

# References to Swords in the Death Scenes of Dido and Turnus in the *Aeneid*

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## Declaration

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates the references to swords in key scenes in the *Aeneid* – particularly the scenes of Dido’s and Turnus’ death – in order to add new perspectives on these scenes and on the way in which they impact on the presentation of Aeneas’ Roman mission in the epic.

In Chapter Two I attempt to provide an outline of the mission of Aeneas. I also investigate the manner in which Dido and Turnus may be considered to be opponents of Aeneas’ mission.

In Chapter Three I investigate references to swords in select scenes in book four of the *Aeneid*. I highlight an ambiguity in the interpretation of the sword that Dido uses to commit suicide and I also provide a description of the sword as a weapon and its place in the epic.

In Chapter Four I provide an analysis of the references to swords in Dido’s and Turnus’ death scenes alongside a number of other important scenes involving mention of swords. I preface my analyses of the references to swords that play a role in interpreting Dido and Turnus’ deaths with an outline of the reasons for the deaths of each of these figures. The additional references to swords that I use in this chapter are the references to the sword in the scene of Deiphobus’ death in book six and to the sword and Priam’s act of arming himself on the night on which Troy is destroyed. At the end of Chapter Four I look at parallels between Dido and Turnus and their relationship to the mission of Aeneas.

At the end of this thesis I am able to conclude that an investigation and analysis of the references to swords in select scenes in the *Aeneid* adds to existing scholarship in Dido’s and Turnus’ death in the following way: a more detailed investigation of the role of swords in the interpretation of Dido’s death from an erotic perspective

strengthens the existing notion in scholarship that Dido is an obstacle to the mission of Aeneas.

## Opsomming

Hierdie tesis ondersoek die verwysings na swaarde in kerntonele in die *Aeneïs* – hoofsaaklik die sterftonele van Dido en Turnus – met die oog daarop om addisionele perspektiewe te verskaf op hierdie tonele en die impak wat hulle het op die voorstelling van Aeneas se Romeinse missie in die epos.

In hoofstuk twee poog ek om 'n oorsig te bied van Aeneas se Romeinse missie. Ek stel ook ondersoek in na die mate waartoe Dido en Turnus as teenstanders van Aeneas se Romeinse missie beskou kan word. In Hoofstuk Drie ondersoek ek die verwysings na swaarde in spesifieke tonele van boek vier van die *Aeneïs*. Ek verwys na 'n dubbelsinnigheid in die interpretasie van die swaard wat Dido gebruik om selfmoord te pleeg en verskaf ook 'n beskrywing van die swaard as 'n wapen en die gebruik daarvan in die epos.

In Hoofstuk Vier verskaf ek 'n ontleding van die verwysings na swaarde in Dido en Turnus se sterftonele saam met 'n aantal ander belangrike tonele met verwysings na swaarde. Ek lei my ontleding van die beskrywings van die swaarde wat 'n rol speel in die interpretasie van Dido en Turnus se sterftes in met 'n uiteensetting van die redes vir die dood van elk van hierdie figure. Die addisionele verwysings na swaarde wat ek in hierdie hoofstuk ontleed, is die verwysing na die swaard in die toneel van Deiphobus se dood in boek ses en die verwysing na die swaard in die toneel waar Priamus sy wapenrusting aantrek op Troje se laaste aand. Aan die einde van Hoofstuk Vier ondersoek ek die parallele tussen Dido en Turnus en hulle verhouding tot Aeneas se Romeinse missie.

Ten slotte kom ek tot die gevolgtrekking dat 'n ondersoek en ontleding van die beskrywings van die swaarde in spesifieke tonele in die *Aeneis* op die volgende manier toevoeg tot bestaande navorsing oor Dido en Turnus se dood: 'n meer gedetailleerde ondersoek na die rol van swaarde in die interpretasie van Dido se dood help argumente versterk dat Dido as 'n struikelblok vir Aeneas se Romeinse missie gesien kan word.

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I would like to dedicate this thesis to my grandfather, a quiet man of letters.

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## Chapter I – Introduction

My aim in this thesis is to investigate the ways in which Dido and Turnus stand in relation to the mission of Aeneas by looking at interpretations of scenes involving references to swords in the *Aeneid*.<sup>1</sup> In doing this I would like to discuss scholarship on the ways in which Dido and Turnus are considered opponents to the mission of Aeneas. I intend doing this firstly, by providing a description of the mission of Aeneas. This description will allow me to provide an outline of the ways in which Dido and Turnus stand in relation to the mission of Aeneas in existing scholarship. I then look at existing interpretations of descriptions of swords in Dido and Turnus' death scenes. An investigation of these interpretations will enable me to explore the manner in which Dido and Turnus are thought to stand in relation to the mission of Aeneas, based on references to swords in the *Aeneid*. Finally, I conduct my own analysis of the references to swords in the *Aeneid*. My analysis originates from references to swords in Dido and Turnus' death scenes, but I also make use of other scenes that I deem important and which are not to my mind properly treated in existing scholarship in the *Aeneid*. Finally, I will attempt to bring the points I make in my analysis to bear on the existing manner in which Dido and Aeneas are considered to stand in relation to the mission of Aeneas, with the view to adding to scholarship in this area. I would now like to look in more detail at the content of each chapter of my thesis.

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<sup>1</sup> Although an interesting study might be made of *ekphrasis* as it relates to swords, I do not go into it at all. According to Conick (2004:872) *ekphrasis* may be defined as 'a description which aims at vividness' where "the most common object of detailed *ekphrasis* can be found in works of art and pictorial representations (2004: 873). According to Conick "the goal of vividness in the *ekphrasis* of visual works of art is achieved in two ways: either the author 'replaces' the artist by allowing the reader to take in the scene depicted on an object through the narrative force of words and through the pictorial nature of the details or he 'dramatizes' the description by including an audience of viewers in the *ekphrasis* and then describing to the readers the effect of reality experienced by the viewers (he thereby tells not so much about the object itself but about the process of its observation" (Conick, 2004: 873).



In Chapter Two I provide a description of the mission of Aeneas with a view to highlighting aspects of the mission that are most relevant. The most important aspects of the mission to which I will refer are that the mission is sanctioned by the gods; that the mission's objectives are to achieve peace and superimpose civilisation; and that the mission has a social dimension which prescribes favourable qualities in a Roman.

I will then investigate ways in which Dido and Turnus may be interpreted as being opponents of the mission of Aeneas. These interpretations form the basis from which I will aim to proceed once I have conducted my own analysis of scenes involving references to swords. I point out that Dido may be regarded as an opponent of the mission of Aeneas owing to the historical enmity between Rome and Carthage. Dido may also be considered an opponent of the mission of Aeneas on the basis of her un-Roman behaviour, and finally because she delays Aeneas in Carthage and waylays him from his cosmic destiny. In the part of Chapter Two where I deal with Turnus I point out that Turnus may be regarded as an opponent of the mission of Aeneas firstly, because he forces Aeneas to break the mould of the 'new hero,' and secondly because the *furor* that characterises Turnus' behaviour goes against the *humanitas* and *pietas* that describe Aeneas' mission. I end Chapter Two by suggesting an important parallel between the manner of Dido and Turnus' opposition to the mission through wound imagery.

In Chapter Three I provide an outline of scholarship on scenes in book four of the *Aeneid* which involve references to swords, and most significantly references to swords in the scenes of Dido and Turnus' deaths. I do this with the view to highlighting what has already been said about the references to swords in the *Aeneid*. I aim to use the points made in my own analysis in Chapter Four to add to this scholarship. The scenes that are relevant occur at *Aen.*4.261-264 (Mercury recalls Aeneas to his mission and finds him wearing a decorated sword); *Aen.*4.494-497

(Dido instructs her sister Anna to build a pyre upon which she must place Aeneas' weaponry); *Aen.*4.507-508 (a description of a sword that hangs above Dido's bed in her royal bedchamber); *Aen.*4.579-580 (Aeneas uses a sword to sever the cables of the ship in which he leaves Carthage); *Aen.*4.646-647 (the sword that Dido uses to commit suicide is described as a gift not intended for that purpose); and finally at *Aen.*4.663-665 (a grisly description of Dido's death itself).

In Chapter Three I also investigate the ambiguity surrounding the exact sword that Dido uses to commit suicide – an ambiguity that results from an apparent exchange of swords that takes place between Dido and Aeneas at *Aen.*4.261-264. This ambiguity plays a very important role in Chapter Four of my thesis when I analyse the scene of Dido's death in some detail. Here I look specifically at scholarship on the role of swords in descriptions of Dido's death scene. In particular, I look in some detail at scholarship in references to the sword that involve imagery of wounds (at *Aen.*4.1-5 and *Aen.*4.68-73); and scholarship that points to an interpretation of the sword as developing the idea of female vulnerability in the *Aeneid* (at *Aen.*4.579-580); as well as scholarship on the decorated sword (at *Aen.*4.261). The description of swords that involve imagery of wounds develops the notion of the sword as an instrument of sexual penetration and serves as a precursor for an interpretation of the sword from an erotic perspective. Scholarship on the description of the sword at *Aen.*4.579-580 points to an interpretation of the sword as an instrument of exploitation based on a notion that female figures in epic are susceptible to exploitation. Finally, scholarship on the decorated sword of Aeneas at *Aen.*4.261 creates a picture of Aeneas as poorly equipped to carry out his mission; it also makes Aeneas seem subservient to Dido and bestows on Aeneas the unwarlike qualities of softness or femininity.

At the end of Chapter Three I explore the role of swords in scholarship on descriptions of Turnus and Turnus' death scene. Although there is very little

scholarship on this particular aspect of the *Aeneid*, I point to studies that interprets the sword as an instrument of revenge; as representing barbarism in the *Aeneid*; and as a literal tool of founding and a destructive instrument used by Aeneas to establish the Trojan people in Italy.

In Chapter Four I conduct my own analysis of the references to swords in the scenes of Dido and Turnus' deaths. In the first part of this chapter I look at scholarship on the reasons for Dido's death at the close of book four. I will refer to the reasons for Dido's death during my analysis and particularly when I bring my analysis alongside existing scholarship on descriptions of Dido's death. The interpretations of Dido's death that I point out are: that Dido commits suicide because she has no choice and is the puppet of forces beyond her control; she commits suicide in a frenzied act of revenge owing to Aeneas' mistreatment of her; Dido is compelled to commit suicide owing to the *furor* of love; Dido kills herself because of the overwhelming guilt she experiences for breaking her vow to remain chaste to her dead husband Sychaeus; Dido commits suicide because she is a sacrificial victim necessary for the establishment of Rome.

In Chapter Four I also introduce scenes that involve references to swords that do not occur in book four of the *Aeneid*. These scenes occur at *Aen.*6.512-527 (Aeneas learns of Deiphobus' gruesome death through Helen's cunning deception); at *Aen.*2.567-576 (Aeneas spots Helen cowering behind an altar on Troy's final night); at *Aen.*2.506-511 (Priam's pitiful act of arming himself to defend his city on Troy's last night); at *Aen.*2.550-558 (the horrible description of Priam's death); and at *Aen.*12.728-733 (Turnus' sword shatter in his hand during the final duel). In the first part of Chapter Four, I attempt to demonstrate a link between scenes involving references to swords based on the occurrence of inner or hidden spaces in these scenes. I will also attempt to show how the interpretation of Dido's death from an erotic perspective, based on references to swords and wound imagery, supports this link.

I look at divergent interpretations of Dido's death scene that result from the ambiguity of the sword which Dido uses to commit suicide. I will attempt to demonstrate that Virgil employs a clever metaphorical trick in order for his readers to interpret Aeneas as only partly responsible for Dido's death at the close of book four. I look at scholarship on the reasons for Turnus' death at the close of the poem because I will refer to these reasons when I bring my analysis of swords in Turnus' death alongside existing scholarship on references to swords. Although I will point to numerous reasons for Turnus' death there are three reasons that I deem particularly significant. Firstly, Turnus dies at the close of the poem because he is fated to die, secondly Aeneas kills Turnus in order to avenge the death of Pallas, and finally, Turnus dies because he is a victim of Aeneas' inability to control his own rage. In the final section of Chapter Four I look at a number of parallels between Dido and Turnus with regards to the mission of Aeneas.

## Chapter II – The mission of Aeneas

### 2.1 Introduction

In this section of my thesis I aim to provide a description of the mission of Aeneas that will be relevant here. Although there are a number of different ways of outlining the Roman future and the mission<sup>2</sup>, for the purpose of my thesis I draw primarily on the work of Williams (1999) that provides me with the basic pillars upon which my understanding of Aeneas' mission to found a new city for the remnants of the Trojan nation will be built.

Williams (1999: 17-27) outlines and defines what he calls “the optimistic side of Rome's destiny” which is also encapsulated in his idea of what he calls “the Roman vision”. He points to five major passages in the *Aeneid* in order to illustrate this.<sup>3</sup> These are: Jupiter's prophecy at *Aen.*1.257-96, the pageant of Roman heroes at *Aen.*6.756-853, the description of the shield of Aeneas at *Aen.*8.626-728, the scene in which Mercury appears to Aeneas at *Aen.*4.259-278, and finally the scene of the reconciliation of Jupiter and Juno at *Aen.*12.791-842.<sup>4</sup> I would like to look at each of

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<sup>2</sup> According to Camps (1969:22) “the revelation [of the Roman future] is made by degrees: first in a riddling oracle which they [the surviving Trojans] do not understand [at *Aen.*3.7], then in a vision which names the promised land [at *Aen.*3.94], then by a seer who sets them on their way [at *Aen.*3.147], and lastly in pictorial but still mysterious revelations which give a glimpse of the future of their descendants many centuries ahead [at *Aen.*3.374; *Aen.*5.735-7; *Aen.*6.716]” For the importance of these scenes in relation to Aeneas' achievement and toward the future of Rome under Augustus see O'Hara (1990).

<sup>3</sup> Ross (2007:106) makes use of what he calls “three major panels” which serve as “previews of the greatness and grandeur of Rome, its achievements and its divinely sanctioned mission.” These are – and there is overlap with three of the scenes that Williams refers to in his vision of Rome – the scene where Jupiter reassures Venus of Rome's destiny at *Aen.*1.254-96; the scene in which Anchises presents Aeneas with the pageant of Roman heroes in the Underworld at *Aen.*6.756-892; and the scene in which Aeneas is presented with armour commissioned from Vulcan by his mother Venus at *Aen.*8.626-728. Lewis (1966: 64) refers to “forwards and backwards links” in “the enlargement of Virgil's subject” and in particular “glimpses of the future in Jove's prophecy in Book 1, the vision of Anchises, in the shield [and] the connection of the whole fourth Book with the Punic Wars.”

<sup>4</sup> These are not the only scenes that are relevant for a comprehensive understanding of what constitutes the optimistic side of Rome's destiny. Williams (1999:20) also mentions the scene in which Hector appears to Aeneas on Troy's final night, urging him to flee with the household gods to found a new city (*Aen.*2.293-5); the scene shortly after in which Venus reminds Aeneas that he needs to escape the burning Troy (*Aen.*2.594-600);

these four passages in a little more detail in order to show what they tell us about Aeneas' mission.<sup>5</sup>

From Jupiter's prophecy at *Aen.*1.257-96 we learn a number of important things about Aeneas' mission. Firstly, that "Aeneas is destined by fate (*fato profugus*) to leave Troy and found a new city in Latium" (Williams,1999: 18) which is to become Rome. In this matter Aeneas has no choice. We also learn at *Aen.*1.261 that "Aeneas will wage a great war in Italy, crush their proud peoples, and establish for his nation a way of life and a new city" (1999: 18). Finally, we learn that for the Romans as a nation, Jupiter has set no bounds in space or time but promises them an unending world empire (*Aen.*1.278).

According to Williams (1999: 19) it is from Anchises' closing description of the pageant of Roman heroes at *Aen.*6.756-853 that we are able to "define the nature of Rome's mission." From Anchises we learn that "the Roman 'arts' are in the province of government (*regere imperio*), and government is defined as first achieving peace and then superimposing civilisation (*morem*): finally peace is a matter of sparing the conquered and overwhelming the aggressor" (Williams, 1999: 23). This occurs at *Aen.*6.851-853:

*tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento*  
*(hae tibi erunt artes), pacique imponere morem,*

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the scene in which Aeneas receives a prophecy from Apollo at Delos that his descendants will rule the whole world (*Aen.*3.97-8); the scene in which Aeneas in Crete is visited by a vision of the Penates and is promised that his descendants will be raised to the stars (*Aen.*3.158-9); and finally, the scene in which Helenus the seer whom Aeneas meets in Buthretum reminds him of his duties and responsibilities, recalling Aeneas to his mission (*Aen.*3. 462). In book eight the reader is provided with a glimpse of the future geographical site of Rome when Evander takes Aeneas on a tour of the city of Pallanteum. Camps (1969:16) tells us that "the presence and personality of Rome is felt strongly in the poem throughout, and especially in the central part of it as the Trojans approach and reach and recognise their promised land and the journey of the hero himself is prolonged to the very place where Rome itself will one day be."

<sup>5</sup> Gransden (1990:26) reminds us that there is even an earlier reference to the mission and Aeneas' destiny in bk 20 of Homer's *Iliad*. Poseidon provides a short prophecy in which he briefly mentions Aeneas' destiny. I provide the translation from Fagles (1990: 513): "He is destined to survive. Aeneas will rule the men of Troy in power - / his sons' sons and the sons born in future years."

*parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*

But you, Roman, remember, rule with all your power  
the peoples of the earth – these will be your arts:  
to put your stamp on the works and ways of peace,  
to spare the defeated, break the proud in war.

According to Hardie (1998:71) certain aspects of the parade of Roman heroes also serve as a “definition of the Roman cultural mission,” namely to instruct the future Romans “to practise the arts of empire, just warfare, and law and order.”

From the depictions on Aeneas’ shield at *Aen.*8.626-731 we learn about the importance of including history into our understanding of the mission. Williams (1999: 23-24) suggests that the descriptions on Aeneas’ shield, a gift from his mother Venus, provides “the opportunity of another review of Roman history.” Each scene on the shield is an expression of “the qualities which the Romans the most admired in the heroes of their race, qualities which they hoped they could show again in the future in the revival and expansion of their greatness” (1999: 24).<sup>6</sup>

From the reconciliation of Jupiter and Juno at *Aen.*12.791-842 we learn that the mission also has a religious dimension. Williams tells us that “the mission is first to conquer the proud (because the gods wish it so, for the benefit of the human race), and then to establish for peoples a civilised way of life based on religious worship of the powers greater than themselves” (1999: 27).

According to Williams there is another equally important scene which occurs at the conclusion of the pageant of Roman heroes in book six and provides us with a clear understanding of Rome’s vision. This occurs at *Aen.*6.851-853. Williams tells us that

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<sup>6</sup> Zetel (1997:189) also tells us that “it is the catalogue of Romans in Anchises’ speech in the Underworld in Book 6 and the shield of Aeneas at the end of Book 8 that create Virgil’s interpretation of Rome’s history and destiny.”

“the passage is of great importance as defining Rome’s two-fold mission – first to rule over warlike Italy, and secondly to bring the whole world beneath the sway of laws. First conquest – then civilisation” (1999: 20). What Williams suggests is that chronology is very important. In order for a great nation to establish itself conquest has to precede the process of civilisation.

Part of Aeneas’ mission also emerges directly from Virgil’s recasting of the character of Aeneas to suit his idea of a new Roman hero.<sup>7</sup> Williams (1999: 28) describes the new hero that Virgil creates as “foreshadow[ing] the qualities of a different civilisation altogether.” One defining feature of the new hero is his “basic feeling of social responsibility” (Williams, 1999: 29) or “the socially responsible hero” (Hardie, 1998:80). This is most evident in the *Aeneid* in Virgil’s use of the epithet *pius* to describe Aeneas. Williams goes on to tell us that “Aeneas has to be the social man, the man who through his care for others succeeds in leading his group or his society, not aiming to achieve personal satisfaction by surpassing others in excellence, but to use his qualities in order to achieve *their* success” (1999: 30).<sup>8</sup>

Based on Williams’ definition of Aeneas as a new hero we are able to say that Aeneas’ mission is to battle down the proud and spare the conquered, but he is also always to be conscious of his civic duty to others. Williams tells us that “by founding the city destined to become Rome [Aeneas] will begin a process of taming the

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<sup>7</sup> Williams (1999:28) coins the term “new hero” for Aeneas and uses it to refer to “a prototype of the Roman character, a person who showed by his behaviour the kind of qualities which had made Rome great and would make her greater still.”

<sup>8</sup> Williams defines *pius* in the following way: “essentially it means ‘aware of one’s responsibility’, ‘dutiful’, ‘devoted to others’. It means that such a person puts other considerations before his own interests. This quality of being *pius* (*pietas* is the noun) may be shown by subordinating one’s own desire to various other loyalties: (i) to the gods and their requirements, hence our English derivative ‘piety’; (ii) to one’s country – here the idea of patriotism comes in; (iii) to one’s family, a form of devotion to others which the Romans specially esteemed; (iv) to one’s friends; and (v) to one’s subordinates. Often these different categories may overlap, and it is not always essential to define which one of them is specially relevant at any one time as long as we recognise that this is the essence of the man – he tries to shoulder his responsibilities, to face his obligations” (1999: 30-31). Gransden (1990:95) tells us that “Virgil created in Aeneas a new type of Stoic hero, willing and ready to subordinate his individual will to that of destiny, the commonwealth and the future, reluctant to fight and not really interested in victory.” According to Otis “the *pietas* that Aeneas achieves with such difficulty is basically an acceptance of his own role as the servant of the Roman future” (1964:315).



wickedness and frenzy in human hearts by means of *pietas*, devotion to others” (1999: 34).<sup>9</sup>

Parry (1966:118) brings to our attention a different dimension of Aeneas’ mission namely that “instead of an arduous but certain journey to a fixed and glorious goal, a suggestion that the true end of the Trojan and Roman labours will never arrive.” What this means is that Aeneas’ mission is also characterised by a lack of closure or fulfilment, particularly in Aeneas’ personal life.<sup>10</sup>

I end by pointing to the work of a number of scholars on the civilising and humanising dimensions of Aeneas’ mission. According to Abad (2003) Aeneas’ mission may be understood as a civilising process which he defines as the cultivation of wild land and the subjugation of inhospitable people. For Abad, the act of civilising is essential for establishing peace and also the most significant goal of Aeneas’ mission.<sup>11</sup> Zetel (1997:190) tells us that “Aeneas’ destiny is to civilise the warring tribes of Italy” but also points out that “their [the Trojans’] landing in Italy can be understood as either the destined arrival of law and civilisation or the colonising and destructive invasion of a foreign army.” Parry (1966:120) reiterates the civilising part of Aeneas’ mission when he tells us that “Virgil continually insists on the establishment of peace and order and civilisation.”

