, did so in his *Roman Vergil* (JACKSON KNIGHT 1966: 111, 300 f. and 318, for instance). First published in 1944, the book was accepted for publication due to ELIOT's influence. Both ELIOT and JACKSON KNIGHT “evidently found in each other a sympathetic spirit” (REEVES 1989: 2).

¹⁰⁸ AUSTIN 1971: 56.

¹⁰⁹ PARRY 1963: 76.

the *Iliad*, nor the embittered Odysseus of the *Odyssey*. Accordingly, the *Aeneid* cannot be regarded as being full of dissent and anguish, because the work shows signs of a “mild-minded pessimism”¹¹⁰. Seemingly, two voices are indeed to be heard: on the one hand, “the public voice of Roman success”, and on the other, “a personal voice which comes to us as if it were Virgil’s own”¹¹¹.

Two final examples, however, illustrate how problematic such a statement is, convincing as it may sound.

The first: having held funeral games, parting from their refuge in a Sicilian harbour under Mount Eryx, near the tomb of Anchises, Aeneas and his fellows set sail with a following breeze on a calm sea. Yet, just before the Trojans reach Italy, during the night Aeneas’ steersman falls overboard, overcome by the god of sleep. The last lines of the fifth book describe the drowning of this good pilot Palinurus in dark and forgetful waters, and “the pathos of this episode is greatly enhanced by the stress laid on Palinurus’ loyalty [...], his sense of duty to the trust placed in him”¹¹². The book closes with Aeneas’ few words of lamentation for his lost comrade (V 870 f.), reminiscent of an epigrammatic epitaph¹¹³: “o nimium caelo et pelago confise sereno, / nudus in ignota, Palinure, iacebis harena” (“too trustful of the tranquil sky and sea, / o Palinurus, you will lie naked on an unknown strand”).

However, an elegiac note uncalled for in a panegyric of Roman greatness: was that what Augustus wanted to hear? Even if we no longer regard him as a “sinister *Übermensch*”, being more inclined to think of him as a man who “both responded to and influenced various cultural, social, and artistic tendencies of the time”¹¹⁴: would he appreciate being moved to tears?

One may push the argument even further, finally introducing a second example: when Aeneas started crying while admiring the paintings of the Trojan war in the new temple at Carthage, “he can look back on his own losses and see them as made beautiful [...] because human art has transfigured them”¹¹⁵. But is this still Aeneas looking at a fresco or rather Augustus listening to Virgil, whose *Aeneid* similarly confers a bright image and a most pleasurable vision that “consoles for the pain of what it represents”¹¹⁶?

¹¹⁰ CLAUSEN 1995: 313.

¹¹¹ PARRY 1963: 69. The two voices have often been reduced to an optimistic and a pessimistic one, but “there are dangers to easy dichotomies like this” (KALLENDORF 2007: VII).

¹¹² R.D. WILLIAMS 1960: 205.

¹¹³ The scarcity of a “similar use of the language of sepulchral epigram” in the *Aeneid*, hinted at by FRATANTUONO and SMITH (2015: 728), attests the lines’ singularly heightened tone.

¹¹⁴ NAPPA 2005: 21.

¹¹⁵ PARRY 1963: 79.

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

A modern reader might be much tempted by the idea of a Virgilian self-mirroring¹¹⁷; whether a hypothetical Roman reader could conceive the same we are unable to say¹¹⁸. Instead, it might well be that he “clapped his hands when Aeneas abandons the overemotional Dido, and approved [...] the steady march of the Roman state to world dominion”¹¹⁹. And departing from Dido, Aeneas is not moved at all – “feeling the thrill of grief, steadfast stands his will; the tears fall in vain” (IV 448 f.): “et magno persentit pectore curas;/ mens immota manet, lacrimae volvuntur inanes”; like an obsessional personality he is controlled, inhibited, and rigid in his ideas.

Whose exactly are the tears? Formally, *mens* and *lacrimae* are not likely to refer to different people, and “these tears could not be denied to Aeneas: but in the changing moods that repeated reading of Virgil always brings, few could withhold them for ever from Dido”¹²⁰.

EPILOGUE

Eventually, Dido and Cleopatra link Aeneas to Augustus¹²¹. Both women strongly resemble each other in their respective deaths – the moment when Aeneas leaves Carthage for Rome on his mission, and the moment after Actium when Augustus parts for his mission, again founding Rome by ending the civil war. When she is about to die, Dido is said to be pale with imminent death (IV 644): “pallida morte futura”. Quite similarly, Cleopatra is paling before her imminent death (VIII 709): “pallentem morte futura”. The line comes from the description of Aeneas’ new shield (VIII 608–731), a passage in which we hear of Actium for the very last time in the *Aeneid*. The pictures on the shield are described: scenes from early Roman history around the outside, and in the centre the battle of Actium, Augustus’ triumph over the forces of the East.