Gransden refers to “the Aeneas legend” as “one of many colonisation stories” (1990:27) but then also reminds us that according to Virgil Aeneas’ arrival in Italy is

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<sup>9</sup> We may now add to our store of additional scenes which illustrate aspects of Aeneas’ mission, the scene at *Aen.* 2.220-305 in which Aeneas refers to himself as *pious* (*sum pius Aeneas*) when he introduces himself to his mother, Venus on the shores of Carthage. Williams tells us that “his own use of it [the word *pious*] emphasises his knowledge that he is a man with a calling, a man whose actions must be determined not primarily by his own wishes and desires but by the requirements of the mission to which he has dedicated himself” (1999: 34).

<sup>10</sup> Parry (1966: 118) goes on to say that “Aeneas cannot live his own life;” he is “an agent of powers at once high and impersonal.” Later, in his treatment of Aeneas’ visit to the Underworld, Parry (1966:121) tells us that “peace and order are to be had, but Aeneas will not enjoy them.”

<sup>11</sup> Abad (2003: 6) tells us that “in the *Aeneid*, patriotism: the love of one’s own land and people is set in a large historical context, showing how the land was first won for civilisation not by ploughshare but by the sword – a tremendous labor that needed in Virgil’s own time to be done over and again because of ambition and violence.”

not entirely unwelcome and unwarranted.<sup>12</sup> Gransden tells us that Virgil refers to “a tradition that Dardanus, founder of the Trojan royal house, had been born in Italy and had emigrated to Asia Minor, so that Aeneas’ arrival in Italy in *Aeneid* VI could be seen as a homecoming, not as an invasion: he came, not as a usurper but as a man claiming his rightful heritage, for he was that *dux externus* (foreign chief) who was destined to rule in Italy” (1990:30). Furthermore, he tells us that “Aeneas arrives in Latium on a mission of peace: he wishes only to found a settlement for his exiled Trojans” (1990: 34).

*Humanitas* also forms an important part of Aeneas’ mission (as an ideal quality in a Roman) and ties in with the idea of Aeneas’ mission being one of civilising. According to Monti (1981:10) “the norms of social behaviour which regulated Roman political relationships are the same ones which inform the association which Dido enters with Aeneas and the Trojans.” The norms of social behaviour to which Monti refers here are also encapsulated in his understanding of what constitutes *humanitas*. Monti goes on to say that “Virgil’s own words on the mission of Rome provide the best commentary on Roman *humanitas* (*Aen.*6.851-853)” and that “the mission of Rome is that of civilising, a task for which Aeneas is uniquely suited” (Monti, 1981:16).

There remains one further aspect to mention concerning the mission of Aeneas: Aeneas’ ignorance of his mission. Gross (2004:152) sums up Aeneas’ condition in the following way: “He [Aeneas] is *rerumque ignarus*, ignorant of the events (8.730); he comprehends neither the meaning of Rome’s future accomplishments depicted on his shield nor the import of his own deeds, nor does he invoke the future as a personal frame of reference. Aeneas’ mission, therefore, has no personal significance for him; even his visit to the dead revealed nothing about his own future.”

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<sup>12</sup> For more on the notion that Aeneas’ mission is similar to colonisation see also Griffin, (1986:88). He tells us that “The destiny of Rome was splendid, but it involved the destruction of many attractive things and the ruin of the innocent [which] is an inescapable part of imperialism.”

There are thus four important aspects of the mission of Aeneas. Firstly, Aeneas' mission is sanctioned by the gods and fate. Secondly, the mission's objectives may be defined as achieving peace and superimposing civilisation, in that order. Thirdly, the mission has a historical dimension which prescribes favourable qualities in a Roman. And lastly, the mission has a religious dimension which prescribes the importance of religious worship.

The roles played by Dido and Turnus in hindering or aiding Aeneas' mission is particularly important. Williams (1999:61) refers to the figures of Dido and Turnus as "the main opponents of the mission" and "two individuals who are in opposition to fate and the Roman order." Of Dido in particular, he says she "is an individual who cares nothing for Rome" and is subject to "the large-scale cosmic destiny of Rome" (1999:61). Of Turnus, he says he "must be brushed aside by the march of events – he does not belong to destiny and he must pay for that" (1999:61).<sup>13</sup>

In the next sections of chapter 2 I investigate the ways in which the figures of Dido and Turnus may be considered as obstacles to the mission of Aeneas.

## 2.2 *Dido as opposition to Aeneas' mission*

In this section I intend to provide an outline of the ways in which Dido can be interpreted as being an opponent of Aeneas' mission based on existing scholarship on the *Aeneid*. Although there is some debate regarding whether or not Dido may

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<sup>13</sup> Dido and Turnus are also similar in another important way: the sympathy that their deaths inspire in the reader. Williams tells us that "Turnus in many essentials resembles Dido. In the structure of the poem he constitutes an obstacle to divine will which must be overcome – yet when he is overcome there is powerful sympathy for him and a feeling of injustice" and furthermore "above all, Turnus, like Dido, is not shown as an impersonal 'obstacle' but as a real human character" (1999:64).

even be considered an obstacle or opponent of Aeneas' mission<sup>14</sup>, this is not something that I will look into.<sup>15</sup> Instead, my focus in this section is to investigate the reasons why Dido is considered to be an opponent or obstacle to the mission of Aeneas.

Braund defines the *Aeneid* as "a foundation poem, strongly teleological (i.e. looking to a specific outcome) in its anticipation of the construction of the city of Rome and the Roman nation which lies in the narrative future" (2002: 3). She goes on to say that "the dynamics of an epic narrative require an aim and an obstacle to that aim," and furthermore that "in the *Aeneid* the aim is the foundation of the Roman people and the obstacle is Juno's anger" (2002: 5). Both Dido and Turnus are linked as opponents of Aeneas' mission through the goddess Juno, whose opposition to the Trojans and the Roman destiny is announced right at the start of the poem.<sup>16</sup>

Although she does not refer to Dido explicitly as an obstacle, Braund does mention that the *Aeneid* "evokes the process of the expansion of the Roman Empire, emblemized in the hostility between two major Mediterranean powers, Carthage and Rome" (2002: 6). The former is the home of Queen Dido, the latter the goal towards which Aeneas strives in his mission. The hostility that Braund refers to here,

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<sup>14</sup> Ross (2007:32) asks: "were the victims [Dido, Turnus, Camilla etc.] really obstacles to progress, and were they necessary sacrifices?" Dinter argues that Dido's death is not essential for the establishment of the Trojan people in Italy. Dinter (2005: 158) tells us that it is Palinurus' death that enables the Trojans safe passage to Italy, not Dido's death. He also goes on to say that "Palinurus' is the one important life whose sacrifice (*unum pro multis* 5.815) guarantees the safe journey of the Trojans; his death becomes the ticket to Rome (not Dido's as one might have thought)." According to Camps "the fatal opposition of Dido and Turnus to the purpose of providence is associated in both of them with an ungovernable passion which excludes reason from the control of the will. This in Dido is desire, in Turnus rage, aroused by special circumstances in a character in which perhaps the tendency to excessive anger was always present" (1969: 40). In this way Camps demonstrates that neither Dido nor Turnus can be fully held accountable for their downfall because they are the victims of circumstances that are beyond their control. Monti (1981:26) points to the generosity in Dido's offer of support upon Aeneas' landfall in Carthage, in accordance with the guest-host relationship and later, an offer of shared rule of Carthage as instances where Dido's actions speak out against seeing her as an opponent of the mission of Aeneas.

<sup>15</sup> Farron (1980:39) points out that Dido twice refers to Aeneas as an enemy (*hostis*). This occurs at *Aen.*4.424 and at *Aen.*4.549.

<sup>16</sup> Camps (1969:14) tells us that "it is the will of Juno, acting through the agency of lesser powers, which causes the storm at the beginning of the poem and the outbreak of war in Italy at the beginning of the second half, thus setting in motion the two main phases of action which terminate, ironically, in the deaths of Juno's human favourites Dido and Turnus."

between Carthage and Rome, provides a historical basis for Dido's opposition to Aeneas' mission and is embodied in Dido's curse at *Aen.*4.621-629 before she commits suicide.

Elaborating on the historical basis of Dido's opposition to Rome through Carthage, Ross (2007:16) tells us that "Dido in the eyes of Jupiter, Venus, and Roman destiny [is] the enemy *par excellence*" and later, also refers to her as "the historical enemy of Rome" (2007:33). The notion of Dido as a historical obstacle to Aeneas is not a new one. Pöschl (1966:165) states that "the opposition of two world powers [Rome and Carthage] is announced immediately upon the introduction of Rome's historic rival: *Carthago Italiam contra* (1.13), in which *contra* is meant much more symbolically than geographically" and with a slight change it returns in Dido's curse at *Aen.*4.628. Camps (1969:95) also argues that "Dido's resistance to the plan of fate for Rome reflects the conflict between the destinies of Rome and Carthage."

For Williams (1999: 17) Dido is one of "those who stood in the way" as well as "brushed aside and trampled upon by [the] requirements" of what he refers to as "the Roman vision." Later, in his treatment of book four of the *Aeneid*, Williams (1999: 41) tells us that "this is the book in which Aeneas comes nearest to abandoning his mission" and that "here [in book four] we are furthest of all from thoughts of Rome and Roman destiny." For Williams, book four culminates in "the triumph of the right, the victory of Rome over a dangerous obstacle" (1999: 42).

Dido is also considered to be an opponent to Aeneas' mission because her actions during Aeneas' stay in Carthage – even though inspired and influenced by the gods and her sister, events beyond her control<sup>17</sup> – force her to be associated with qualities

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<sup>17</sup> According to Camps (1969:33) the events that lead to Aeneas' stay in Carthage are as follows: "Juno, concerned to frustrate Aeneas' mission to re-found Troy, provides the storm which drives Aeneas' fleet off course and brings him (not by her design) to the territory of Carthage. Jupiter, concerned for the safety of Aeneas in the interests of his mission, moves Dido to give the Trojans a kindly reception. Venus, concerned for

that are un-Roman.<sup>18</sup> Dido neglects her duties and responsibilities as a queen and leader of her people. Dido is thought to live in a state of disgrace, having turned her back on her vows to her dead husband, Sychaeus. Moreover, Dido drags Aeneas into this state of disgrace and neglect of duty.<sup>19</sup> Dido's descent into disgrace takes a number of forms. I would like to discuss each individually.

Firstly, it is because Dido's mission so closely resembles Aeneas' own mission<sup>20</sup> that we are able to judge Dido's actions in Carthage as un-Roman. We would expect Dido to embody and uphold virtues from which Aeneas can learn in order to become the leader of his own people in the future Lavinium. Initially Dido does seem to embody qualities that a Roman of Aeneas' time would find exemplary. However, in time, as her love for Aeneas develops, she becomes more un-Roman.

Related to Dido's un-Roman behaviour is the notion that Dido is also regarded as an opponent of Aeneas' mission because, according to Parry (1966:115), Aeneas' relationship with Dido prefigures the unpopular and un-Roman relationship of Anthony with Cleopatra. This connection between the two pairs of lovers is possible because the figure of Aeneas is readily connected with the historic figure of Anthony and the figure of Dido is easily linked to the historic figure of Cleopatra through

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Aeneas because he is her son, contrives that Dido shall become possessed with the fatal passion that ensures her misery. Juno, hoping to turn this development to account to keep Aeneas from Italy, contrives the fatal meeting in the cave."

<sup>18</sup> In many ways Dido also exhibits qualities that are favourable in an ideal Roman. According to Monti (1981:240) "she [Dido] is the woman of *humanitas* in the Roman sense of the term, that is, she subscribes to and acts in accordance with as specific standard for civilised behaviour." For instance, she honours the sanctity of *hospitium* when the Trojans make landfall at Carthage by offering them hospitality. She even goes as far as to offer Aeneas shared rule of Carthage.

<sup>19</sup> According to Camps (1969:31-32) Dido and Aeneas "are felt by those around them to neglect their dignity" and Aeneas "under the influence of her [Dido's] personality and her strong affection begins to forget the duty laid on him to found the new Troy in Italy [and] begins to behave as Dido's consort."

<sup>20</sup> Ross (2007:33) tells us that "her [Dido's] role seems very much, in fact, like Rome's divine mission." According to Hardie "her [Dido's] career closely matches that of the hero Aeneas, who, from being a prince of a junior branch of the Trojan royal family with a good fighting record, is suddenly cast in the role of the survivors of Troy with a mission not only to establish a new society overseas, but also to lay the foundations for a race destined to world-rule in the distant future" (1998:80). Otis (1964:264) points out that "Dido is an *alter Aeneas*. Like him she had a mission to found a new city overseas; like him she had a special *pietas* towards the dead (Sychaeus is, in effect, Dido's Anchises); like him she was lonely and vulnerable. She is thus the great example of *pietas* worsted by the *furor* of passion."

images on the shield of Aeneas at *Aen.*8.626-731.<sup>21</sup> It is possible then because Dido's relationship with Aeneas is also unique in nature: according to Monti (1981:29) "Aeneas' association with Dido is defined in the terminology of Roman personal political relationships."

Dido might also be considered an obstacle to the mission of Aeneas because she delays Aeneas in Carthage. One reason why Dido is able to do this is because she is under the impression that she has entered into a marriage contract (at *Aen.*4.236-238) with him, a marriage that is not altogether binding because it turns out to be a sham in the eyes of Aeneas (*Aen.*4.338-9). Guinach in Parry (1966: 111) reminds us of this when he points out that "Dido was the aggressor in her marriage with Aeneas" and that "the Roman would have condemned her for breaking her vow to her first husband, dead these many years."

Dido may also be considered an obstacle to the mission of Aeneas owing to the debilitating effect of her love on Aeneas. Here, it is the quality and command of Dido's love to the exclusion of everything else – including for Aeneas and his mission – that serves as a means of delaying Aeneas from his mission. According to Camps (1969:28) "love in this sense is a compulsive power which makes a man utterly absorbed in a woman to the exclusion of all the normal values of society around him and renders its victim shameless and irresponsible."

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<sup>21</sup> Parry points out that the connection between Aeneas and Anthony develops from a scene depicted on the shield that Vulcan makes for Aeneas at *Aen.*8.626-731 in which "there is also the possibility of his [Aeneas'] being [prefigured] as Augustus' bitter enemy, Mark Anthony" (1996: 114). The link between Dido and Cleopatra is possible because of an echo in the description of Dido as she dies of the description of Cleopatra on the shield of Aeneas. Parry tells us that "when she [Dido] is about to die, she is said to be *pale with imminent death, pallida morte futura* [*Aen.*4.644]" and "Cleopatra, in her own person, is described on Aeneas' shield in Book 8 as *paling before imminent death, pallentem morte futura* [*Aen.*8.709]." According to Camps (1969:95) "the story of Dido's dangerous love and Aeneas' temporary involvement with it must inevitably have evoked for the Roman reader of Virgil's time the recent memory of Cleopatra, another African queen whose love entangled a Roman leader and seemed to threaten Rome with subordination to a foreign power." Also according to Keith (2000:68) "the historical Egyptian queen Cleopatra [is] another important model for Dido."

I would like to elaborate on another aspect of the love relationship between Dido and Aeneas to which Camps refers: its effect of subordinating the male to the female through the overwhelming strength of her love. Camps links the quality of the debilitating love that Dido displays for Aeneas with the love of Anthony for Cleopatra. He tells us that “in recent memory Antony, ruler of half the Roman world, had fallen under the spell of Cleopatra and given himself up to wanton enjoyments with her, forgetting his dignity and his responsibilities, and, worse still, subordinating Roman interests to the ambitions of a foreign queen” (1969:29-30).<sup>22</sup>

It is also worth noting at this point that although Dido’s love for Aeneas serves as the source of his delay in Carthage - alongside the hero’s travel fatigue and weariness of the burden of his mission – there are extenuating circumstances that remove some of the blame from Dido. Camps (1969: 31) points out firstly that “Dido’s obsessive love for Aeneas is inflicted on her by the irresistible will of a higher power,”<sup>23</sup> secondly, that “she tries at first to resist because she has vowed her affections to the memory of her dead husband and because to be the slave of desire offends her self-respect and sense of dignity” and thirdly because “a fatal combination of circumstances (contrived, again, by a higher power) Dido and he [Aeneas] are brought together alone during a hunting expedition.”

In this section of chapter two I looked at scholarship on the ways in which Dido may be considered an opponent of or an obstacle to the mission of Aeneas. Dido’s opposition to Aeneas’ mission is based on a historical enmity between Carthage and

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<sup>22</sup> Lyne (1989) also points to Aeneas’ subordination to Dido through an analysis of the word *uxorious* and the description of the clothes that Aeneas is spotted wearing when Mercury is sent to recall him to his mission at *Aen.*4.265. He tells us that “Aeneas appears to be *owned* by his Dido” (1989:47) and that “it is not surprising that Mercury felt moved to imply that Aeneas was the ‘property of his wife’” (1989:189).

<sup>23</sup> I find it very interesting, though not particularly relevant, that the goddess Venus is both the agent that “contrives that Dido shall become possessed with the fatal passion that ensures her misery” (Camps, 1969:33) and the same agent that later provides Aeneas with the arms of Vulcan, also secured through similar love guiles. For although she acts in the best interests of her son, one act (inspiring Dido’s fatal passion) is squarely in opposition to the mission of Aeneas while the other (securing arms for Aeneas) is wholly in support of the mission of Aeneas.



Rome. Dido may also be considered an opponent of the mission of Aeneas on the basis of her un-Roman behaviour. Finally, Dido's role in delaying Aeneas in Carthage also enables us to see her as an opponent of the mission.

### 2.3 *Turnus as opposition to Aeneas' mission*

In this section I intend to provide an outline of the ways in which Turnus can be interpreted as being an opponent of Aeneas' mission based on existing scholarship on the *Aeneid*. Arguments concerning Turnus as an opponent of the mission of Aeneas are based primarily on the view that Aeneas' mission has a civilising function. The process of civilisation which may be defined as the cultivation of wild land and the subjugation of inhospitable people can be broadened to include the subjugation of arrogant people, such as Turnus.<sup>24</sup> According to Ross (2007:44) "Turnus is all violence (*violentia*), rash boldness (*audacia*), and confidence in his own might (*fiducia*)." Parry (1996:110) refers to Turnus as "Aeneas' antagonist, who is made the embodiment of a simple valor and love of honor which cannot survive the complex forces of civilisation." Aeneas is charged with a civilising mission; civilising Turnus is part of that mission.

Turnus may also be thought to be an opponent of Aeneas' mission because he forces Aeneas to break the mould of the "new hero" that Virgil has created for him. This occurs twice in the *Aeneid*: where Aeneas captures and sacrifices eight Rutulian warriors in a bizarre act of revenge for Pallas' death (*Aen.*10.515-20) and at the close of the *Aeneid* where Aeneas kills Turnus.<sup>25</sup> Both of these instances appear to be acts

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<sup>24</sup> Abad (2003: 2-3) argues that "Aeneas' arch enemy, Turnus...is not barbaric or monstrous....although he is portrayed as hot headed, selfish and boastful." Gransden (1990:94) tells us that "in the character of Turnus, Virgil has created an old-style Homeric hero dedicated to personal glory and the protection and enhancement of his own reputation."

<sup>25</sup> There is another scene in which Aeneas is also thought to break the mould of the "new hero" that Virgil creates for him. This is where Aeneas kills the opposition warrior Mezentius. Gransden (1990: 34) points out that "although Aeneas, to his bitter regret, cannot prevent Pallas' death, he throws himself into the fight with

driven by the desire for revenge for Pallas' death and similarly both of these acts also force Aeneas to go against the kind of hero that Virgil envisions. According to Camps (1969:24) "compassion is a principal element in every context except that of Pallas' death."

In sacrificing the eight captured Rutulian warriors Aeneas fails to spare the conquered, an important part of his mission and an equally important attribute of the new hero. In killing Turnus at the close of the poem, Aeneas both upholds his duty to the mission as well as goes against it. Camps (1969:39) tells us that "Aeneas too becomes bloodthirsty, and more grossly than Turnus, after the death of Pallas." Henry (1989:166) speaks of Aeneas' acts subsequent to Pallas' death as "the defeat of rationality and *pietas*." This is a particularly interesting part of the poem and one which has enjoyed much scholarly attention, owing precisely to this apparent contradiction. I will return to it later.

Turnus embodies the *furor* that Aeneas is charged with battling down, according to his mission.<sup>26</sup> However, in each of these two scenes, Aeneas is as much a victim and proponent of *furor* as Turnus, which makes him temporarily dispossessed of his duty and responsibility to the mission.<sup>27</sup> Otis (1964:329) points out that "Turnus is not represented as an evil man simply: but his *fury* entailed as one of its worst

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renewed vigour, killing the renegade ex-leader of the Etruscans, the dispossessed tyrant Mezentius, and also his young son, an act which might indeed seem to be one of revenge for Pallas' death." Although a study of the death of Mezentius would be an interesting one, my focus in this thesis is on the figures of Dido and Turnus.

<sup>26</sup> According to Otis (1964: 330) "Aeneas is the divine man of Roman destiny whose mission is to defeat impious *furor*." According to Hardie (1998:73) "the rhythm of war and peace that defines the course of Roman history is generalised in the *Aeneid* into a recurrent pattern of the release of violence or madness (*furor*) followed by the painful reimposition of peace and calm, of chaos followed by the restoration of order."

<sup>27</sup> Gransden (1990:35) tells us that "nor is Aeneas without anger: indeed, *furor*, the madness of war, dominates the last four books of the *Aeneid* and permeates Aeneas' actions on the battlefield no less than it does those of his opponents." He also tells us that "when he must fight, [Aeneas] fights as savagely and with as much *furor* as any other hero in the poem" (1990: 96). Ross (2007:25) also mentions an entire list of Aeneas' additional victims which in his opinion demonstrate Aeneas' *furor*: Magus, who pleads for his life at *Aen.*10.524-5; a priest of Apollo and Diana, whose death is described as a sacrifice (*immolat*) at *Aen.*10.537-42; Tarquitus, exemplary for his "natural innocence" (2007:25) who also begs for his life in vain at *Aen.*10.550-60. Of these particular deaths, Ross says "Aeneas' blatant savagery cannot be excused or explained away on the grounds that Virgil was simply following a Homeric model" (2007:25).

consequences, the sacrifice of his own passions and ambitions.” Earlier in this chapter I provided a description of the mission of Aeneas in which I highlighted Aeneas’ *pietas* and *humanitas* as important aspects of this mission. Turnus’ *furor* makes him an opponent of the mission of Aeneas because it goes against the aspects of *humanitas* and *pietas* that form such an integral part of Aeneas’ mission.<sup>28</sup>

## 2.4 Connections between Dido and Turnus

I end this section with a short discussion of important connections between the two opposition figures, Dido and Turnus. According to Williams (1999:65) the last scenes of the tragedy of Turnus are linked to the tragedy of Dido “in a number of small but telling ways”: Turnus’ words at *Aen.*12.645-9:

*terga dabo et Turnum fugientem haec terra videbit?  
usque adeone mori miserum est ? vos o mihi, Manes,  
este boni, quoniam superis aversa voluntas.  
sancta ad vos anima atque istius inscia culpa  
descendam magnorum haud umquam indignus avorum.*

*Shall the country look  
on Turnus in full retreat? To die, tell me,  
is that the worst we face? Be good to me now,  
you shades of the dead below, for the gods above  
have turned away their favours. Down to you I go,  
a spirit cleansed, utterly innocent as charged,*

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<sup>28</sup> Turnus may also be thought of as a figure of opposition to the mission of Aeneas through his association with the goddess Allecto in book seven of the *Aeneid*. Otis (1964:323) points out that “Allecto is the key symbol of violence and *furor*, of all that opposes *pietas* and *humanitas* in the *Aeneid*.” By his association with Allecto, Turnus also comes to oppose Aeneas and his mission.

*forever worthy of my great father's fame!*

echo Dido's last words at *Aen.*4.651-2:

dulces exuviae, dum fata deusque sinebat,  
accipite hanc animam meque his exsolve curis

Oh, dear relics,  
dear as long as Fate and the gods allowed,  
receive my spirit and set me free of pain

The divine portent of an owl disguised as a Fury sent by Jupiter to herald the end of Juno and Turnus' sister Juturna's support of him, echoes Dido's "nightmare visions and torments of conscience accompanied by the long-drawn hooting of an owl" at *Aen.*4.462 (1999:65). And finally, the two figures' tragedies are linked in Juturna's teary farewell to Turnus at *Aen.*12.869 which is echoed in Anna's farewell lamentation to her sister Dido at *Aen.*4.672.

Putnam (1965:156) establishes another important connection between Dido and Turnus as opponents of the mission of Aeneas through an analysis of wound imagery in the fourth book of the *Aeneid*. According to Putnam (1965:156) "Turnus could be visualised as a heroic reincarnation of Dido." Both Turnus and Dido suffer similar wounds: Dido suffers because of her love for Aeneas in the same way that Turnus suffers because of his love for Lavinia.

Camps refers to the "quest for the hand of the princess [Lavinia]" as a significant motif in the *Aeneid*, both as an important goal in the mission of Aeneas as well as "the cause of the rival leader Turnus' hostility to Aeneas" (1969:28). Aeneas is charged with establishing the Trojan people in Italy. However, he must do this

through the “foundation of a royal race in which the qualities of Trojan and Italian are united” (Camps, 1969:28). Furthermore, there is a prophecy which establishes Lavinia as the rightful bride of Aeneas. Turnus, who has his heart and mind set on Lavinia thus comes directly in opposition to Aeneas through their mutual need of the hand of the princess.

In chapter two I provided a description of the mission of Aeneas. I also provided an outline of the scholarship in the various ways in which Dido and Turnus are considered to be opponents or obstacles of the mission of Aeneas. In chapter three I will provide an outline of the scholarship in description of swords in the death scenes of Dido and Turnus.

## Chapter III – Swords in Scholarship on the *Aeneid*

### 3.1 *Introduction*

In chapter three I look at scholarship on the references to swords in the scenes of Dido's and Turnus' deaths. This chapter is divided up into three main sections. In the first section (3.2) my aim is two-fold. Firstly, to point out the most important references to swords that will be relevant for my purposes in this thesis. Secondly, to discuss the ambiguities surrounding the sword that Dido uses to commit suicide at the close of book four.

The second section (3.3) of this chapter is entitled "The role of the sword in descriptions of Dido and Dido's Death Scene." Here it is my aim to point to scholarship in references to the sword that involve Dido and Dido's death scene that will be relevant. I look at scholarship on the imagery of wounds, scholarship on the sword at *Aen.*4.579-580, scholarship on the sword as it relates to female vulnerability, and scholarship on the decorated sword of Aeneas at *Aen.*4.261.

The third section of this chapter (3.4) is entitled "The role of the sword in descriptions of Turnus and Turnus' death scene." Here it is my aim to highlight scholarship in references to the sword that involve Turnus and Turnus' death scene that will be relevant. I look at scholarship that point to the sword as an instrument of revenge, scholarship that reveals the sword as representative of barbarism, as well as scholarship that points to the sword as an instrument of destruction.

### 3.2 *References to Swords*

Most of the scenes containing references to a sword occur in book four of the *Aeneid*. However, there are a number of other scenes involving references to a sword that will play a role in the arguments presented in this thesis. I will refer to these as they become relevant. I begin by looking at references to swords in book four.

There are six descriptive scenes in book four of the *Aeneid* that have particular relevance for this thesis. The first relevant scene involving a description of a sword occurs at *Aen.*4.261-264. In this scene Mercury is sent by Jupiter to recall Aeneas to his mission. He finds Aeneas in Carthage, decked out in luxurious clothing, including a beautifully decorated jasper-studded sword:

*atque illi stellatus iaspide fulva  
ensis erat Tyrioque ardebat murice laena [my underlining]  
demissa ex umeris , dives quae munera Dido  
fecerat, et tenui telas discreverat auro.*

And his sword-hilt [my underlining]  
is studded with tawny jasper stars, a cloak  
of glowing Tyrian purple drapes his shoulders,  
a gift that the wealthy queen had made herself,  
weaving into the webst a glinting mesh of gold.<sup>29</sup>

The next two scenes in book four involving a description of a sword occur at *Aen.*4.494-497 and *Aen.*4.507-508. Dido gives instructions to her sister Anna to

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<sup>29</sup> Here and elsewhere I make use of the translation of the *Aeneid* by Fagles, 2006.

construct a pyre in the palace at Carthage using Aeneas' weaponry in her bedchamber:

*tu secreta pyram tecto interiore sub auras  
erige, et arma viri thalamo quae fixa reliquit [my underlining]  
impius exuviasque omnis lectumque iugalem,  
quo perii, super imponas...*

Now go,

build me a pyre in secret, deep inside our courtyard  
under the open sky. Pile it high with his arms – [my underlining]  
he left them hanging within our bridal chamber

In lines 507-508 Virgil provides us with a description of the sword that is fixed to the wall above Dido's bed in the royal chambers that is to be placed on top of the pyre alongside Aeneas' other belongings:

*super exuvias ensemque relictum  
effigiemque toro locat haud ignara futuri.*

she lays his arms and the sword he left [my underlining]  
and an effigy of Aeneas, all on the bed they'd shared,  
for well she knows the future.

The fourth scene involving a description of a sword occurs at *Aen.*4.579-580. Here Aeneas has just resolved to leave Carthage. He uses a sword to sever the ship cables before he sets out to sea:

*dixit vaginaque eripit ensem [my underlining]*



*fulmineum strictoque ferit retinacula ferro.*

Tearing sword from sheath like a lightning flash, [my underlining]  
he hacks the mooring lines with a naked blade.

The fifth scene in book four involving the description of a sword occurs at *Aen.*4.646-647. Here Virgil describes the sword that Dido uses to take her life in a very telling way that I will look at in more detail in chapter four of my thesis. Dido climbs on top of the pyre constructed by her sister Anna and readies the sword for using it on herself:

*conscendit furibunda rogos ensemque recludit [my underlining]  
Dardanium, non hos quaesitum munus in usus.*

[she] clambers in frenzy,  
up the soaring pyre and unsheathes a sword, a Trojan sword [my underlining]  
she once sought as a gift, but not for such an end.

The final scene in book four which involves the description of a sword occurs at *Aen.*4.663-665. This is the actual scene of Dido's death. She stabs herself with the sword and, after an agonising interlude, dies:

*dixerat, atque illam media inter talia ferro  
conlapsam aspiciunt comites, ensemque cruore [my underlining]  
spumantem sparsaque manus...*

All at once, in the midst of her last words,  
her women see her doubled over the sword, the blood  
foaming over the blade, her hands splattered red.

Four of the scenes outlined above feature an overt description of a sword. These occur at *Aen.*4.261-264, *Aen.*4.579-580, *Aen.*4.646-647, and *Aen.*4.663-665. One scene involves a reference to weaponry. This scene occurs at *Aen.*4.494-497. For the purposes of this thesis I am going to consider the reference to weaponry at *Aen.*4.495 to be synonymous with a reference to a sword. I am able to do this because Bradley (1958:234) establishes a sound connection between the swords at *Aen.*4.507, *Aen.*4.646 and the reference to weaponry at *Aen.*4.495.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, according to Lyne (1989:20) “when Dido refers to ‘arma’, ‘arms’ in the first passage [*Aen.*4.494-7] she seems particularly to have in mind the ‘ensis’, the sword [at *Aen.*4.507 and at *Aen.*4.645-52].”

Two scenes in particular (*Aen.*4.467 and *Aen.*4.261 as outlined above) are significant for my purposes because they play an important role in disambiguating the sword that Dido uses to take her life at the close of book four. I would like to look in more detail at the sword which Dido uses to commit suicide with a view to pointing out the ambiguity inherent in its ownership, but before I do so there remain two observations to be made regarding the meaning attached to swords. I attempt to provide a circumscription of this meaning in contrast with other weapons in the *Aeneid*.

In order to illustrate how I think references to swords may be interpreted in the *Aeneid* I start by looking at what the sword is not. The first weapon whose use I contrast with the sword is the bow. Bittarello (2009: 214) tells us that “the use of the bow [in warfare] was inappropriate because the bow was a weapon used by hunters

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<sup>30</sup> Bradley (1958:234) tells us that “Virgil provides a plainer link than appears to have been so far admitted, inasmuch as the sword in question is in each of the three passages associated with the same objects: the *exuiiae* are mentioned at 496, 507, and 651, and the bed at 496 (*lectum iugalem*), at 508 (*toro*), and at 648 (*notum cubile*). The repeated reference to objects so closely associated in Virgil's poem (as they are in Dido's mind) leaves no place for doubt that *arma* points first and foremost to the sword, and that in each of these passages it is a question of the same sword”

[and that] Aeneas, the Trojan ancestor of the Romans, is never presented as a bowman." According to Bittarello, those who use a bow in war are considered "predators rather than warriors" (2009: 215).<sup>31</sup>

Bittarello's observation will be useful in my analysis of the imagery of wounds later in this chapter and particularly in my analysis of Dido's deer simile at *Aen.*4.68-73 where Aeneas is described as the *pastor nescius*. In contrast with the bow, the sword serves as an instrument that highlights the courage and integrity of the figure that wields it. The converse is also true as it is evident from Bittarello's observation that a figure that uses the bow as opposed to the sword is associated with the negative character traits of cowardice and predation. The bow also associates its user with the negative attributes of femininity and luxuriousness.

Bitarello (2009) establishes a meaningful connection between the bow and the Etruscan people highlighting a number of negative connotations that the bow has for a Roman audience. She tells us that

"the Etruscans use inappropriate weapons, behave in war as hunters, can be defeated by women, and even behave like women – an aspect connected to their wealth and consequent excessive luxury, as well as to their (supposed) oriental origin. Their moral flaws include cowardice, tyrannical pride, cruelty, 'softness', love of pleasures, and a peculiar relationship with sacral practices presented as dangerous and extraneous to the Roman religion" (2009:219).<sup>32</sup>

Bitarello's observation will be important later in this chapter when I look in more detail at the description of the decorated sword at *Aen.*4.261.

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<sup>32</sup> Bittarello also establishes a connection between three prominent Etruscans and the behaviour outlined above and concludes that "the three politicians' main flaw is their yielding to their passions, thus lacking the sense of measure expected of (and inherent in the behaviour of) a Roman citizen" (2009:228).

The sword is also easily distinguished from the spear in that it is more readily associated with combat at close quarters. According to Quinn (1968:269) “a man with a sword must get close to his opponent; a man with a spear can hurl it from a safe distance.” It is evident from Quinn’s observation that the sword is most closely associated with those qualities that are preferable in the Homeric warrior. This interpretation of the sword will be important when I look in more detail at the role of the sword in Turnus’ death, where Aeneas drives the sword into Turnus’ breast.

There is another interpretation of the sword that it also useful. For this I turn to the figure of Mezentius. There are two instances in the description of Mezentius’ death in which mention is made of a sword. I mention them in the order in which they appear in the text of the *Aeneid*. Firstly, there is the scene in which Aeneas stands over Mezentius and threatens him, subsequent to driving a spear through his horse’s head that causes Mezentius to fall to the ground. This occurs at *Aen.*10.896-98. The second scene in which the sword plays a significant role is the scene in which King Mezentius is actually killed by Aeneas. This occurs at *Aen.*10.907-8. It is at this point also that the right hand and its significance as the hand that wields the sword, is significant.<sup>33</sup>

Gotoff (1984:199) draws our attention to the most un-Roman character trait in the figure of Mezentius’ when he points out his brazen disrespect for the gods at *Aen.*10.773-776 that earns him the title *contemptor divum*.<sup>34</sup> More importantly, he draws our attention to Mezentius’ right hand (*dextra*) which is also his sword-wielding hand, as the pivotal image that points to Mezentius’ transgression.

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<sup>33</sup> The right hand is often synonymous with the sword. This is illustrated most pointedly in *Aen.*12.14: *aut hac Dardanium dextra sub Tartara mittam*. Here, while he reproaches his men, Turnus makes reference to his sword by mention of his right hand (*dextra*). There are numerous other examples that illustrate this use of the right hand to refer to a sword. Just one should suffice here.

<sup>34</sup> Although his scorn for the gods is Mezentius’ greatest transgression, there are others. Gotoff tells us that Mezentius is “a man who was incapable of guilt, remorse, self-doubt, or self-criticism” (1984:201).

Mezentius, who is so closely associated with his right, sword-holding hand, is also associated with a number of un-Roman aspects.

This interpretation of the sword based on the figure of Mezentius is important because it clearly demonstrates that the sword can be viewed in a negative light. Furthermore, this interpretation of the sword enables me to link the figures of Turnus and Mezentius. James tells us that “Mezentius is associated with Turnus in several ways, not the least of which is structural, in that his death at the end of book 10 is almost a rehearsal for Turnus’ death at the end of book 12” (1995:630) and furthermore that “their general pride, arrogance, and violence further link them” (1995:631)<sup>35</sup>.

There is also scholarship that suggests a reversal in *pietas* in the figures of Mezentius and Aeneas. This view is based on an analysis of the manner in which each of these figures manage (or fail to manage) the *furor* that results in Mezentius’ death scene. In his treatment of the description of Mezentius’ death Kronenberg (2005:425) points out that “Aeneas steps into the role of the impious monster just as Mezentius is transformed into a pious philosopher.” Aeneas’ piety plays a particularly important role in delineating the manner in which Aeneas is to carry out his mission. The reversal that Kronenberg refers to establishes a connection between the description of Mezentius’ death and the death of Turnus at the close of the poem.

I would now like to look in more detail at the sword which Dido uses to take her life at the close of book four with the view to pointing out the ambiguity inherent in its

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<sup>35</sup> The deaths of Turnus and Mezentius are not only structurally connected. Sharon also points out that “they are native-born Italian kings who exercise *imperium* in a hereditary patriarchy; when Turnus takes in the ousted Mezentius, they become associated physically and politically. In war, they share a military association. Their general pride, arrogance, and violence further link them. Aeneas first hears of each by name from Evander, who, unable because of age to take action against them, asks him first in book 8 and then in book 11 to take on those jobs. Both die at the hands of Aeneas, one asking to be reunited, in death, with his son, and the other asking to be returned to his father, either dead or alive” (1995: 631).

ownership. We know for certain that Dido uses a sword to kill herself at the close of the fourth book of the *Aeneid*.<sup>36</sup> However, there is some ambiguity regarding the *exact* sword which she plunges into her breast. Thus, it is not possible simply to assume – as Quinn (1968:142, 148) and Camps (1969:33) do – that the sword that Dido uses to kill herself is simply “a sword that had belonged to Aeneas.”<sup>37</sup> This ambiguity is possible for a number of reasons.

Basto (1984) provides a cogent outline of the ambiguity surrounding the sword that Dido uses to commit suicide at *Aen.*4.664-5. He maintains that this ambiguity results from the interpretation of two significant scenes. The first scene occurs at *Aen.*4.261 and serves as evidence of an apparent exchange of swords that takes place between Dido and Aeneas.<sup>38</sup> According to Basto this exchange reveals a paradoxical significance which symbolises the severance of Aeneas’ relationship with Dido. The second scene of importance is the description of Aeneas’ arms on the wall above Dido’s bed in their bedchamber and occurs at *Aen.*4.495-507. Basto argues that this scene symbolises Aeneas’ retirement from combat.<sup>39</sup>

In other words, Basto maintains that the sword that Dido uses to commit suicide is in fact the sword that she receives in the exchange where she replaces Aeneas’

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<sup>36</sup> See Edgworth (1977:129) for an outline and analysis of Dido’s choice in the method of her suicide.

<sup>37</sup> Quinn simplifies the question of ownership of the sword significantly. He tells us that Aeneas is seen “wearing a sword studded with jasper which Dido had given him and a purple cloak which she had worked with gold.” He then goes on to say that “the sword is the one Aeneas leaves behind in the *thalamus* after the quarrel with Dido and then uses it to kill herself at 646” (1968:142) and later that “among the *exuviae* placed beside the effigy [on the funeral pyre, is the] sword ornamented with jasper which she had given to Aeneas as a present and which at 261-2 we saw him wear as one of the symbols of consortship” (1968:148). The connection between the sword that Aeneas supposedly leaves behind and the sword that Dido uses to take her life that Quinn establishes here is an oversimplification of the question of the ownership of the sword. I address it in the sections that follow when I look more closely at the ambiguity inherent in the ownership of the sword.

<sup>38</sup> There are a number of scholars who differ from Basto’s suggestion that an exchange of swords took place between Dido and Aeneas. These are Conington (1883), Page (1894), Pease (1935), Quinn (1968), and Heinze (1993) whose argument is mentioned shortly in more detail.

<sup>39</sup> Basto (1984: 337) points out that “Dido has festooned the sword in her bedroom as an emblem that Aeneas’ role has changed from being a warrior to being a lover.” But there are also arguments against this suggestion. Basto mentions the fact that retirement dedication is usually done on an appropriate temple, not ordinarily on a bedroom wall. Furthermore, the agency of *fixa*, is not necessarily placed on Aeneas, suggesting that he did not relinquish his sword of his own volition.

warrior sword – the sword, we must assume, with which he arrives in Carthage – with the decorative sword he is seen wearing at *Aen.*4.261-262. Based on this exchange it is possible to see how Dido may be held solely responsible for her own suicide, making Aeneas' involvement in her death almost negligible. Basto's argument, based on the exchange, that the sword in Dido's bedchamber symbolises Aeneas' retirement from combat, is significant and I will return to it in chapter four.

According to Heinze (1993: 120) the sword that Dido uses to kill herself at *Aen.*4.647-664 cannot possibly be the sword that hangs above their bed in their bedchamber at *Aen.*4.495-507 for three reasons. The argument for all three reasons rests in the abovementioned two key scenes that point to Aeneas exchanging his sword for a richly decorated sword and a Tyrian garment. Heinze argues that the sword in Dido's bedchamber is not Aeneas' combat sword firstly, because a sword is not a suitable gift for a lady, secondly because it is unlikely that Aeneas would surrender the unmistakable symbol that identifies him as a warrior, and thirdly because there is very little evidence to support the view that a formal handover or exchange did in fact take place.<sup>40</sup>

At this point I would like to pause and examine more closely the arguments surrounding the view that a formal handover or exchange of swords took place between Dido and Aeneas. Evidence for an exchange of swords between Dido and Aeneas is based on four key scenes. The first scene occurs at *Aen.*1.647-655. In this scene Aeneas presents Dido with a number of gifts including, supposedly, a sword. The second scene occurs at *Aen.*4.261-262. In this scene Aeneas is spotted by Mercury wearing a decorated jasper-studded sword. The third scene occurs at *Aen.*4.495-507.