Dido’s “tragedy” changed Aeneas, as did the story of Pallas, the *Aeneid*’s second great tragedy. Cleopatra’s death may make Augustus change, too, and henceforth he shall sacrifice all emotion to *pietas*, as Aeneas did. Now it might

¹¹⁷ A modern reader might also note that since the *gubernator* of Aeneas’ flagship has died, the course of poetry is likely to change from now on. In fact, one may consider the *Aeneid*’s fifth book as such a “‘kind of close-but-not-quite’ turning point” in Virgil’s narrative, and not only “in Aeneas’ physical journey”, as is suggested by FRATANTUONO and SMITH (2015: 14); they consider “the eerie circumstances of the sacrificial loss of Palinurus” even to be a foreshadowing of the death of Caesar (*ibidem*, 730 f.).

¹¹⁸ There is self-mirroring in Greek poetry right from its beginning, though. Demodokos performing his songs at the Phaeacians’ court, for instance, might be seen as a Homeric self-portrait. However, not everyone reading the *Aeneid* may have felt that.

¹¹⁹ PARRY 1963: 70.

¹²⁰ AUSTIN 1955: 135.

¹²¹ PARRY 1963: 73.

be the same with Augustus as it was then with Aeneas. Once, tears for the nature of things moved him, and his heart was touched by human transience. Virgil subliminally suggested such a parallelism to Augustus. If Augustus really wishes to be at the centre of such a great story, he must suffer the impact of its narrative, as Aeneas did. Did Augustus match up to the expectations of the *Aeneid*'s readers? Was he great?

It would have helped considerably if Virgil were on good terms with Augustus. It would have avoided misunderstandings. Perhaps, only a friend could dare to allude to such a parallel, as only a friend could make friendship the theme of a literary work dedicated to, and inspired by, a friend. Since loyalty among friends and mutual commitment play such a role in the *Aeneid* – Pallas, who goes with Aeneas, gets killed, and makes Aeneas change his mind; Nisus and Euryalus, who die for each other, and who are singled out by Virgil's singular statement – it is not absurd to entertain the idea that Augustus and Virgil were indeed friends.

Friendship, however, is treacherous, as the case of Gallus shows. He also was a friend of Augustus', and he perished ignominiously, compelled to commit suicide in 27, or possibly 26 BC. Gallus occupies centre stage not only at the end of Virgil's *Eclogues* (*Ecl.* 10), but also at the end of his *Georgics* (IV 453–527), in the song of Proteus. It is about Orpheus and Eurydice. The choice of subject, a mythological exemplum, as well as its being treated like an epyllion, suggest a literary homage to Gallus¹²².

Since Virgil largely acknowledges how much Gallus meant to him – was it for that reason that Virgil became ever more cautious and reluctant, resembling Aeneas, who hesitated until the very last moment? Was Virgil biding his time, scared of what may happen to him, once the spectacularly innovative *Aeneid* was published? Did he fear failure and disgrace, such as Ovid later suffered, once also being admitted to court but then thrown out? Or, rather perversely, did Virgil hope to remember even these adversities with pleasure, “a joy to recall”, as Aeneas puts it in his second speech, addressing his comrades (*Aen.* I 203): “forsan et haec olim meminisse iuvabit”, not necessarily convinced by what he says, always doubting?

Be that as it may, Virgil started something new that was for sure up to that point unheard of, as did Aeneas. As Walt Whitman's “Song of Myself” opens his *Leaves of Grass* and sets the tone, at the same time representing the core of his poetic vision as well as liberating American poetry from tradition once and for all, so does Virgil's song of himself in the *Aeneid* set the tone for the Europeans. Assimilating the great Greek tradition, while at the same time transcending it, he prefigures many other such songs, such as that of Dante, for example. Accompanied by Virgil, the Christian poet “took him as his sibylline

¹²² THOMAS 1988: I 15 f.

guide through Hell and Purgatory¹²³, but left him, and his work's pagan darkness, as Virgil left behind Homer.

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¹²³ NEWMAN 2015: 399. Quite literally, both Aeneas and Dante have the starting-point of their voyage in common (*ibidem*). Both places are in dark wood, where the straight path is confused, and Dante's *selva oscura*, the opening of his *Inferno*, echoes Virgil's *in silvis* (*Aen.* VI 271): “suddenly, as in a dream, we find ourselves, we know not how, moving in the dim mysterious world of the dead” (FLETCHER 1941: 53). This can be said of Dante as well as of Virgil.

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