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<sup>40</sup> Heinze (1993: 120) tells us that the two swords are “irreconcilably incompatible for the hypercritical reason that, in one passage, the sword belongs to Aeneas, and, in the other, to Dido, and this leads to the further objection that a sword is not a suitable gift for a lady. It will not have been formally handed over; Aeneas hung up his weapons in their bedchamber at Dido's request (*quaesitum*), a pledge, as it were, of his love – it is difficult to imagine a clearer symbol of the total surrender of a warrior – and received from Dido in return a richly decorated sword and Tyrian garment.”

Here we find a description of a sword that hangs above Dido's bed in her royal bedchamber. The fourth scene of importance occurs as *Aen.*4.664-645. This is the scene of Dido's death in which the sword is described as a gift (part of the *munera*) that was not intended for the purpose of killing Dido.

The argument for a handover or exchange looks as follows: Dido is described as killing herself with a sword that is a gift not intended for that purpose (*Aen.*646-647). Aeneas is spotted wearing a decorated sword (*Aen.*4.261-262). Both figures have swords in their possession which they did not appear to have in their possession before. The logical explanation for this occurrence must be that an exchange took place. We know that Aeneas presents Dido with gifts (*Aen.*1.647-655). Based on the reciprocal gift giving tradition that exists between guest and host, Dido and Aeneas have presented each other with the gift of swords at this point. This explains an exchange of swords and the descriptions at *Aen.*4.261-262 and *Aen.*4.646-647. It also accounts for the description of the sword that hangs above Dido's bed in her royal bedchamber at *Aen.*4.495-507.

Bradley (1958:235), in support of the notion, points out that "this sword [that occurs at *Aen.*4.261] is introduced in a context which strongly suggests that it was a gift from Dido, and its ornateness *stellatus iaspide fulva* supports this suggestion." Bradley also sums up the findings of Pease and Austin when he says that "Austin appears to accept that this sword is a gift; Pease admits the probability that it is 'a present from Dido in exchange for one given by him to her.' For the purposes of my thesis I will investigate the interpretive possibilities of the role of the sword in Dido's death scene from the viewpoint that an exchange did take place, as well as from the viewpoint that it did not. In the next section of my thesis I would like to look at scholarship on particular references to the sword with a view to highlighting a number of very important ways in which it can be understood to play a role in the interpretation of Dido and Dido's death.



### 3.3 *The role of swords in descriptions of Dido and Dido's Death Scene*

I begin by looking at scholarship on the imagery of wounds. The imagery of the wound from which Dido suffers plays a fairly important role in scholarship on the *Aeneid*. Wound imagery occurs most prominently at *Aen.*4.1-2 (the opening lines of book four), at *Aen.*4.66-67 (a description of the injurious force of Dido's love), at *Aen.*4.68-73 (the deer simile), and most significantly, at *Aen.*4.693-705 (the close of book four and the description of Dido's death). In scholarship on the *Aeneid*, the description of wounds has served the following functions:

Wounds play an important role in foreshadowing Dido's death at the close of book four of the *Aeneid*. According to Lyne (1989:180-81) "the love-wound leads to the death-wound, produces it and merges into it. The love-wound already *is* the death-wound, incipiently but inescapably." In other words, the imagery contained in the descriptions of wounds throughout the *Aeneid* and particularly in book four, build up to the inevitability of Dido's death at the close of book four and serves to foreshadow the final fatal wound inflicted with a sword. This is not all. There is another dimension to wound imagery, particularly as it relates to the sword, which is very important.

Moorton (1990:156-157) tells us that "the figurative wound, the initial *vulnus* [*Aen.*4.2], is the invasive onset of passion, including the desire for sexual penetration by the lover, caused in Dido by the *vultus* of Aeneas [*Aen.*4.1-5], which sticks (i.e. stays) in her breast like the sword which will kill her." According to Moorton (1990:164) "Aeneas' sword is like his metaphorical 'sword', his phallus, because it will end her actual life, by lethal insertion into her body, as Aeneas' physical love in the also dangerous penetration of intercourse destroyed her *fama*, tantamount in this

great woman to life itself." I will return to Moorton's observations in chapter four of my thesis in a more detailed discussion of the sword as a symbol of penetration.

The imagery of the wound also plays an important role in establishing sympathy and pity for Dido. Lyne (1989:1221) tells us that "wound imagery easily suggests sympathy. Wounds involve suffering, which we pity." Our understanding of Dido's death at the close of the book four may involve an element of pity for the woman who suffered as a result of her destructive love for Aeneas. Edgeworth (1977: 130) also reaffirms Lyne's observation when he tells us that "Dido's death by the double means of pyre and sword wound represents an externalization of an internal condition."<sup>41</sup> Now I would like to look at the image of wounds in Dido's deer simile.

The deer simile at *Aen.*4.68-73 is an extension or elaboration of the imagery of wounds and wounding in the *Aeneid* and also plays an important role in developing an erotic interpretation of Dido's death scene.<sup>42</sup> According to Lyne (1989:195) "the wound which the hind, figuring Dido, sustains clearly stands for the 'wound' of love. The hunt therefore is the 'hunt' of love (the tracking down of beloved by lover) [while] the shepherd-hunter in this hunt of love must stand for Aeneas." What is particularly interesting about the hunt to which Lyne refers is the significance of the word *nescius* for although the wound Dido sustains is "devastatingly and lethally successful," (Lyne, 1989:196) Aeneas does not intend killing her.

The imagery of wounds can also be extended to include Turnus. Putnam (1999:211) establishes a link between Dido and Turnus based on the opening simile of book

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<sup>41</sup> Edgeworth (1977) investigates the purpose of the seemingly redundant pyre in addition to the sword in Dido's death scene. He maintains that "the detail of the blazing pyre, which seemed to serve no purpose in the poem [the *Aeneid*] has been added to suggest the blazing fall of Carthage" (1977: 132). According to Lyne (1989:172) the wound that Dido suffers is internal because it is psychological: "a psychological wound like love is aptly and comprehensibly described as 'hidden', as 'escaping notice' or 'working stealthily.'"

<sup>42</sup> What I mean by "an erotic interpretation" of Dido's death scene will become clearer in chapter four when I look in some detail at the sword as a symbol of penetration. At this point "an erotic interpretation" of Dido's death scene might be defined as an interpretation of Dido's death based on an analysis of the the physical component of the love that exists between Dido and Aeneas.

twelve (at *Aen.*12.4-8) in which Turnus is described as a lion suffering an internal wound. Putnam goes on to point out that the link between Dido and Turnus is possible for two reasons: firstly both Dido (during the course of book four) and Turnus (in the above simile) suffer from an internal wound, and secondly the setting of the simile at *Aen.*12.4-8 namely on the Punic plains (*Poenorum in arvis*), reminds us of Dido's Carthage.

In conclusion, four important and very useful points emerge from an investigation into the imagery of wounds. Firstly, a series of images of wounds foreshadows Dido's death at the close of book four. Secondly, it enables us to interpret Aeneas' sword as a metaphorical sword – an important point in developing the sword as a symbol of penetration – and serves as a precursor for an interpretation of Dido's death from an erotic perspective. Thirdly, it helps establish a sympathetic view of Dido's death and stirs the reader's pity for Dido at the close of book four. It also helps establish a link between Dido and Turnus.

Up until this point I have only highlighted scholarship on the sword that presents it as an instrument of destruction. Here I introduce an entirely new viewpoint on the sword and consequently how its role may be understood in Dido's death. Based on the argument I will outline below, the sword may be interpreted as the instrument that frees Dido as well as Aeneas, and consequently it will be possible to see the sword as an instrument both of destruction as well as an agent of good. I begin with the scene that forms the backbone of this argument.

The scene involving a description of a sword that is pivotal here occurs at *Aen.*4.579-580. In this scene Aeneas uses a sword to sever the ropes of the ships that will bear him and his Trojan contingent away from Carthage and away from Dido. If it is accepted that the sword that Aeneas uses to sever the ropes is the same sword that he receives in the exchange that takes place between Dido and Aeneas in book four

(see my discussion on the ambiguity of the sword above) then a number of interpretations are possible regarding the end of the relationship between Dido and Aeneas.<sup>43</sup> I would like to focus on the interpretation of the description of the sword and its use here that highlights its positive associations. However, I commence with the interpretation that casts the sword in a negative light.

According to Bradley (1958:135) “its [the sword at *Aen.*4.579-580] unforeseen employment as the instrument which sets in motion his flight from Carthage is the counterpart and cause of the equally unforeseen use to which she puts his gift to her.” In other words, the use of the sword at *Aen.*4.579-580, which enables Aeneas to resume his destined role in the establishment of the Trojan people in Italy, is simply another instance that ushers Dido towards her inevitable death. This view of the sword is in line with my earlier observations that cast the sword in a negative light, such as the abovementioned interpretation of the sword in its capacity as an instrument of wounding.

However, the parallel between the use of the sword to free the ships (which means the resumption of the mission for Aeneas and his Trojans) and the use of the sword to end Dido’s life may be viewed in an altogether different manner. In the same way that the severing of the ropes that prevent Aeneas from sailing from Carthage at *Aen.*4.579-580, liberates Aeneas from his prolonged delay in Carthage, Dido’s suicide at the close of book four may be viewed as an act that liberates her from the burden of her suffering. This view is supported by Quinn (1968:149) who says that “it is Aeneas’ sword that will free her [Dido].” According to this view a sword serves as

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<sup>43</sup> Bradley (1958:235) argues that the sword that Aeneas uses to sever the ropes at *Aen.*4.579-580 is that same sword that Aeneas receives from Dido during their exchange at *Aen.*4. X based on two observations. Firstly, Virgil must be credited with the ingenuity in which Dido is called to mind through the sword in Aeneas’ act of severing the ropes of the ships at *Aen.*4.579-580 and the sword that appears on Dido’s wall at *Aen.*4.495. Secondly, an argument for the same sword in both scenes “is aided by the fact that Mercury is present in the earlier passage, while 579-80 are not far re-moved from the account of the vision of Mercury: the later passage cannot but recall the earlier one” (1958:135).

the agent that frees both figures and enables them to resume the course that fate has set for them.

The importance of this alternative view of the sword in scholarship will only fully be realised in my discussion in chapter four of the role of the sword and the way the mission of Aeneas is carried out. However, this view of the sword as a positive instrument in the establishment of the mission opens the way to a more balanced view of its role in Dido's death and will also prove valuable in a more balanced interpretation of Turnus' death at the close of the poem.

In the following paragraphs I look at scholarship on references to the sword that highlight female vulnerability in the *Aeneid*. The scholarship I refer to in this section demonstrates how female figures in epic, and in particular Dido, are considered susceptible to sexual exploitation by male figures in epic and moreover that this exploitation may be interpreted as a form of conquest. I also look at an interpretation of the sword as an instrument in the abovementioned exploitation. However, before I provide an outline of the scholarship on the sword with regards to female vulnerability, it is necessary to make a few brief remarks about the role of women in epic.<sup>44</sup>

The most telling role of women in the *Aeneid* is one that I have already mentioned in chapter two namely, as obstacles to Aeneas' mission. Nugent (1999:251) reiterates this view when he defines Dido's role in the *Aeneid* in the following important way: alongside Juno she is an "obstacle in the path of the inevitable and male-identified mission of Aeneas." Thus, according to Nugent Dido is not simply an obstacle to the mission of Aeneas, she is moreover an obstacle by definition of her sexuality. She is a

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<sup>44</sup> Providing an outline of the role of women in epic is also important later because I will investigate descriptions of the sword in which women other than Dido play an important role. One such scene occurs at *Aen.* 6.523-525 and involves a description of the sword which causes Deiphobus' death where Helen plays a significant role.

woman and it is in her capacity as a woman that she must also be considered an obstacle to the mission of Aeneas.

Gaca refines Nugent's interpretation of the role of women in epic by pointing to the manner in which women stand in relation to men, particularly during warfare. He tells us that the fate of women in warfare is particularly gruesome: "the girls and women are captured for the purpose of sexual and other exploitation" (2008:149). Indeed the subjugation of women and children is a normal and indeed necessary part of epic warfare. Moreover, the sexual exploitation of women and children is also considered part of the act of conquest. The idea of "conquest" is particularly striking in view of Aeneas' mission and I will return to it in chapter four of my thesis when I look at interpretations of the role of the sword in Dido's death in relation to the mission of Aeneas where conquest features prominently.

Up to this point I have shown how women in epic may be defined as vulnerable to exploitation by male figures in the epic. It now remains for me to show how this relates to the sword in Dido's death scene. In order to do this I make use of the work of Keith (2000: 83) who points to "a 'natural' hierarchy of gender that constructs the female body as vulnerable to penetration by the male." She also goes on to say that during Dido's death scene "the poet [Virgil] emphasises the queen's mad desire for death and conflates this desire with her sexual passion for Aeneas in Dido's action of grasping her lover's sword [*ensemque recludit* at *Aen.4.647-664*]" (2000:115). The link that Keith establishes between female vulnerability and the act of penetration is very important and will be discussed in more detail in chapter four.

However, there remains a number of loose ends. Although it is possible and indeed convenient to regard Dido as an obstacle to the mission of Aeneas, there are arguments against this view. Dido is also considered an opponent based on her sexuality. Sexuality and gender provides an entirely new perspective to the role of

women in epic and has interesting ramifications for the role of the sword in Dido's death at the close of book four. This brings us to an interpretation of Dido's death from an erotic perspective, which I will only discuss in detail in chapter four. However, I would like to look at it only very cursorily now.

I begin with Keith's interpretation of Dido's death scene and the reason for her death which, she maintains, is very closely related to the mission of Aeneas. She tells us that "the queen must die for her sexual and social transgressions, but also she must die so that the man may live" (2000:115). She goes on to say that "the death of Dido thus emerges as a requirement for Aeneas' foundation of the Roman cultural order" (2000:115). However, the description of the sword at Dido's death can also be linked to Aeneas' mission in another significant way that involves reference to the erotic. Gibson (1999:184) highlights the fact that "the erotic relationship between Dido and Aeneas in Book 4 of the Aeneid evolves out of the *hospitium* relationship established between them in Book 1."<sup>45</sup> He goes on to say that "the return [for Dido's hospitality] which he [Aeneas] actually made was diametrically opposed to a proper return, and consisted of a sword and a reason for Dido to kill herself with it" (1999:184).

There is yet another dimension, also based on the erotic interpretation of Dido's death that deserves special mention in this section. Spence (1999:91) points to the historical enmity between Troy and Carthage, prefigured in Dido and Aeneas, when she says that "the destruction of a city by a city bears little pathos compared to the destruction of a woman by a man."

The works of Gibson and Spence both highlight the significance of gender in understanding the role of swords in Dido's death scene. According to Gibson, Dido

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<sup>45</sup> Gibson (1999:186) brings our attention to the fact that "there is something profoundly disturbing about the very existence of a *hospitium* relationship between Dido and Aeneas." He tells us that "the future enmity of Rome and Carthage, the Roman conception of *Punica fides*, and the historic enmity between Aeneas' mother and Dido's father, Venus and Belus (1.621 f.), all give grounds for disquiet here."

must die so that Aeneas, the male epic figure, may live. For Spence Dido's death must be interpreted to be the death of a woman at the hand of a man. Both of these interpretations of Dido's death bring us closer to an interpretation of Dido's death from an erotic perspective.

In the next part of this chapter I look at scholarship on references to the sword that allude to an act of sexual penetration. This will lead to a discussion of Dido's death from an erotic perspective. The scholarship I refer to in this section demonstrates two distinct interpretations of the sword in Dido's death scene: firstly that it is a love gift not meant to prove fatal to Dido and secondly, that it was intended to end her life. Scholarship in this section also shows how Aeneas' sexual penetration of Dido foreshadows the destruction of Carthage.<sup>46</sup> I begin by pointing out the scenes that involve sexual penetration that are relevant to my thesis.

There are two scenes of penetration in book four of the *Aeneid* which involve Dido. The first is Aeneas' sexual penetration of Dido which occurs in the cave where they consummate their sham marriage during the hunt at *Aen.*4.160-172.<sup>47</sup> Here, both Venus and Juno play an instrumental role in bringing the two leaders together. The second scene of penetration of Dido occurs at the close of book four, this time with a sword. It is worth noting that there is no sword in the first scene, at *Aen.*4.160-172. However, I pointed out earlier (during my discussion on the imagery of wounds) that there is a connection between Aeneas' sexual penetration of Dido and her destruction by the sword.

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<sup>46</sup> Farron points to two scenes that link Dido's death with the destruction of Carthage: "in 4. 682-3 Anna says that by her suicide Dido has destroyed Carthage. In 4. 669-71 Vergil says of the shrieks and wailing at Dido's death that it was as if 'all Carthage or ancient Tyre were falling before an intruding enemy and furious flames were rolling through the houses and temples'" (1980:39).

<sup>47</sup> Although there is no indication in the text that Dido and Aeneas consummated their sham marriage, a number of scholars accept that it did happen: see Abad (2003:7).



Moorton (1990:1955) argues that Dido's latent sexual needs (the result of her prolonged abstinence owing to her oath to remain chaste to her first husband, Sychaeus) together with her propensity to *furor*, lead to her death at the close of book four. In this way Moorton (1990:158) is able to refer to Aeneas' sexual penetration of Dido as "Aeneas' erotic impact on Dido [that] will prove fatal." He has the following to say about Aeneas: "as a warrior whose mother is the goddess of love, Aeneas personifies the conflicting yet kindred themes of desire and destruction in a way ideally suited to the fate Vergil crafts for Dido, a queen whose suppressed sexual needs and latent capacity for the *ira* which characterizes her patroness Juno make her only too apt to enact it" (Moorton, 1990:155).

An interpretation of Dido's death from an erotic perspective means the following: Firstly, that Dido's death (her physical penetration with the sword at *Aen.*663-647) is prefigured in her sexual penetration by Aeneas in the cave, and we must assume, in Dido's bedchamber during Aeneas' stay in Carthage; secondly, that Dido's death must be interpreted as at least partly due to her gender (according to Gibson and Spence); thirdly, that Dido's death is also the result of a desire to be sexually penetrated by Aeneas.

At this point two interpretations of the sword in Dido's death scene are possible. Firstly, it is possible to interpret the sword as a "love gift," which "given in love will prove to be lethal to Dido, as its analogue the penis given in love did before" (Moorton, 1990:162). This interpretation seems to be in line with the idea of Aeneas as the *pastor nescius*, because although he is unaware of the damage he has done, it still results in death. The second interpretation of Dido's death scene now made possible is that Aeneas intended for his sword to be used to kill Dido. According to Moorton (1990:162) "Aeneas' phallus earlier imposed on Dido in her *thalamus* that death sentence which his sword, with her cooperation, will execute."

The next section focuses on the decorated sword of Aeneas at *Aen.*4.261. Here Mercury meets Aeneas in Carthage at Jupiter's insistence with the view to recalling him back to his mission. Virgil provides us with a description of Aeneas as Mercury finds him: he stands on top of the unfinished walls of Carthage decked out in Carthaginian accoutrements, including a fine ornamental sword. Based on the scholarship to which I refer in this section, I would like to highlight three views regarding the description of the sword that will be very important. Firstly that the decorative sword paints a picture of Aeneas as poorly equipped to carry out his mission, secondly that the description of the sword makes Aeneas out to be subservient to Dido, and finally, that the description of the sword assimilates to Aeneas the unwarlike and thus undesirable quality of softness or femininity.

I begin by looking at scholarship on the description of the sword at *Aen.*4.261 that will enable me to show that Aeneas is poorly equipped to carry out his mission. According to Gross (2004:141) "Dido selects his [Aeneas'] wardrobe, for he wears a deluxe, jewel-studded sword (*stellatus iaspide fulva*, glittering with tawny jasper) along with the mantle interwoven with gold and dyed with Tyrian purple." Gross points out that Dido "selects" Aeneas' wardrobe. While this act may seem harmless, it casts him in a particularly poor light with regards to his mission. Gross goes on to say that Aeneas' wardrobe has "altered his identity, transforming him [Aeneas] from Trojan to Carthaginian" (2004:141).

What strikes me as particularly interesting in the description of the sword at *Aen.*4.261 – as pointed out by Gross – is that it is uncharacteristically unsuited for battle. It appears to be an ornamental sword primarily intended for show or decoration. The description of the sword as 'deluxe' leads to a number of interesting interpretations that I will look at in more detail in chapter four of my thesis. However, the most significant aspect of the sword highlighted by the word "deluxe" is that it paints a picture of a hero poorly equipped to carry out the mission with

which he is charged and particularly that part of the mission defined by battling down the proud (see chapter two).

The decorated sword at *Aen.*261 can also be linked to Cleopatra through its description as an item of luxury. According to Boyle (1999:152) “the *luxuria* of Dido, Cleopatra, and Antony are implicitly condemned as non-Roman and antithetic to the establishment of a moral, civilised community.” The link established here between Dido, Cleopatra, and Aeneas points to the gift sword of Aeneas as unsuited to a hero whose mission is the establishment of Rome.

There is a second aspect of the description of the sword that Gross brings to our attention when he refers to the sword at *Aen.*4.261 as “selected by Dido.” Gross’ observation is significant because it makes the sword out to be the property of Dido, and consequently forces us to see Aeneas as the property of Dido.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, this interpretation of the sword makes Aeneas out to be subservient to Dido. Both the view that Aeneas is Dido’s possession as well as Aeneas’ subservience to Dido will be particularly important in chapter four of my thesis when I revisit the role of the sword in Dido’s death with the view to considering who is responsible for her death at the close of book four.

There is another interpretation of the description of the sword at *Aen.*4.261 that is also important. This is the view that the sword attributes to Aeneas qualities of softness or femininity improper or unsuited to a man and a warrior.<sup>49</sup> As mentioned earlier in this section, the description of the sword as *stellatus iaspide fulva* makes it

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<sup>48</sup> The idea of Aeneas as Dido’s property is particularly striking here because it is a reversal of the norm in epic. According to Roisman (2006:2) “in the environment of the *Iliad*, women are possessions, to be bartered or fought over” and furthermore “the *Iliad* presents a world in which women are property, to be taken, traded, quarrelled over” (2006:2).

<sup>49</sup> Gaca (2008:157) supports this when he points out that – based on an analysis of the Homeric warrior-hero – “warriors often impute incompetence and cowardice to fighters by likening them to unwarlike women and children.”

plain that the sword is not intended for battle. Together with the clothes that Aeneas is described as wearing namely, *murice laena / demissa ex umeris*, there can be no doubt that Virgil paints a picture of a man who has been robbed of his masculinity as well as his title of epic warrior.

### ***3.4 The role of the sword in descriptions of Turnus and Turnus' death scene***

In this section of my thesis I aim to provide an outline of scholarship on the role of the sword in descriptions of Turnus and the scene of Turnus' death. Firstly, I look at the references to the sword that involve its interpretation as an instrument of revenge. Related to this interpretation of the description of the sword in scholarship is the view that it comes to represent barbarism in the *Aeneid*. Finally, I look at scholarship on the sword that points to its interpretation as a literal tool of founding – a destructive instrument that enables Aeneas to establish Rome in Italy through violence. I begin by looking scholarship on the sword that involves its interpretation as an instrument of revenge.

In chapter four of my thesis I provide an outline of the scholarship on the reasons for Turnus' death. One of the reasons I mention is that he is killed for his transgression of killing Pallas at *Aen.*10.479-489. Viewed in this way, the sword may be regarded as an instrument for exacting revenge.<sup>50</sup> I would like to look at this interpretation of the sword in a little more detail now. I begin by plotting the course of Aeneas' path to ultimate revenge. It is important for me to do this because the manner of Aeneas' conduct also tells us a great deal about the manner in which the mission is carried out. This plays an important part in my analysis in chapter four.

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<sup>50</sup> This is not the only way in which the sword may come to be regarded as an instrument of revenge. In his analysis of the scene in which Aeneas is wounded by an arrow at *Aen.*12.856-859, Putnam interprets the arrow as an instrument of the gods' wrath.

Aeneas' revenge is not limited to killing Turnus at the close of the poem. It commences shortly after Pallas' death. I begin by looking briefly at the sequence of events that culminate in the penultimate act of revenge. Gross (2004:146) provides a succinct outline of the order of events subsequent to Pallas' death that demonstrate Aeneas' path of revenge. He tells us that "inflamed by the young man's fate and distraught because of the pledge he made to Evander to protect his son (10. 515-17), Aeneas rages over the battlefield in hopes of killing Turnus. Not finding his adversary, he captures eight soldiers whom he apparently plans to kill and burn on Pallas' pyre" (2004:146). Then, in the final lines of the poem, Aeneas kills Turnus and his spirit disappears into the Underworld.

Malan (1993:32) establishes a sound link between Aeneas' acts of revenge outlined in Gross above and the arms that he uses in carrying out these acts. She tells us that Aeneas has a "total inability to exhibit *pietas* when he is armed and in a position of power." According to Malan, we should read each of Aeneas' acts outlined above – Aeneas raging on the battlefield, his savage sacrifice of eight soldiers on Pallas' pyre and the killing of Turnus – as framed by the weaponry that Aeneas wields in these scenes. According to this view weaponry serves as a tool that empowers Aeneas to carry out his acts of revenge and in so doing, distances him from the limitations imposed on him in carrying out his mission.

Malan's interpretation of the sword as an instrument of revenge is closely related to an observation about the sword as barbaric or representative of barbarism. I look at this in more detail in the next section.

I make a distinction between the sword as representative of revenge on the one hand and of barbarism on the other on the following grounds. It is possible for Aeneas to exact revenge in a manner that is consistent with the limitations imposed on him in

carrying out his mission. However, this is not the case in Aeneas' chosen path of revenge as outlined by Gross above. If revenge is simply a matter of killing Pallas, then Aeneas could have done it – or Virgil could have Aeneas do it – without recourse to the excessive violence that precedes it, particularly the slaughtering of the eight victims. The violence that precedes the killing of Turnus makes it necessary to distinguish between the sword simply as an instrument of revenge and the sword as a symbol of barbarism.

Putnam adds this new dimension to our understanding of the sword as an instrument of revenge by reference to the work of two of Virgil's contemporaries, Ovid in *Met.*14.574 and Horace in *Ep.*1.2.7., both of whom regard the Trojans as barbarians fighting the Italians in the Aeneid. Based on the works of these two poets Putnam (2001:333-4) refers to the sword with which Aeneas kills Turnus in the final duel as barbaric. But, it is Putnam's conclusion based on his observation above in which I am most interested. I reproduce it here in full:

"He [Aeneas] is at once both a foreigner and savage from incivility. He is the outsider whom fate has brought from distant parts to found Rome, the impoverished exile who over the course of epic time gains omnipotence. He has also become the insider, the Roman in power, who is likewise both *impius* and *barbarus*, impious for going against his father's ethical advice by killing a suppliant, and cruel in the doing, exiling Turnus to the shades" (Putnam, 2001:334).

The new dimension added to our understanding of the sword as an instrument of revenge allows us to review the manner in which Aeneas carries off his mission. It is now possible to gauge the extent to which Aeneas has adhered to the limitations imposed on him in carrying out the mission.

In the next section I look at another view of the sword in scholarship on Turnus' death. This view is based on an analysis of the word *condere* and aims to establish a link between the act of founding Rome and the physical act of Aeneas' stabbing Turnus with his sword at the close of the poem.

In this section I discuss a view in scholarship that identifies the sword as an instrument of destruction during the process of founding Rome, and consequently casts it in a negative light. I make use of the work of James (1995) who supports a negative view of the sword by linking Aeneas' physical act of stabbing Turnus at the close of the poem with the act of founding Rome.

James (1995:264) makes a link between the act of stabbing Turnus and the process of founding or establishing Rome based on the double meaning of the word *condere* with a view to highlighting the violence and destruction that underpins the act of founding Rome.<sup>51</sup> She tells us that "in linking the slow founding of Rome to the swift stabbing of Turnus, Vergil suggests that the former rests on the latter....thus he shows the violence and fury beneath the founding of Rome" (1995:624).

The view of the sword as an instrument of destruction is particularly important. It supports the earlier two scholarly views that the sword is an instrument of revenge and that the sword represents barbarism. All three of these views work towards illustrating the violence inherent in the process of establishing Rome.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter my main objective was to provide an outline of the scholarship on the role of the sword in interpretations of Dido and her death scene as well as on Turnus

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<sup>51</sup> James (1995: 623) mentions two scenes in which the word *condere* occurs and are relevant. The first occurs at *Aen.*1.5 *dum conderet urbem* and the second at *Aen.*12.950 *ferrum adverso sub pectore condit*.

and his death scene. I have also pointed out the scenes involving the sword that will be relevant for my purposes in this thesis as well as outlined some of the ambiguity surrounding the sword that Dido uses to commit suicide at the close of book four. I will now summarize the major points in each section. I begin by revisiting my findings regarding the ambiguity of the sword.

In the first section of this chapter (3.2) I showed that there is some ambiguity regarding the sword with which Dido commits suicide at the close of book four. This ambiguity results primarily from a supposed exchange that takes place between Dido and Aeneas. In this exchange, Dido is thought to present to Aeneas a decorated jasper-studded sword which is described at *Aen.*4.261. Dido apparently receives from Aeneas a number of gifts, amongst which are a portentous cloak that belonged to Helen and supposedly a sword that belonged to Aeneas – a sword which he had in his possession upon arrival at Carthage, a battle sword – which is also hung up on the wall of her inner chamber and is described at *Aen.*4.495-507.

I indicated that two interpretative possibilities presented itself to us at this juncture. Firstly, the sword that Dido uses to kill herself at *Aen.*4.647-64 is the sword that she obtained from Aeneas during the exchange, the battle sword as opposed to the decorated sword. Alternatively, the sword that Dido uses to commit suicide is not the sword that she obtains from Aeneas during the exchange but a different sword altogether.

In the second section of this chapter (3.3) I discussed the role of swords in descriptions of Dido and the scene of Dido's death. Firstly, I looked at the references to the sword that involve images of wounds. I showed that scholarship on the imagery of wounds indicated a number of important things with regards to the sword, most significantly that wound imagery foreshadows Dido's death and that



this imagery enables us to interpret Aeneas' sword as a metaphorical sword – an important point in developing the sword as a symbol of penetration.

I then indicated that an interpretation of Dido's death from an erotic perspective may be summarised in the following way: Dido's fatal penetration by the sword at *Aen.*4.663-647 is prefigured by Dido's sexual penetration by Aeneas most notably during the cave scene as well as during his stay in Carthage. I also demonstrated that the imagery of wounds helps establish a sympathetic view of Dido's death and stirs the reader's pity for Dido at the close of book four.

In this section I also looked at the description of the sword of Aeneas at *Aen.*4.579-580. Scholarship on the description of the sword in this scene casts it in a positive light with regards to the mission. I indicated that this interpretation opens the way to a more balanced perspective on the role of the sword in Dido's death and will also prove valuable in a more balanced interpretation of Turnus' death at the close of the poem. In this section I also pointed to scholarship on the sword that develops the idea of female vulnerability. The scholarship I referred to here demonstrated how female figures in epic, and in particular Dido, are considered susceptible to sexual exploitation by male figures in epic and moreover that this exploitation may be interpreted as a form of conquest.

Then I looked at scholarship on the decorated sword of Aeneas at *Aen.*4.261. Here I highlighted three views regarding the description of the sword that are important. Firstly, the decorative sword paints a picture of Aeneas as poorly equipped to carry out his mission; secondly the description of the sword makes Aeneas out to be subservient to Dido; and finally, the description of the sword assimilates to Aeneas the unwarlike and thus undesirable quality of softness or femininity.

In the third section of chapter three (3.4) it was my aim to provide an outline of scholarship on the role of the sword in references to Turnus and the scene of Turnus' death. Despite the fact that there is very little scholarship on the role of the sword in descriptions of Turnus and Turnus' death scene, I pointed out three important interpretations of the sword.

Firstly, I looked at the references to the sword that involve its interpretation as an instrument of revenge. I demonstrated that this view of the sword casts it in a particularly negative light with regards to the mission of Aeneas by highlighting the violence that underpins the founding of Rome. I then showed that another interpretation – related to the one just mentioned – comes to represent barbarism in the *Aeneid*. I indicated that this view of the sword also contributes to our understanding of the violence that underpins the founding of Rome.

Finally, I looked at scholarship on the sword that points to its interpretation as a literal tool of founding – a destructive instrument that enables Aeneas to establish Rome in Italy through violence. I indicated that this interpretation of the sword as an instrument of destructive violence is particularly important here because it contrasts so markedly with the idea encapsulated in the act of founding. I also indicated that this interpretation of the sword – like those already mentioned – further contributes to our understanding of the violence that underpins the establishment of the Trojans in Italy.

In the next chapter I aim to bring together the three major strands of my thesis: scholarship regarding the mission of Aeneas, scholarship on the role of references to the sword in the deaths of the figures of Dido and Turnus, and scholarship on the reasons for the deaths of Dido and Turnus. In this way I aim to illuminate parallels between Dido and Turnus' deaths and their respective roles in Aeneas' mission.

## Chapter IV – Aeneas’ mission and Parallels between Dido and Turnus

### 4.1 Introduction

It is my primary aim in this chapter to analyse references to swords in key scenes in the *Aeneid* within the framework of the mission of Aeneas, as outlined in chapter two. During my analysis I will also draw significantly on scholarship on the role of the sword in interpretation of the figures of Dido and Turnus and particularly in the scenes of their deaths. I aim to demonstrate how an analysis of swords in these key scenes contributes to our understanding of the manner in which Dido and Turnus stand in relation to the mission of Aeneas. I also conduct this analysis with the view to adding to the already established ways in which Dido is regarded as an opponent of the mission and to the already established interpretations of Dido’s death at the close of book four and Turnus’ death at the close of the poem.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section (4.2.) is entitled Discussion of Dido’s Death scene, swords and Aeneas’ mission. I preface this section with a concise overview of the scholarship on the reasons for Dido’s death at the close of book four. It is important for me to do this because an analysis of the manner in which Dido stands in relation to the mission of Aeneas, based on an interpretation of swords in a number of key scenes in the *Aeneid*, is incomplete without reference to the reasons for Dido’s death.

The second section of this chapter (4.3.) is entitled Discussion of Turnus’ Death Scene, swords and Aeneas’ mission. I also preface this section with a concise discussion of the reasons for Turnus’ death at the close of the poem. This is

important because interpretation of the reasons for Turnus' death provide essential groundwork for an analysis and discussion of the manner in which Turnus stands in relation to the mission of Aeneas, based on interpretations of the role of the sword in Turnus' death scene.

In the third section of this chapter (4.4.), entitled Parallels between Dido and Turnus, I will investigate certain parallels and highlight major differences between the figures of Dido and Turnus and the manner of their opposition to the mission of Aeneas based on an analysis of the role of swords in the descriptions of their deaths.

#### ***4.2 Discussion of Dido's Death scene, swords and Aeneas' mission***

In this section I analyse in more detail scenes involving references to swords which relate to Dido and most significantly the description of the sword in Dido's death scene. My aim in this section is to show that an analysis of these scenes contributes to our understanding of Dido's relation to the mission of Aeneas as outlined in chapter two as well as the reasons for her death outlined at the start of this chapter.

I begin by briefly discussing the reasons for Dido's death at the close of book four. It is not my intention at this point to argue either for or against different interpretations of the reasons for Dido's death. However, these reasons are important in this section of my thesis because they provide an essential background for an analysis of the sword and the role it plays in Dido's death with regards to the mission of Aeneas.

One viewpoint is that Dido committed suicide because she was left with no choice in the matter. Proponents of this viewpoint maintain that Dido, like Turnus, is a puppet of the indifferent and unfeeling gods. According to Camps (1969:31) Dido is merely a

tragic victim of the “conflict between the wills of the higher powers over the destiny of Rome.” Quinn (1968:140) shares Camps’ viewpoint, but adds that “the fact that Dido is the victim of a trick does not exculpate her. For, if the seduction is excusable, the way she lets it develop into a liaison and calls that liaison marriage, careless of how the thing looks to others, is not to be excused.”

Another viewpoint, less prevalent in scholarship, is that Dido committed suicide in a frenzied act of revenge upon Aeneas for his mistreatment of her.<sup>52</sup> This is related to the viewpoint that Dido commits suicide simply because she was frustrated, tired, and utterly in agony with her desperate situation. Lyne (1989:173) points out that “at the heart of the cluster of emotions that presses Dido to suicide is simply the agony of love.” Linked to the notion that Dido’s death results from the agony of love, is Moorton’s observation that Dido’s death is caused by the *furor* of love. This is worth looking at in more detail.

Moorton (1990:154) suggests that the “furor of love” is the compulsion that drives Dido to suicide. This is significant because Turnus is considered to be the embodiment of *furor* in the *Aeneid*, in the extreme. Dido is the final recipient of *furor* in a line of figures in her family that are similarly affected by it. It begins with “the *furor* of greed [that] maddened her brother Pygmalion, the king of Tyre (1.348), who secretly killed Sychaeus for his wealth,” and terminates “as the *furor* of love [that] was to drive Dido to kill herself” (Moorton, 1990:154).

Another reason commonly adduced for Dido’s death is that she breaks her vow to remain chaste to her first husband, Sychaeus.<sup>53</sup> We learn of Dido’s vow to Sychaeus

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<sup>52</sup> According to Quinn (1968:147) “she [Dido] was aiming at revenge, or vindication, as well as suicide.”

<sup>53</sup> Moorton (1990:154) reminds us that “in memory of their marriage and as a testimony of her strong affection for Sychaeus – which was never to leave her entirely – Dido vowed that she would thenceforth remain chaste, a woman of one husband, *univira* (4.15ff.)”

at *Aen.*4.15. Dido's death results not so much as a punishment for breaking her vow to Sychaeus, as from the shame it causes her.

In a rather complex argument Dido is also considered a sacrificial victim necessary for the establishment of Rome. According to Parker (2004:582) Dido's death, and particularly, the act of penetration that kills her (which resonates with Aeneas' sword) is the result of "a necessary act of collective violence distilled into a singular aggressor (Aeneas) aimed at purification and absolution." Dido's death is all the more poignant, according to this interpretation, because Dido commits suicide, taking the responsibility of ending her life into her own hands. I will discuss this in more detail later in this chapter.

It is also worth mentioning at this point that there are a number of scholars that maintain Aeneas has no direct role to play in Dido's death. According to Putnam (1965:179) "Dido's suicide can be imputed to him [Aeneas] only secondarily," while Keith (2000:114) states that "the poet attributes to Dido a desire for death before her time and thereby exculpates Aeneas from responsibility for it."<sup>54</sup> I would like to come back to this point later in this chapter when I look briefly at Aeneas' culpability in Dido's death and what this tells us about Dido in relation to the mission of Aeneas.

Ultimately, there is no single 'correct' explanation that outlines the reason or reasons for Dido's suicide. Quinn (1968:147) sums it up best when he points out that "there is no clear clue to her [Dido's] intentions in 600-6 – this is the wild raging of a frenzied woman." I now conduct my own analysis of key scenes of references to swords in the *Aeneid* related to the figure of Dido. At this point it is worth mentioning perhaps

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<sup>54</sup> Keith's (2000:114) argument that Dido desires her own death is based on two observations. Firstly, on the repetition of Dido's own words that refer to her death namely *moritura* (*Aen.*4.308, 519, 406), *moribunda* (*Aen.*4.323) and secondly to scenes that "evoke the certainty of her approaching death in her pleas to Aeneas (*Aen.*4.318, 385-7,436).

that I do not analyse these scenes chronologically, but rather in a manner that enables my argument to flow easily. I begin by looking at the sword that Dido uses to commit suicide.

The most compelling aspect of the description of the sword in the scene of Dido's death is that it is not held by Aeneas when it enters Dido's flesh. There is an entire process, presented to the reader in the form of a series of calculated steps, which leads up to the final act in which Dido kills herself with a sword, but Aeneas is tellingly absent from them. In fact, Dido, entranced and ghost-like in her actions as the events unfold leading up to her fateful stabbing, is herself also surprisingly uninvolved in the physical preparations that result in her death. For me, the process that leads to Dido's death begins with Dido approaching her sister Anna to commission her services for building her funeral pyre at *Aen.*4.494-497:

*tu secreta pyram tecto interiore sub auras  
erige, et arma viri thalamo quae fixa reliquit  
impius exuviasque lectumque iugalem,  
quo perii, super imponas*

“Now go,  
Build me a pyre in secret, deep inside our courtyard  
under the open sky. Pile it high with his arms-  
he left them hanging within our bridal chamber-

Instead of carrying out the material preparations for her own death, Dido is a bystander. She relies on Anna to prepare the funeral pyre, to erect it in the inner chamber of her palace, to remove from the wall of her bedchamber the sword that hangs suspended over the bed, and pile on top of the pyre that she hastily constructs the mementoes that remind her of Aeneas and her spurned love. Dido is going

through an entirely different set of motions, none of them geared towards the physical aspects that culminate in her death at the end of book four. She tends to the ritual and religious preparations for her death. For instance, at *Aen.*4.520-521 she prays to the gods to witness her approaching fate:

*...tum, si quod non aequo foedere amantis  
curae numen habet iustumque memorque, precatur.*

And then to any Power above, mindful, evenhanded,  
who watches over lovers bound by unequal passion,  
Dido says her prayers.

Dido's absence from the physical and material preparations for her death is telling because I believe it sheds some light on the question of the responsibility for Dido's death. Firstly, although Dido issues the order for her funeral pyre to be built, it is Anna that constructs it. Secondly, although Dido plunges the sword into her own breast, it is very likely that the sword that she uses belongs to Aeneas, making Aeneas at least partly responsible for her death and in this way shifting some of the responsibility for Dido's death from her own shoulders. In the same way that Dido is partly responsible for erecting the pyre upon which she will die (Dido issues the order for its construction), Aeneas is partly responsible for Dido's death (she uses Aeneas' sword).

There is also something particularly compelling about the location in which the description of the sword Dido uses to commit suicide takes place, namely in the interior chambers of her palace. Dido commits suicide on top of a pyre that is erected in the inner chambers of her palace (*Aen.*4.495: *interior sub auras*; *Aen.*4.504: *in sede sub auras*). The word *interiore* and the repetition of *sub auras* which Fagles (2006:145) translates as "deep in the heart of her house" at *Aen.*4.504 are particularly significant



here because they refer to a space that is demarcated as out of sight or hidden from the gaze of the public. Furthermore, this is a space that is not easily penetrated by the male or the male gaze.

The notion of the interior or a hidden space involving a description of swords may be extended to include a number of other scenes that also include an impenetrable inner space. I pause here to look briefly at these other scenes and their relevance to my thesis. The first scene that I look at occurs in book six of the *Aeneid* where Aeneas speaks to the slain warrior Deiphobus during his visit to the Underworld at *Aen.*6.512-527 and learns of Helen's role in Deiphobus' death. I quote the scene here in full:

*sed me fata mea et scelus exitiale Lacaenae  
his mersere malis; illa haec monimenta reliquit.  
namque ut supremam falsa inter gaudia noctem  
egerimus, nosti : et nimium meminisse necesse est.  
cum fatalis equus saltu super ardua venit  
Pergama et armatum peditem gravis attulit alvo,  
illa chorum simulans euhantis orgia circum  
ducebat Phrygias ; flammam media ipsa tenebat  
ingentem et summa Danaos ex arce vocabat.  
tum me confectum curis somnoque gravatum  
infelix habuit thalamus, pressitque iactentem  
dulcis et alta quies placidaeque simillima morti.  
egregia interea coniunx arma omnia tectis [my underlining]  
emovet, et fidum capiti subduxerat ensem: [my underlining]  
intra tecta vocat Menelaum et limina pandit,  
scilicet id magnum sperans fore munus amanti,  
et famam extinguere veterum sic posse malorum.*

My own fate and the deadly crimes of the Spartan whore  
 have plunged me in this hell. Look at the souvenirs she left me!  
 and how we spent that last night, lost in deluded joys,  
 you know. Remember it we must, and all too well.  
 When the fatal horse mounted over our steep walls,  
 its weighted belly teeming with infantry in arms –  
 she led the Phrygian women round the city, feigning  
 the orgiastic rites of Bacchus, dancing, shrieking  
 but in their midst she shook her monstrous torch,  
 a flare from the city heights, a signal to the Greeks.  
 While I in our cursed bridal chamber, there I lay,  
 bone-weary with anguish, buried deep in sleep,  
 peaceful, sweet, like the peace of death itself.  
 And all the while that matchless wife of mine  
 is removing all my weapons from the house, [my underlining]  
 even slipping my trusty sword from under my pillow. [my underlining]  
 She calls Menelaus in and flings the doors wide open,  
 hoping no doubt by this grand gift to him, her lover,  
 to wipe the slate clean of her former wicked ways.

There are a number of parallels between the scene of Deiphobus' death and the scene of Dido's death and the preparations and events leading up to her death. Firstly, the words *monimenta reliquit* (*Aen.*6.512) remind us of the *viri monimenta* (*Aen.*4.498) that Dido requests Anna to destroy on top of the funeral pyre she builds for her. The *fatalis equus* (*Aen.*6.515) takes us back to book two of the *Aeneid* when Aeneas recounts Troy's fateful night and the Trojan horse that fatefully penetrates the city of Troy. The *munus* (*Aen.*6.526) reminds us of the gift *non hos quaesitum munus in usus* (*Aen.*4.646-647) that Dido uses to take her life but which was not intended for that

purpose. I will look at each of these parallels in some detail during my analysis. I begin by looking at the significance of location.

Similar to the location in which the sword of Aeneas is thought to be found – hanging on the wall of Dido’s bedchamber (*Aen.*4.495: *thalamo*) – is the *thalamus* (*Aen.*6.521) that Deiphobus refers to in the description of his last night as the location of his betrayal and subsequent death. This is also an interior space, demarcated as such by Virgil’s choice of word: *thalamus*, and is also delineated as an impenetrable space. Helen’s betrayal of Deiphobus is particularly striking because it occurs in their bedchamber. Helen’s action at this point may also be considered a transgression. This is something that I now investigate further.

Helen’s involvement in Deiphobus’ death is considered to be a transgression for a female in a male-dominated area: warfare.<sup>55</sup> According to Keith (2000:66) Helen is not only “associated with the outbreak of the war [in Latium]” and considered to be “the author of his [Deiphobus’] death for she concealed his weapons while he slept” but is also credited with having a “career of sexual transgression troped in the socially transgressive action of a militaristic opening of one husband’s house to another” and in so doing she “violates the ‘traditional territorial assignments of both gender and war.’”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Helen is not the only female in the *Aeneid* that transgresses against the male-dominated area of warfare. Keith (2000) also mentions the warrior princess Penthesilea who appears on the walls of the temple of Juno, as well as the warrior maiden Camilla who fights alongside the Trojans during the war in Latium. Helen deserves special mention because of the mention of weaponry, and more specifically the sword, in the scene where Deiphobus recounts to Aeneas the scene of his death on Troy’s final night.

<sup>56</sup> Gibson (1999:194) also establishes an important connection between Helen and Dido through the ominous gifts presented to Dido by Aeneas subsequent to his landfall at Carthage at *Aen.*1.650. Gibson argues that Virgil deliberately breaks with the *hospitium* convention of gift-giving when Aeneas (the guest) presents Dido (the host) with an ominous gift of Helen’s cloak: “one obvious motivation for the breaking of convention must be the desire on Vergil’s part to introduce bad omens for the relationship between Aeneas and Dido. In particular the gift of Helen’s dress (1.650ff. *ornatus Argivae Helenae, quos illa Mycenis,/ Pergama cum peteret inconcessosque hymenaeos,/ extulerat*) appears sinister in the light of subsequent events” (1999:194).

Keith (2000:114) also points to Dido's death as penalty for her sexual transgression.<sup>57</sup> She establishes this connection through the location where Aeneas' arms are kept namely, her bedchamber. Lloyd (1972:129) mentions the location of the bedchamber in conjunction with the word *superbus*, a word itself closely related to the mission of Aeneas and frequently associated with anti-Trojan figures in the Aeneid.<sup>58</sup> He maintains that this association foreshadows Dido's death at the close of book four.

Lyne (1989:22) establishes a connection between Helen and Dido based on the sword (*ensem*), but primarily the clothes (*Iliacis vestis*) which make up the spoils (*exuviae*) from Dido's bedroom at *Aen.*4.646-48 that Dido places on top her funeral pyre. The *Iliacis vestis* referred to here are clothes that belonged to Helen. They are also gifts that were snatched from Troy during its final hours (*Aen.*1.647) and presented to Dido during the gift exchange that occurs at *Aen.*4.261. These clothes are considered inauspicious because they once belonged to Helen.<sup>59</sup> I would like to look at Lyne's argument in a little more detail.

Lyne has established a connection between Dido and Helen based on an ominous exchange which results in Aeneas presenting Dido with the gift of Helen's clothing. In addition to Helen's clothing Dido also receives a sword from Aeneas. According to Lyne this is the sword that Dido uses to take her life. Lyne also points out, by reference to the location where the gifts are displayed namely, above her marriage bed in the marriage chamber (at *Aen.*4.494-97), that Dido is "the possessor of the

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<sup>57</sup> Keith (2000:114) tells us that "he [Virgil] represents Dido constructing her funeral pyre in such a way that she replicates the marriage-bed she shared with Aeneas (*super exuvias ensemque relictum / effigiemque toro locat*, 4.507-8), so as to confirm the androcentric Roman requirement that she pays for a sexual transgression identified as exclusively hers."

<sup>58</sup> According to Lloyd (1972: 129) "the characterization of Dido's palace and private chambers twice in Book I (639, 697) as "superb" in their royal purple and gold can be seen as foreshadowing not only Dido's end but that of Carthage itself."

<sup>59</sup> According to Lyne (1989:22) "Aeneas has given Dido a sword as a present; he has also given her some clothes, which, as the one-time property of Helen, some might regard as inauspicious, not to say tactless, gifts." Gross (2004:140-1) reiterates Lyne's observation about the inauspicious mantle when she says that "the mantle recalls Helen's first marriage and her departure for Troy to seek an illegitimate union (*inconcossosque hymenaeos* 651). As an amatory gift to Dido, the mantle sadly foreshadows the tragic outcome of the relationship between the two lovers."

proceeds of erotic victory" (1989:23). He goes on to say that "she [Dido] is not the victor in love's war, but the vanquished, the catastrophically vanquished" (1989:23).

Men and women play very different roles with regards to the mission in the *Aeneid*. According to Keith (2000:77) "the men who wage war in the *Aeneid* emerge as the proponents of peace, while the advocacy of war is displaced onto a series of militant women. The "warriors" to which Keith refers are the slain Deiphobus and "militant women" by which he means Helen, Penthesilea, and the warrior-maiden Camilla.

According to Nugent (1999:260) "the great female characters of the *Aeneid* refuse, in various ways, their traditional roles of passivity, domesticity, and subordination; they refuse the mission of Rome." Monti (1981:76) tells us that "In Book 4 Aeneas' wants and desires take him a step beyond the neglect of the responsibilities incumbent on him. By acquiescing in Dido's construction of their relationship as marriage and by assuming actively the role of consort and partner in royal power, Aeneas entangles himself in a web of obligations from which he cannot be extricated with impunity by the fiat of a god. He is wrong, but not for leaving Carthage."

Roisman (2006:18) suggests the possibility that Helen is a figure governed by strong sexual cravings which she finds extremely hard to resist. Her observation of Helen is based on a scene at *Il.3.392* in which the goddess Aphrodite attempts to entice Helen to Paris' bedchamber in Troy. The part of Roisman's observation that I would like to focus on is her suggestion that Helen might succumb to Paris' attractions precisely because he is described in "richly sensuous terms: sitting or reclining on his ornamental couch and 'gleaming in beauty and [fine] clothes'" (2006:18). The reference to luxurious clothes takes us back to chapter three and the various interpretations in scholarship of the description of an ornamental sword that Mercury spots Aeneas wearing at *Aen.4.261-262*.

In chapter three I looked at the work of Basto who interprets the description of the arms of Aeneas on the wall of Dido's bedchamber at *Aen.*4.495-507 as symbolic of Aeneas' retirement from combat. I would like to suggest that Helen's betrayal of Deiphobus by taking his sword from under his pillow is similar to Dido's act of hanging Aeneas' arms on the wall of her bedchamber. In both cases a female figure prevents a male figure from getting to his arms. The fact that the arms of Aeneas are hung on a wall instead of in his possession, means that Aeneas is deprived of the means by which to defend himself, and moreover that the reader is less likely to identify Aeneas as a warrior.

Helen's act of stealing Deiphobus' sword may also be regarded as an act of emasculation. By stealing Deiphobus' sword Helen not only deprives Deiphobus of his warrior status, but also diminishes his masculinity in the eyes of the reader. The sword may be regarded as a symbol of masculinity (see chapter three) as well as a symbol for the phallus (chapter three). Helen deliberately removes Deiphobus' sword from beneath his pillow and in so doing becomes the agent of his destruction. Her act of cunning puts Deiphobus in a position where he is unable to engage in combat when Menelaus bursts through the doors of his bedchamber.

Here I pause to revisit the significance of the bedchamber in the scene of Deiphobus' death. For this I need to look in more detail at the interpretation of the sword as a symbol for the phallus. Helen's act of removing the sword of her Trojan husband is tantamount to emasculation in that it may be regarded as a literal act of rendering him powerless to defend himself in a situation of immediate physical danger. According to an erotic interpretation of this scene, Helen's act may be seen equally as significantly as rendering Deiphobus impotent. In other words, Helen robs Deiphobus of his phallus (in addition to his masculinity) and in so doing also makes him sexually subservient to her.

Helen, like Dido who replaces Aeneas' warrior sword with an ornamental sword during the exchange at *Aen.*4.261, also replaces the warrior Deiphobus' sword with something that renders this male warrior subservient to a female character while also assimilating to Deiphobus the unfavourable characteristics of femininity and softness (see chapter three). However, unlike Aeneas who stays on in Carthage wearing the luxurious clothes that Dido presents to him in addition to the jasper-studded sword, Deiphobus dies a death that the reader finds deplorable. The reader is actually permitted to sympathise with Deiphobus and the cruelty and injustice of his death whereas Virgil presents Aeneas' complacency with the appearance he assumes in Carthage as wholly unacceptable.

The scene of Deiphobus' death takes place in a Trojan bedchamber on Troy's final night. The bedchamber is a location that has sexual connotations because it is here where the marriage is consummated. The royal bedchamber also holds a special significance in book four of the *Aeneid* because it is here where Dido instructs Anna to erect a pyre in order for her to take her life. The bedchamber, we must assume, is also where Dido and Aeneas spend a lot of their time together during Aeneas' stay in Carthage. The strength of Aeneas' sexual desire for Dido is also considered partly the reason for Aeneas' inability to resume his mission and carry out the duty of establishing the Roman people in Carthage.

Dido's sexual hold over Aeneas in Carthage – that renders Aeneas powerless – is not altogether unlike the debilitating nature of the sexual power that Helen has over men. Dido manages to retain Aeneas in Carthage by the blinding sexual nature of their love and in this way prevents Aeneas from fulfilling his mission. By depicting Deiphobus' death in the bedchamber (as opposed to on the battlefield or while he is fully geared in his battle armour) Virgil, in my opinion, deliberately brings our attention to the sexual dimensions of the circumstances surrounding his death.

At this point I also refer to the notion (see chapter three) that the initial *vulnus* in the imagery of wounds in the *Aeneid* is the invasive onset of passion, including Dido's sexual desire for penetration by Aeneas. Dido's desire to be penetrated by Aeneas is on the foreground in the scene in book four of the *Aeneid* during the storm that interrupts the hunt scene where Dido and Aeneas are thought to consummate their sham marriage in the cave. The importance of the role of the wounds in this interpretation of penetration cannot be overlooked. Dido, who I have already pointed to as the recipient of the love wound (which she desires), is similar to Helen in that both figures rely on their sexual prowess to advance their stations in life.

It is my opinion that the "love wound" (chapter three) that Aeneas inflicts upon Dido in the cave is cleverly reversed in the death wound that results in Deiphobus' death in his bedchamber. I refer to a reversal because the female and male roles are reversed in the scene of Deiphobus' death. This interpretation is possible largely because of the parallel location in which these two scenes take place, namely the bedchamber or an enclosed space; the sexual connotations of this space; and the sexual deviousness of the female figures that are involved. The wound that Deiphobus sustains that ends his life is the direct result of Helen's devious machinations and "the destructive power of eroticism,"<sup>60</sup> in the same way that the act of disarming and refitting Aeneas with garments unsuited to a warrior result in the temporary "death" of Aeneas' commitment to the mission.

Building on the aforementioned discussion of Helen, there remains one more point to be made. This centres on a scene that occurs on Troy's final night described at *Aen.*2.567-576. In this scene, Aeneas comes across Helen cowering behind an altar in Priam's palace:

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<sup>60</sup> The expression "the destructive power of eroticism" is not my own. It comes from Putnam (1999:213). He uses it to describe the effect of the interplay between love (*amor*) and war – the result of *furor* – on Turnus and his bride to be Lavinia.



*Iamque ideo super unus eram, cum limina Vestae  
servantem et tacitam secreta in sede latentem  
Tyndarida aspicio; dant claram incendia lucem  
erranti passimque oculos per cuncta ferenti.  
illa sibi infestos eversa ob Pergama Teucros  
et Danaum poenam et deserti coniugis iras  
praemetuens, Troiae et patriae communis Erynis,  
abdiderat sese atque aris invisā sedebat.  
exarsere ignes animo ; ira cadentem  
ulcisci patriam et sceleratas sumere poenas.*

So at just that moment I was the one man left  
and then I saw her, clinging to Vesta's threshold,  
hiding in silence, tucked away – Helen of Argos.  
Glare of the fires lit my view as I looked down,  
scanning the city left and right, and there she was...  
terrified of the Trojans' hate, now Troy was overpowered,  
terrified of the Greeks' revenge, her deserted husband's rage –  
that universal Fury, a curse to Troy and her native land  
and here she lurked, skulking, a thing of loathing  
cowering at the altar: Helen. Out it flared,  
the fire inside my soul, my rage ablaze to avenge  
our fallen country – pay Helen back, crime for crime.

Aeneas' first and overwhelming desire is to kill Helen. Malan (1993:11) refers to "a terrible urge for vengeance [that] inflamed his desire to kill Helen." He does not, and this is singularly telling. Vengeance takes us back to the role of the sword in Turnus' death as an instrument of wrath. Similarly, it also recalls my earlier observation regarding the sword and the reversal of roles between Aeneas and Turnus according

to which Aeneas fails in his mission because he fails to restrain himself thereby exhibiting *furor* characteristic of Turnus. Through his inability to control his fury Aeneas becomes Turnus. Nonetheless, Aeneas does manage to restrain himself in this scene with Helen.

Vengeance and the inability to restrain one's passions stands directly opposed to the restraint that Aeneas exhibits in his decision not to kill Helen. Aeneas is not powerless to kill her in the physical and literal sense, he is armed and Helen is not. Aeneas restrains himself from killing Helen because he does not believe it the right thing to do. However, Aeneas could not be aware during his moment of hesitation of the terrible cruelty of which Helen had been the orchestrator in arranging Deiphobus' death. Aeneas' hesitation is not weakness. It is a calculated decision and a triumph of reason over passion.

Another scene involving a description of a sword and an interior space occurs in book two of the *Aeneid* where Priam arms himself in the inner chambers of his own palace at the impending onslaught of the Greek army on Troy's fateful night. Here I continue with the line of discussion around impotency and futility, looking in particular at the futility of Priam's act of arming himself and the hopelessness of his defence of Troy. This scene occurs at *Aen.*2.506-511. I quote it here in full:

*Forsitan et Priami fuerint quae fata requiras.  
urbis uti captae casum convulsaque vidit  
limina tectorum et medium in penetralibus hostem,  
arma diu senior desueta trementibus aevo  
circumdat nequiquam umeris et inutile ferrum [my underlining]  
cingitur, ac densos fertur moriturus in hostis.*

"Perhaps you wonder how Priam met his end.

When he saw his city stormed and seized, his gates  
wrenched apart, the enemy camped in his palace depths,  
the old man dons his armor long unused, he clamps it  
round his shoulders shaking with age and, all for nothing,  
straps his useless sword to his hip, then makes [my underlining]  
for the thick of battle, out to meet his death.

Virgil presents Priam's act of arming himself as an act of complete futility. He refers to Priam's sword as *inutile*. Priam stands for all that is good about the city of Troy in its final hours. Priam represents the old order and his death symbolises the inevitable destruction of Troy. Virgil's description of Priam as he dons his armour is a pathetic one, but it is also particularly striking. It reminds us of the superficiality of the jasper-studded sword of Aeneas which he is spotted wearing when Mercury comes down at Jupiter's insistence in order to recall Aeneas back to his mission. This occurs at *Aen.*4.261.

I look now at the two swords– Priam's *ferrum inutile* as well as Aeneas' *stellatus iaspide fulve* – in a little more detail. Both swords are equally ineffectual as weapons of battle. In chapter three I pointed to an interpretation of the decorated sword of Aeneas at *Aen.*4.261 as an item of luxury which associates Aeneas with softness and femininity and assimilates to Aeneas qualities that are equally as unfavourable in an epic warrior as in a future Roman. The armour that Priam is described as wearing in order to defend his kingdom on Troy's final night creates the image of a weak and feeble man, far removed from the model of the male warrior we expect to found the Roman nation. In sum, the description of each of these men, based on the manner of their attire, lends the reader to conclude that they are rendered useless to the challenges of nation building.

This interpretation of the swords of Aeneas as ineffectual is reiterated by Gross (see chapter three) who interprets the sword of Aeneas at *Aen.*4.261 as an item of luxury as opposed to a warrior's weapon and shows that Aeneas is firstly, poorly equipped to carry out his mission; secondly, he appears subservient to Dido; and thirdly, (based on his interpretation of the sword) he attributes the undesirable qualities of softness and femininity to Aeneas. Boyle (see chapter three) also supports this notion of the sword when he interprets the sword of Aeneas at *Aen.*4.261 as an item of *luxuria* and shows how this assimilates to Aeneas unfavourable qualities associated with Cleopatra.

Another scene involving a description of a sword and an impenetrable interior space, doubly significant because it also alludes to sexual penetration, occurs in book eight of the *Aeneid* where Venus seduces Vulcan her husband for the arms that her son Aeneas will need in order to carry out his mission. This scene occurs at *Aen.*8.369-406 and although there is no direct reference to a sword, we must assume that the arms that Venus procures for Aeneas from Vulcan includes a sword with which to do battle in Italy. Vulcan's workshop is the space where Venus seduces Vulcan in order to secure arms for her son, not altogether unlike the cave where the consummation of Aeneas and Dido's love occurs, similarly securing Dido's hold over Aeneas.

Although there is no direct mention either of swords or penetration in either the scene of Venus' seduction of Vulcan or in the scene of the consummation of the sham marriage in the cave, both scenes foreground a dangerous sexual advantage. Aeneas (see chapter three) penetrates Dido sexually during their shared experience in the cave and from that moment, Dido considers Aeneas married to her. In a similar way, Venus seduces Vulcan in the space of his workshop and from that moment Vulcan is bound to Venus and obligated to manufacture arms for Aeneas. The consummation of the sexual act in the cave between Dido and Aeneas puts Dido in a position of

power over Aeneas. Dido has a firm hold on Aeneas, not only through a claim to what she considers to be a legitimate marriage, but also through her sexual ownership of Aeneas.

In chapter three I pointed out that Aeneas' penetration of Dido in the cave prefigures Dido's ultimate penetration and the resulting wound that leads to her death at the close of book four. Dido's sexual hold on Aeneas proves to be as fatal for her as the sword that results from Venus' seduction of Vulcan proves to be for Turnus at the close of the *Aeneid*. In both instances, the sexual act which takes place in the interior space sets in motion a series of events that culminates in a death.

The sword may also be interpreted as a symbol for everything characteristic of the goddess Venus. The sword that is presented to Aeneas at the close of book eight comes to him already loaded with symbolic significance. According to Putnam (1965:137) "the weapons which result from the union [of Venus and Vulcan], even if forged with war's fires, are tempered with much for which Venus is the symbol."<sup>61</sup> I am also able to link the scene of Venus' seduction of Vulcan to the scene of Deiphobus' death by means of reference to the deception that underlies each of these scenes. Venus is not at liberty simply to ask Vulcan for the arms that she needs for her son Aeneas, instead she seduces him with what Lyne (1989:36) refers to as Venus' "devious sexuality." Similarly, Helen uses her devious cunning to take from her husband Deiphobus the sword that he needs to defend himself. But this is not the only deception that is significant at this point. I now look at the final scene involving an interior space that is relevant to my arguments.

The final scene involving an interior space that is violated does not involve an overt description of the sword, but is relevant to my analysis in a different way. This is the

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<sup>61</sup> According to Putnam (1965:152) Venus is "a creative spirit who teaches commitment to the future, not reprisal for the past."

scene of Aeneas' description of Troy's final night in which the Trojan horse, belly filled with deadly soldiers, penetrates the walls of the city of Troy and precipitates its destruction. The horse, impregnated or fetid with enemy soldiers, is ushered into the city under the ruse of a gift. This takes us back to the notion that the sword that Dido uses to take her life is a gift that was not intended for that purpose. It also reminds of the interpretation (see chapter three) of the sword of Aeneas as the gift of his phallus, a sexual gift, that turns out to be fatal for Dido.

The Trojan horse is a gift intended for a fatal purpose. It is loaded with a deadly cargo that will be released into the city of Troy in order to bring about its downfall. The sword that Dido presents to Aeneas at the exchange at *Aen.*4.261 also turns out to be a fatal gift that results in her death, but there is an essential difference between the two objects. The difference between the gift of the sword and the gift of the Trojan horse lies with the intention that accompanies it. Aeneas does not present Dido with the sword during the exchange with the view to her using it to take her life. However, the Trojan horse is designed with the sole purpose of destroying the city of Troy.

I now pause to look more closely at the scene of Priam's death before moving away from it with the view to investigating what it tells us about the manner in which Turnus stands in relation to the mission of Aeneas. The scene of Priam's death occurs at *Aen.*2.506 – 557. I do not quote it here in full, but I do quote the description of Priam's death that illustrates its brutality because this is where the focus of my investigation lies in this section. Priam has just witnessed the horrible death of his son Polites, and is himself chased down by a murderous and bloodthirsty Pyrrhus, who cuts him down in a most cruel manner. The scene is related at *Aen.*2. 549-558:

*hoc dicens altaria ad ipsa trementem  
traxit et in multo lapsantem sanguine nati,*

*implicuitque comam laeva, dextraque coruscum  
 extulit ac lateri capulo tenuis abdidit ensem.  
 haec finis Priami fatorum, hic exitus illum  
 sorte tulit Troiam incensam et prolapsa videntem  
 Pergama, tot quondam populis terrisque superbum  
 regnatorem Asiae. iacet ingens litore truncus,  
 avulsumque umeris caput et sine nomine corpus.*

That said, he drags the old man  
 straight to the altar, quaking, slithering on through  
 slicks of his son's blood, and twisting Priam's hair  
 in his left hand, his right hand sweeping forth his sword –  
 a flash of steel – he buries it hilt-deep in the king's flank.  
 Such was the fate of Priam, his death, his lot on earth,  
 with Troy blazing before his eyes, her ramparts down,  
 the monarch who once had ruled in all his glory  
 the many lands of Asia, Asia's many tribes.  
 A powerful trunk is lying on the shore.  
 The head wrenched from the shoulders.  
 A corpse without a name.

Very little has been done in scholarship on Priam's death from the viewpoint of the sword. However, there are a number of ways in which the description of Turnus' death is similar to Priam's death and is worth mention at this point. For instance Putnam points to two particular phrases that seem to echo one another in the respective death scenes.<sup>62</sup> Burnell (1987:191-193) contrasts the brutal and violent manner in which Phyrrus kills King Priam at *Aen.*2.457-548 with the manner in

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<sup>62</sup> The phrases to which Putnam (1965:172) refers are: *vacua atria lustrat* (at *Aen.*2.526-530) which is similar to *alta atria lustrat* (at *Aen.*12.473-478), and *porticibus longis* (at *Aen.*2.526-530) which is similar to *porticibus vacuis* (at *Aen.*12.473-478).

which Aeneas kills Turnus at the close of the *Aeneid*. He concludes that unlike the rash and hot-headed Pyrrhus, “Aeneas in the last scene is not severe, but intemperate” (1987:193). Priam’s death is also thought to parallel the death of Hector in the *Iliad*.<sup>63</sup>

Putnam (1999) draws to our attention two similarities between the description of Priam’s death in book two and the description of Aeneas’ onslaught of Turnus in book twelve. According to Putnam (1999:218) the description of Aeneas being the first to enter the battlements of the Latins at *Aen.*12.579 is prefigured in Pyrrhus who is first to break into the palace of Priam at *Aen.*2.479. In addition, he points out that the phrase used to describe Pyrrhus’ slaying of the guards upon entering Priam’s palace in book 2 is strikingly similar to the manner of Aeneas’ entering the Latin camp at *Aen.*12.577. Nethercut (1968:86) refers to another scene where Aeneas’ violent actions echo the description of Priam’s death. The scene in question occurs at *Aen.*10.535-536. Here the sword is mentioned explicitly and echoes the brutal slaying of Priam by Pyrrhus at *Aen.*2.552-553.<sup>64</sup>

There is another scene at the close of book twelve in which the sword plays a seemingly insignificant role, but which merits some attention here because it recalls the description of the sword in Priam’s death scene. This scene occurs at *Aen.*12.728-733. In this scene of their final duel Turnus’ sword shatters in his hand rendering him an ineffectual opponent for Aeneas:

*Emicat hic impune putans et corpore toto*

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<sup>63</sup> According to Bowie (1990:472) “the wealth of parallels between the *Aeneid* and *Iliad* passages securely establishes Priam’s death as the equivalent of that of Hector. It is the sign of the end of Troy.”

<sup>64</sup> Nethercut (1968) also points to a number of other scenes where parallels can be made between descriptions of Aeneas and Turnus: the description of Aeneas raging for his arms at *Aen.*2.314 is echoed in the description of Turnus raging for his arms at *Aen.*7.460. The description of Aeneas lamenting that he did not die fighting beneath the walls of Troy at *Aen.*1.94-101 is echoed in the description of Turnus lamenting his separation from his dying comrades at *Aen.*10.667-669. And finally the description of Aeneas (already mentioned in this capacity) growing faint at *Aen.*1.92 is echoed in the description of Turnus’ limbs loosening at *Aen.*12.951.



*alte sublatum consurgit Turnus, in ensem [my underlining]  
et ferit ; exclamant Troes trepidique Latini,  
arrectaque amborum acies. at perfidus ensis [my underlining]  
frangitur in medioque ardentem deserit ictu,  
ni fuga subsidio subeat.*

Suddenly Turnus

flashes forward, certain he's in the clear and  
raising his sword high, rearing to full stretch [my underlining]  
strikes – as Trojans and anxious Latins shout out,  
with the gaze of both armies riveted on the fighters.  
But his treacherous blade breaks off, it fails Turnus [my underlining]  
in mid-stroke – enraged, his one recourse, retreat,  
and swifter than Eastwinds, Turnus flies as soon  
as he sees that unfamiliar hilt in his hand,  
no defense at all.

The sword, Turnus realises is not his own, but an inferior weapon which he seized in characteristic haste to enter into battle.<sup>65</sup> It is possible to link the scene of the shattering of Turnus' sword at *Aen.*12.728-733 to the pitiful description of Priam arming himself on the Troy's final night at *Aen.*2.506-511 and the impotent spear cast at *Aen.*2.544-546. Aeneas wields a sword, Turnus a spear. I have already pointed out (see chapter three) that the spear as a weapon may be less suited to the kind of warrior that Virgil would like us to see in Aeneas. The futility of Priam's spear cast adds to the notion of the futility inherent in Priam's act of arming himself.

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<sup>65</sup> Quinn points out that "he [Turnus] snatched up not the magic sword given to Turnus' father by Vulcan but an ordinary man-made sword belonging to Metiscus and no match for the immortal armour of Aeneas" (1968:268). In addition, it is interesting to note that "the shattered sword comes from Homer Il.3.361-3 [where] Menelaus breaks his sword on Pallas' helmet" (1968:268).

The aged king Priam also reminds us of old Anchises. According to Berlin (1998:17) “the association between Anchises and Priam is natural, to be sure, by virtue of not only their age but also their vulnerability.” In this way Priam’s death is made to look even more tragic and pitiful.

I will now look more closely at the interpretation of Dido’s death scene from an erotic perspective (already touched upon in chapter three) alongside the ambiguity of the sword used by her (discussed in chapter two) in order to point out that there are two possible interpretations of Dido’s death with regards to the mission of Aeneas.

According to the interpretation of Dido’s death from an erotic perspective, Dido’s physical penetration by the sword at *Aen.*4.663-647 is prefigured by Dido’s sexual penetration by Aeneas (see chapter 3). This view of the sword is strongly dependant on scholarship of the sword and the imagery of wounds as well as the notion of female vulnerability, sexual exploitation and female conquest. In chapter three I made this connection clear when I pointed out that the fact that women are considered vulnerable to sexual exploitation is closely related to the idea of the sword as an instrument of penetration and the notion of female conquest. This is true for women in epic in general and for Dido in particular.

According to scholarship on the imagery of wounds, Aeneas’ love for Dido proves to be fatal for her. It begins in what is described by Lyne (1989) as a “love-wound” characterised by the negative effects of Aeneas’ love for Dido, which then progresses into a physical wound and culminates in her death at *Aen.*4.663-665. The crucial point about the fatal physical wound that Dido suffers is that it is inflicted by the sword of Aeneas, which is also a symbol for his phallus.

This understanding of the sword as an instrument of penetration which leads to an interpretation of Dido's death from an erotic perspective tells us more about culpability for Dido's death. Firstly, if the sword that Dido uses to commit suicide at the close of book four is in fact the sword that she receives from Aeneas during an exchange upon his arrival in Carthage, then it is possible to conclude that Dido takes her life with a sword that is intended for battle. In other words, Dido kills herself with a sword that was intended for the victory of the Trojan people over Carthage and establishment of these people in Italy.

However, if the sword that Dido uses to commit suicide is not the sword that results from an exchange of swords that takes place between Dido and Aeneas in book four, then Dido kills herself with a different sword, possibly even the decorated sword described at *Aen.*4.261, and consequently a sword that was not particularly suited to the task of establishing the Trojan people in Italy. This interpretation of the sword is more in line with the view expressed earlier in chapter three in which I pointed to the interpretation of the sword as indicating that Aeneas is poorly equipped to carry out his mission. It also supports the notion expressed in chapter three that Aeneas is subservient to Dido. Scholarship thus indicates that two distinct interpretations of the sword are possible. I will look at the two divergent interpretations of the sword in more detail below.

The two possibilities outlined above make it is possible for an analysis of the role of the sword in the scene of Dido's death to shed some valuable light on responsibility for Dido's death. In addition, this analysis could reveal an important insight into the manner in which Dido stands in relation to the mission of Aeneas namely, it can bring us closer to understanding the role of Aeneas in Dido's death at the close of the book and in so doing either aid us in exculpating Aeneas for the responsibility of Dido's death to some extent or support the notion that Dido's death is the result of

her opposition to the mission of Aeneas. Let us look at these alternatives in more detail now.

According to the first alternative outlined above, Dido commits suicide using a sword which resulted from the apparent exchange that takes place between her and Aeneas in Carthage. Based on this observation it is a fairly safe assumption that throughout book four Dido is in possession of the sword with which Aeneas arrived at Carthage. This is then also the sword that is described as hanging above Dido's bed in the royal bedchamber at *Aen.*4.495-507. At this point a very important observation must be made: although Dido commits suicide, she ultimately uses a weapon that belongs to Aeneas. But the situation is not as clear-cut as it initially appears, particularly owing to an interpretation of Dido's death from an erotic perspective.

The turning point in my argument here rests in the observation that even though Dido commits suicide (in other words *she* plunges the sword into her own breast at *Aen.*4.663-665) the sword that she uses to this end belongs to Aeneas and is a sword that is possibly very closely associated with the establishment of the Trojan people in Italy. The significance of this association will also be explored later in this chapter when I look in more detail at Turnus and the role of the sword in his death.

It is at this point that an interpretation of Dido's death from an erotic perspective becomes particularly useful. This interpretation of Dido's death makes it possible to say that Aeneas does in fact penetrate Dido, sexually and physically, albeit metaphorically. Furthermore, both of these acts – the emotional and the physical penetration – are acts of destruction. But it also means more than this. In this way an interpretation of Dido's death from an erotic perspective adds to Aeneas' culpability in Dido's death. Consequently, given the care and attention of Virgil's craftsmanship it is very unlikely that he did not intend, at the very least, for his readers to toy with

the idea of re-evaluating the agency of Dido's death through an interpretation of the role of the sword in her death scene.

As indicated above, my analysis tends towards a re-evaluation of the agency for Dido's death. In the very least, this analysis adds to the suggestion that Aeneas is to an important extent responsible for Dido's death at the close of book four, even though it is she who plunges the sword into her own breast. Furthermore, it is not too far-fetched to suggest a wily trick of craftsmanship on the part of Virgil in deliberately crafting Dido's death in this manner. Perhaps Virgil was reluctant to present Aeneas as fully responsible for Dido's death and instead shrouded Aeneas' culpability in a veiled manner. This veiled suggestion is presented to us in the form of the ambiguity of the sword with which Dido commits suicide. However, as demonstrated above, it is only properly brought to light alongside an interpretation of Dido's death from an erotic perspective.

In this way the sword may be considered a ruse, a clever metaphor that both partly exculpates Aeneas from responsibility for Dido's death while also supporting the notion that he is to blame. The mechanism of this veil works as follows: in shrouding the ownership of the sword in ambiguity Aeneas may be regarded as exculpated from responsibility for Dido's death. However, in reading the sword alongside an interpretation of Dido's death from an erotic perspective, Aeneas may also be regarded as responsible for her death. This seems to be a particularly clever device on Virgil's part. It is left for me now only to discuss how my analysis of role of the sword in Dido's death scene above fits in with the mission of Aeneas (chapter two) and the already outlined reasons for Dido's death (chapter four).

I mentioned earlier that the sword may be closely associated with the act of conquest. In keeping with the view that Aeneas is partly responsible for Dido's death, it is possible to see a tentative connection between the sword and the act of

conquest. Aeneas' act of physical penetration which is thought to take place in the cave in chapter four during the hunt scene may thus be regarded as an act of conquest or even of ownership. According to this interpretation, Aeneas conquers Dido both sexually and physically so that her death at the close of book four may come to be associated more strongly Aeneas' quest to establish the Trojan people in Italy.

Earlier in this chapter, when I provided an outline of the reasons for Dido's death, I mentioned that Dido's death could be the result of the *furor* of love that compels her to commit suicide. This reason for Dido's death contradicts the results of the analysis which point to Aeneas – through his association with the sword she uses– as partly to blame for Dido's death. The *furor* which Moorton (1990) describes here comes from Dido herself, as opposed to originating from an external source such as Aeneas. According to this view, Dido is responsible for her own death. However, passion (which plays an important part in the interpretation of Dido's death from an erotic perspective) is not isolated to Dido. I would like to revisit this reason for Dido's death in light of these points.

In chapter three I established that the external physical wound that Dido suffers at her death at the close of book four is the manifestation of an internal wound caused by Aeneas, whose love for Dido and her subsequent loss of this love causes her much pain and suffering. Dido's love for Aeneas is perhaps not reciprocated by him in the form which she so desperately desired namely, in the resolution to stay with her in Carthage or even to permit himself to be moved by her pleas, but it certainly is sexual in nature. And, in as much as the sexual component of Dido's love is reciprocated, it is safe to assume that Aeneas demonstrates some form of passion in his relationship with Dido. Consequently, it is possible to say that Aeneas is also under the compulsion of love.

The sword which Dido plunges into her breast is the physical manifestation of this love on the part of Aeneas, driven by the passion that Aeneas experiences in his sexual love for Dido. Thus the sword which Dido uses to kill herself is “loaded” with a similar emotion on the part of Aeneas. Dido is driven by the compulsion of *furor* to plunge the sword into her breast, but that same sword can be said to be driven metaphorically by the passionate sexual love that Aeneas experiences for Dido. Based on this observation it is possible to see that in addition to Dido’s death being the result of a compulsive emotion on her part it is also the result of a similar passion on the part of Aeneas.

This analysis is also useful in revisiting one of the ways in which Dido is considered to be an opponent of the mission of Aeneas. In chapter two I pointed out that Dido may be considered an obstacle to the mission of Aeneas based on the manner in which she delays Aeneas from carrying out this mission. I also pointed to the work of Camps (1969) who suggests that Dido manages to delay the mission of Aeneas through her debilitating love for Aeneas. The passionate sexual nature of love on the part of Aeneas cannot be brushed aside during an investigation of Dido’s relation to the mission of Aeneas.

Aeneas, like Dido in book four, is – at least temporarily – consumed with passionate love. This love makes it possible for Aeneas to forget that he is charged with the mission of establishing the Roman people in Italy. It is clear from my analysis that the sword that Dido uses to commit suicide is charged with the passion of this love thus making Aeneas to an important extent responsible for Dido’s death. This observation supports the interpretation of Dido as an opponent of the mission of Aeneas based on the debilitating effect of her love, but also adds a new dimension. It enables us to relieve Dido of some of the responsibility for her death and shift some of the blame to Aeneas.

I would now like to analyse Dido's death from the alternative interpretation of the sword namely, from the point of view that the sword that Dido uses to commit suicide is not the sword that results from an exchange of swords. The alternative interpretation of the sword outlined in my analysis (based on the ambiguity of the sword in book four) suggests that Dido commits suicide using a sword which does not originate from the presumed exchange that takes place between Dido and Aeneas in Carthage. Based on this observation it is possible to say that throughout book four Dido is in possession of a different sword to the one with which Aeneas arrived at Carthage. It is also possible that the sword that is described as hanging above Dido's bed in the royal bedchamber at *Aen.*4.495-507 is likewise not the sword that results from the exchange. In accordance with this alternative interpretation it is very likely that the sword described above is not a battle sword but a different sword altogether, perhaps even the decorated sword described at *Aen.*4.261 which Mercury finds Aeneas wearing upon his descent to earth to recall Aeneas to his mission.

The alternative interpretation of the sword has significant implications for my arguments. It means that Dido may no longer only be considered less responsible for her death. The reason for this is because we can no longer include the interpretation of Dido's death from an erotic perspective with the same confidence as we did earlier. The most significant reason why it was possible to lay some of the blame on Aeneas was because there is a metaphorical link between the sword which Dido uses to commit suicide and Aeneas based on wound imagery. However, this is no longer possible if the sword that Dido uses to commit suicide is considered not to belong to Aeneas. In fact, if, as suggested, Dido uses the decorated sword described at *Aen.*4.261 to kill herself then Dido may even be considered fully responsible for her death at the close of book four.



There is another important point upon which I only touched very briefly in chapter three, but which I would like to remark on again because it supports the view that Aeneas is not entirely responsible for Dido's death. According to Lyne (1989) and his interpretation of the deer simile at *Aen.*4.68-73, Aeneas the hunter is unaware (*nescius*) of the damage that he has done Dido (the deer). Aeneas' ignorance has been the focus of a number of studies with regards to Dido's death. However, there is no scholarship to indicate that this ignorance on the part of Aeneas has been looked at in relation to the ambiguity of the sword which Dido uses to commit suicide.

### ***4.3 Discussion of Turnus' Death scene, swords and Aeneas' mission***

In this section I look in more detail at interpretations of the sword in Turnus' death scene discussed in chapter three. My aim in this section is to demonstrate that an analysis of these findings and their connections with one another contributes to our understanding of Turnus' relation to the mission of Aeneas as outlined in chapter two as well as the reasons for his death which will be outlined below. I begin by reiterating the major points made in chapter two and three because these will form the basis for my analysis in this section.

In chapter three I showed that scholarship on the role of the sword in Turnus' death points to the sword as an instrument of revenge. I also pointed to scholarship on a related interpretation of the sword as representative of barbarism. Finally, I looked at scholarship on the sword that points to its interpretation as a literal tool of founding – a destructive instrument that enables Aeneas to establish Rome in Italy through violence.

Before I begin my consideration of scholarship on Turnus' death scene and the role that the sword plays in it, I would first like to provide a brief overview of

scholarship surrounding the reasons for Turnus' death at the close of the *Aeneid*. It is not my intention in this part of my thesis to argue either for or against different interpretations of the reasons for Turnus' death. However, these reasons are important because they provide a background for an analysis of the sword and the role it plays in the interpretation of Turnus' death. In this section I make extensive use of the work of Malan (1993) who provides a superb outline of the scholarship on the close of the *Aeneid* in her thesis.<sup>66</sup>

Scholarship points to three main reasons for Turnus' death at the close of the poem. These are firstly, that Turnus is fated to die; secondly that Aeneas kills Turnus to avenge the death of Pallas, and thirdly that Turnus is the victim of an inability on the part of Aeneas to control his rage. Related to these reasons numerous other reasons are provided in scholarship for Turnus' death. However, the majority of these are focused around the moral question of Turnus' death at the close of the poem. I would like to make a brief mention in this section of each of the reasons for Turnus' death that are relevant here. As mentioned above, I make use of the outline provided by Malan (1993). I begin by looking at scholarship in support of the interpretation of Turnus' death as vengeance for the death of Pallas.

Otis (1963) maintains that Turnus' death is the result of Aeneas' *pietas* towards Pallas and Evander.<sup>67</sup> He does this in order to stress Aeneas' moral superiority over Turnus. However, for Otis this reason is only a secondary reason. The primary reason for Turnus' death is that he breaks the *foedus* and deserts his battle companions. Hunt (1973) supports Otis' view but adapts it somewhat. He maintains that Turnus' death is due to his uncompromising pursuit of the heroic ideal of

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<sup>66</sup> Burnell (1987) also provides a very comprehensive outline of the moral question surrounding Turnus' death, He identifies four main reasons for Turnus' death: "1) revenge, 2) loss of self-control [on the part of Aeneas] because of rage, 3) compassion, and 4) practicality" (1987: 189).

<sup>67</sup> According to Monti "the death of Turnus is a payment owed to Evander; the *foedus* entered with Evander puts Aeneas under that obligation," (1981:94) and furthermore "the killing of Turnus is an act of violence undertaken in the vindication of *fides*" (1981:94) a very favourable Roman trait.

personal honour. Clausen (1964) reiterates the view of Otis but suggests that Turnus' death is primarily the result of Aeneas' obligation to fulfil his sacred vow to Evander. Clausen wants his reader to perceive as essential the humanity of Turnus and not condone Aeneas' final passionate impulse in killing Turnus. In this way Clausen highlights a reversal in morality of the figures of Turnus and Aeneas.

According to Putnam (1965) Turnus' death is the result of Aeneas' violent imposition on Italy sanctioned by his mission. Along these lines Putnam attempts to show that Turnus' death is a victory for Turnus. Poe (1965) supports Putnam's view but emphasizes the divine part of Aeneas' mission as the reason for Turnus' death. According to this view Turnus' death makes him a sacrifice for the greater good. Little (1970) also supports Putnam's view but identifies the civilising function of Aeneas' mission as the reason for Turnus' death. According to his view Turnus' death is the final act in a series of steps towards civilisation.

Putnam (1965) mentions another important reason for Turnus' death: Aeneas' inability to exhibit *pietas* when he is armed and in a position of power. This view is particularly important because it is also linked to the erotic interpretation of Dido's death through the figure of Pallas. This interpretation revolves around the notions of dissatisfaction, sexual jealousy and a suppressed erotic impulse on the part of Aeneas triggered by the loss of Pallas. Here too there links with the passion that culminates in Dido's death and parallel wound imagery. I will look at these in more detail later in this chapter.

According to Clausen (1964), whom I have mentioned earlier, Turnus' death is simply part of the harshness of founding Rome. He attempts to show that Turnus' death is not a triumph. Related to this is Anderson's (1969) view that Turnus' death results simply from the need to achieve peace. According to this view, Turnus' death

may be taken as a “moment of justice.”<sup>68</sup> This view issues from Anderson’s observation about Turnus as an inadequate leader for the following reasons: Turnus’ way of doing battle is the result of selfish irresponsibility, of unthinking indulgence in a mere physical activity. Turnus’ reluctance to meet Aeneas in single combat is the result of a lack of humane awareness of the destructiveness of war. Finally, Turnus’ exultation at the selfish spoliation of Pallas shows him up as an inadequate leader by Roman standards (Malan, 1993: 37).<sup>69</sup>

Camps (1969) and Thornton (1953) both support the view that Turnus’ death is the result of Aeneas’ revenge for the killing of Pallas. However, they also maintain that Turnus dies because he is the victim of a conflict of purposes among powers beyond his control. Related to this view is that of Johnson (1976) for whom Turnus’ death is the result of a mindless, evil design. According to Johnson’s view, Turnus, like Dido, may be considered a tragic victim.<sup>70</sup> Hornsby (1966) comes closest to the mission of the Aeneas as the reason for Turnus’ death when he posits that Turnus dies in order to put away the old order (of Homeric heroism) and as sacrifice to the new.

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<sup>68</sup> This view is also supported by De Grummond (1981).

<sup>69</sup> Thornton (1972) supports Clausen’s view when he reiterates the reason for Turnus’ death as the result of Turnus’ immoderation and arrogant glorying in the killing of Pallas.

<sup>70</sup> Putnam is the first to suggest the view that Turnus may be regarded as a sacrificial victim. Putnam goes on to say that Turnus is not only a sad victim of Aeneas’ mission, but also an unnecessary sacrificial victim. Putnam (1965:165) refers to the symbolism of the act of sacrifice at *Aen.* 12.219-221 before entering into the final fight to point out that “Turnus is himself to be a victim, the last person standing in the way of Aeneas, the last figure of violence set up by Juno to oppose the hero’s fated progress [and that] like Lacoön, Turnus is at once the sacrifice and the sacrificed.” Later he points out that “it is Aeneas who loses at the end of Book XII, leaving Turnus victorious in his tragedy. Aeneas fails to incorporate the ideal standards, proper for the achievement and maintenance of empire, in his struggle with the individual who embodies the emotionality of all opposition, of fallible man against infallible fate” (1965:193). However, in more recent scholarship Gross (2004:151) maintains that by killing Turnus, Aeneas “destroys the defender who dies for the homeland.” In this way Turnus’ death is linked to Dido’s death in that both figure as victims of Aeneas’ mission. Turnus’ death is linked to Dido’s death through tragedy. This view is also reiterated by Martino (2008:433) though for different reasons. According to Martino, Turnus’ death is necessary for the completion of the *spolia opima* dedication process, which requires the sacrifice of a suitable sacrificial animal, normally a bull. Martino (2008: 433) points out that the “slaying of an ‘impious’ Turnus also represents a type of piacular offering, which carries a further *spolia opima* resonance as certain animals were sacrificed to the archaic triad [Jupiter Feretrius, Mars Ultor, Janus Quirinus] as part of the full dedication ceremony associated with this honour.” Furthermore, the idea of Turnus as sacrificial animal is strengthened by his association with a bull at *Aen.* 12.103-106.

According to Di Cesare (1974) Turnus' death is the result of the ultimate act of *pietas* on the part of Aeneas. According to this view, which reiterates the view of Poe (1965) above, the death of Turnus is an act for common good. Di Cesare's view should be tempered with that of Northrop (1978) who maintains that Turnus' death is the result of a loss of self-control or restraint on the part of Aeneas. I would now like to turn to some more recent views on the reasons for Turnus' death.

Miles (1999:234) brings to our attention the importance of the *Aeneid* as a foundation story when he points to Turnus' death as necessary because it serves as the starting point for what is now considered to be the "moment when the formation of Roman identity began."<sup>71</sup> According to this view Turnus dies so that Aeneas can rid himself of his Trojan heritage and become more fully Roman. Gross supports the view of Miles when he says that Aeneas' killing of Turnus is synonymous with the killing of the Trojan part of himself. Gross (2004:154) tells us that "he [Aeneas] does not simply kill his opponent and *alter ego*, but by allusion Aeneas destroys the defender of Troy, by extension Troy itself, and the last vestige of his view of himself."

Another important reason for Turnus' death in addition to stripping Pallas of his sword belt at *Aen.*10.495 is his failure to dedicate it to an appropriate deity. Moreover, Turnus not only fails to legitimise his act of despoiling Pallas but he also exalts in it. Martino (2008:427) quotes Harriet when she points out that "Turnus' failure to vow or consecrate his *spolia opima* to a suitable god also presages his fate." According to the *spolia opima* tradition, a successful single combatant is required to offer his vanquished opponent's armour and weaponry to a suitable god.<sup>72</sup> Turnus

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<sup>71</sup> Miles (1999:234) is also quick to point out that Turnus' death is not the only occurrence that is regarded as the "moment when the formation of Roman identity began." In addition to Turnus' death, there is also the moment of Troy's fall coupled with "the circumstances that impelled Aeneas to abandon the traditional, Greek ideal of heroism and seek a new destiny" (1999:234).

<sup>72</sup> Martino (2008:411) provides an outline of the correct procedure to be followed by a successful *spolia opima* victor: he "had to slay his opponent in the heat of battle rather than during an arranged monomachy between two opposed champions. The victorious Roman combatant then stripped the panoply off his opponent and dedicated

fails to do this, in addition to gloating over his triumph, thereby doubly sealing his death at the close of the poem.<sup>73</sup>

According to Nickbakht (2010:51) the death of Turnus could also represent the death of one (or more) of Virgil's rival poets.<sup>74</sup> This is made possible through a network of allusions based on the word (or variations of the word) *umbræ* (shadows) which extend from the end of the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics* right through to the close of the *Aeneid* and enable us to see Virgil behind the figure of Aeneas in what Nickbakht refers to as instances of authorial self-reference.<sup>75</sup> In this way "the killing of Turnus is to be seen as an emblem of triumph over prior poets" (2010:62).

There remains a great deal to be said about the reasons for Turnus' death at the close of the *Aeneid* that I cannot discuss here. Putnam (1999:224) sums up scholarship on the reasons for Turnus' death when he says that "the calculated dissatisfactions are many."

In the next section I analyse scholarship on the sword in chapter three within the framework of the mission of Aeneas as outlined in chapter two. I do this with the aim of adding to the already established ways in which Turnus is regarded as an opponent of the mission of Aeneas in addition to contributing to the interpretation of

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it within the religious precincts of Rome to a member of the so called archaic triad (i.e., Jupiter Feretrius, Mars, and Janus Quirinus).

<sup>73</sup> Turnus' fate is also mentioned by Aeneas himself at *Aen.*10.503-505: *Turnus tempus erit magno cum optaverit emptum / intactum Pallanta, et cum spolia ista diemque oderit.*

<sup>74</sup> The death of a rival poet is not meant to be taken in the literal sense. Nickbakht (2010:53) tells us that he "is not suggesting that Vergil really killed a rival [and] it is certainly not admissible to 'translate' on a one-to-one scale." The death of a rival poet may be regarded as the instance of one poet outstripping another in terms of fame or in terms of the longevity and timelessness of their work. For instance "the proclamation of Turnus' eternal fame [through his sister Juturna at *Aen.*12.234-5] compares to Ennius's own claim during his lifetime. The analogy between the two characters, however, only applies insofar as Turnus is killed by Aeneas, and Ennius, symbolically, by Vergil (Nickbakht, 2010:55).

<sup>75</sup> The scenes involving allusions to *umbræ* that enable Nickbakht (2010:51) to point to authorial self-reference occur in the following places: The *umbræ* at the end of the first *Eclogue* (1.83), the triple mentioning of *umbra(e)* in the last *Eclogue* (10.75-6), a notion of shade that occurs in the last line of the *Georgics* 4.566, and in the *Aeneid* itself where the invocation to the Muse at *Aen.*7.37-45 signals a turnaround from the Odyssean half to the Iliadic half of the poem.

the already established reasons for Turnus' death at the close of book twelve. I begin by looking more closely at what the sword tells us about the way the mission is carried out.

In the first chapter of my thesis I demonstrated that the objectives of Aeneas' mission are to establish peace and superimpose civilisation. Furthermore, I demonstrated that *humanitas* and *pietas* are also an important part of the mission of Aeneas. Turnus is an opponent of the mission in that he stands for madness or unrestrained passion (*furor*) and violence (*violentia*).<sup>76</sup> On the basis of this interpretation it is possible to see how Turnus comes to be regarded as an opponent of Aeneas' mission. I would like now to take a more detailed look at the description of the sword in the scene of Turnus' death.

One way in which a closer look at the role of the sword in Turnus' death scene makes a significant contribution towards scholarship on the *Aeneid* is in what it tells us about the manner in which Aeneas carries out his mission. According to Otis (1964: 315) "Aeneas' *pietas* comes out not only in his opposing such violence by fighting it with all necessary courage, but in the *way* he opposes it, in the way he fights and treats his enemies. His is the *humanitas* that sees war as a terrible necessity and a means to its negation, peace."

Burnell (1987:198) points to another aspect of *humanitas* that forms part of the mission: clemency. He tells us that to a Roman audience "clemency came to be seen as an instrument of imperial statesmanship, Aeneas, too, is a statesman but his last action in the poem lacks that quality of statesmanly restraint."

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<sup>76</sup> Putnam (1965:158) refers to Turnus as the embodiment of *furor* through an analysis of the animal imagery associated with him in the *Aeneid*. Camps (1969:39) also ascribes the following words to Turnus: "*amens, turbidus, fervidus, ardens, furens, trepidans*, in a state of *insania* (madness), *furor* (frenzy), *violentia* (ungoverned passion)."

A great deal of scholarship has been devoted to understanding the close of the *Aeneid* and particularly to answering the question: has Aeneas failed? According to Otis "his [Aeneas'] humanity is never exercised at the expense of his duty. He fights well because he feels it his duty to fight well, but he fights without the violence and cupidity that make war an end in itself or an expression of irrational *furor* indifferent to any peaceful or rational purpose" (1964:316). Otis (1964:102) also points out that it is the lack of Aeneas' lust for battle-glory which "gives him the moral superiority that justifies his military superiority over Turnus."<sup>77</sup>

James points to what happens after Turnus' death, namely the question of burial, in order to arrive at a complete answer regarding the manner in which the mission of Aeneas is carried out. She tells us that "the fate of Turnus' body is relevant because of the way he dies: by describing his death with *condere*, Vergil establishes a link between the manner of his death and the character of Rome itself" (1995:634). James goes to great lengths to show that the word *condere* can mean "to bury" as well as "to establish." The importance of this ambiguity cannot be overlooked.

According to Putnam (1965:157) "death can be the only penalty exacted from anyone who opposes fate. The downfall of resistance does not occur before the hero has absorbed certain characteristics usually found in his enemies. His [Turnus'] death will in some ways be seen as a victory for Turnus." In the description of the mission of Aeneas in chapter two I emphasized that an important aspect of the mission was its civilising function. Putnam suggests here that Aeneas has ultimately failed in his mission because he too has become precisely what he set out to correct.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> According to Otis (1966:103) "what gives him [Aeneas] pre-eminence, despite all the competing figures, is his immunity from the moral failure that fatally stains the conduct of the rest. Unlike Turnus, Nisus, Euryalus or Camilla he does not succumb to the lust of plunder. Unlike them also, he does not manifest any eagerness for fighting, except when dominated by a special emotion such as affection for Pallas. Unlike them, he regrets and sorrows over the war. He alone thinks throughout of the peace to be gained."

<sup>78</sup> Putnam (1965:162) goes on to say that "Aeneas, by bringing death to Turnus, becomes a victim of that very unreason which hitherto he had done his best to shun. If Book XII depicts the tragedy of Turnus, it also delineates the gradual submission of Aeneas to the particular *furor* of Dido, inherited by Turnus."



Nethercut (1968) identifies a number of other scenes in the *Aeneid* which illustrate instances of Aeneas' impiety.<sup>79</sup> I would like to enumerate these scenes here because some of these scenes involve a direct reference to a sword or weaponry. At *Aen.*10.537-41 Aeneas kills a priest of Apollo "the god we have come to associate intimately with Troy and the divinity who guides the wanderings of Troy's posterity" (Nethercut, 1968:88). At *Aen.*3.41-3 Aeneas violates or tears the body of Polydorus in an act of terrible savagery. At *Aen.*3.247-249 Aeneas and his men take up arms against the Harpies and "were about to drive this people from a land which belonged to them by heritage" (1968:90).

One implication of the viewpoint that Aeneas has failed in his mission as far as his killing of Turnus is concerned is succinctly outlined by Gossage (1955:23) who tells us that "if the Romans were descendants of the Trojans, it was from a defeated nation that the conquerors of the Mediterranean world had arisen." This viewpoint resonates with the notion in scholarship – outlined earlier by me – that Aeneas may be regarded as subservient to Dido. Aeneas' subservience is based on an interpretation of the decorated sword that Mercury finds Aeneas with at *Aen.*4.261.

The view expressed by Putnam (1965:157) concerning Aeneas' failure to civilise is reiterated by Quinn (1968:274-75) who lists a number of factors that illuminate Aeneas' decision to kill Turnus at the close of the poem. He points to the memories that Aeneas had of Pallas at *Aen.*10.159-62; Aeneas' distress at *Aen.*10.513-17 upon learning of Pallas' death; the promise made to Evander to return Pallas to his father at *Aen.*8.465-8; Evander's plea to Aeneas to revenge Pallas' death at *Aen.*11.176-81, and finally the ominous and bloody portent depicted on Pallas' belt and the manner

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<sup>79</sup> Nethercut (1968:93) attempts to point out how "Virgil shows us, latent in those who are to found Imperial Rome, the very same propensity for *furor* and aggrandisement that distinguished those who overthrew Troy."

in which it firstly recalls Aeneas' grief at the loss of Pallas and secondly serves as an incitement to violence through the violence depicted on it.

The deaths of the grooms depicted on Pallas' sword belt take place in marriage chambers. The location of these deaths is particularly important because it reminds of the location of Aeneas' sword during his stay in Carthage namely, above Dido's bed in her marriage chamber. Furthermore, it also reminds us of the sword that Helen removes from beneath Deiphobus' pillow on Troy's final night – the location also the marriage chamber. I would like to suggest that the echo of the location – the marriage chamber – makes it possible for Turnus' involvement in Pallas' death to warrant interpreting Turnus' death from an erotic perspective. At the very least it may suggest that Pallas death foreshadows an erotic interpretation of Turnus' death.

At this point I would like to explore a number of interpretations that result from viewing weaponry – and in particular, the sword – against the background of and for its role in interpretation of the motivation of characters. It is also important to point out that the view that Aeneas' act in the final lines of the poem is an act of revenge for Turnus' killing Pallas is not new. One suggestion is that this view comes from a comparison between the figures of Aeneas and Achilles.<sup>80</sup> Accordingly, it is possible to see Aeneas prefigured in Achilles when he revenges the death of Pallas at the close of the *Aeneid*.<sup>81</sup> The view of Achilles prefiguring Pallas outlined above is closely related to the scene in which Venus procures arms for Aeneas through Vulcan at *Aen.*8.369-406. Before I look more closely at the implications of this scene for interpreting the role of the sword I would like to examine an argument regarding Aeneas' need for the new sword that he obtains from Venus.

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<sup>80</sup> See MacKay (1957:14).

<sup>81</sup> Casali (2006:187) mentions one way in which Achilles prefigures Aeneas, when he tells us that “the handing over of the arms [that Venus procures for Aeneas at *Aen.*8.369-406] is the investiture of Aeneas as a new Achilles.”

I disagree with Casali (2006:187) when he says that “Aeneas has no need of arms, since no one has taken his.” Earlier in this chapter I demonstrated that there are two distinct possibilities regarding the sword that Dido uses to take her life at the close of book four. Firstly, there is the possibility that the sword she uses for this purpose is the gift-sword that she obtains from Aeneas during the exchange in book four. Based on this viewpoint, Aeneas is already in possession of a sword and, as Casali points out, is not in need of a new one. However, if the sword that Dido uses to commit suicide is in fact the sword with which Aeneas arrives at Carthage, then Aeneas is in possession of his original sword.

I have already pointed out in chapter three that the decorated sword that Mercury spots Aeneas wearing on the battlements in Carthage at *Aen.*4.621 allows us to interpret Aeneas as soft and associate him with feminine qualities. If Aeneas has indeed left Carthage with only the decorated or ornamental sword in his possession, then contrary to what Casali suggests, Aeneas is in need of a new sword with which to do battle in Italy. A decorated sword is hardly the stuff with which to do effective battle for the mission. I would now like to return to the point I was trying to make earlier about the important role that the scene of Venus’ procurement of arms for Aeneas at *Aen.*8.369-406 plays in interpreting the role of the sword in Turnus’ death.

Venus procures the arms for Aeneas – including the sword with which he does battle in Italy – by way of offering herself sexually to Vulcan. This occurs at *Aen.*8.373. In addition to this, Putnam mentions another aspect of Pallas’ death that foreshadows an erotic interpretation of Turnus’ death. Putnam (1985:13) points to the description of Aeneas’ act of wrapping Pallas’ body in a cloak made by Dido at *Aen.*11.39-41 when he says that “Pallas’ funeral is to Aeneas in some sense his marriage, that his funeral was his marriage bed, as it had been for Dido.” And finally, there is the fatal wound that Aeneas gives Turnus.

Putnam (1999:226) points to the echo of the phrase *solvuntur frigore membra* from the opening lines of the poem (*Aen.*1.92) at *Aen.*12.951, where Turnus undergoes a similar experience before he is killed by Aeneas. On the grounds of this echo Putnam points to the reversal of the agency of *furor*. Here it is Aeneas not Turnus who is overcome with anger and bloodlust. Furthermore, Putnam tells us that “he [Aeneas] who had been the sufferer of someone else’s violence [Juno] now inflicts the workings of his own inner demons on his victim” (1999:226).

The true significance of Putnam’s observation for my arguments concerning the sword only comes to light when we revisit the circumstances surrounding Turnus’ death. Aeneas was torn between killing Turnus and sparing him. A number of scholars maintain that Aeneas was inclined to spare Turnus. However, at the sight of Pallas’ baldric on Turnus’ shoulder, Aeneas unhesitatingly plunges his sword into Turnus’ breast, killing him. Putnam seems to suggest that Aeneas’ sword is simply an instrument for exacting revenge.

#### **4.4 *Parallels between Dido and Turnus***

In this section I attempt to bring my own interpretation of swords in the *Aeneid* and particularly in Dido and Turnus’ death scenes, alongside existing scholarship on references to swords in the *Aeneid*. I do this through highlighting a number of parallels between the manner in which Dido and Turnus stand in relation to the mission of Aeneas.

At the start of this chapter I mentioned that one of the most striking things about the scene of Dido’s death is that Aeneas is absent from it, a situation that suggests Dido’s death is not the result of her opposition to the mission of Aeneas, because Aeneas – the new hero, whose responsibility it is to battle down the proud and establish the

Trojan people in Italy – does not take Dido's life directly. My point of departure for this line of argument is that any obstacle or opposition that Aeneas faces on his mission to establish the Roman nation, is only legitimised or recognised as such if it is battled down or faced by Aeneas' hand directly. The notion that Aeneas is absent from Dido's death, supported by one interpretation of the ambiguity of the sword that Dido uses to take her life, suggests that Aeneas played no direct role in taking Dido's life.

However, this interpretation is counterbalanced by my analysis of the alternative interpretation that results from the ambiguity of the sword (earlier in this chapter). According to this interpretation the sword that Dido uses to kill herself may have been a sword that does belong to Aeneas, and consequently Aeneas is at least partly to blame for Dido's death. According to this interpretation Dido's death may be attributed to a number of ways in which Dido is considered to be an opponent of the mission. Firstly, Dido's death by means of a sword that belongs to Aeneas is supported by the notion that Dido is an opponent of the mission of Aeneas on the basis of her un-Roman behaviour (see chapter two) as well as the notion that she delays Aeneas in Carthage (see also chapter two).

Based on an interpretation of the sword at *Aen.*6.511-527 (see chapter four) Dido can be regarded as sharing certain characteristics with the figure of Helen who orchestrates the brutal slaying of her husband Deiphobus. I pointed out that both Dido and Helen are considered sexually devious in their attempts to dominate male figures. Helen deceives Deiphobus by stealing his sword from beneath his pillow in their bedroom, a location I have shown to be important from a sexual point of view. Dido manages to retain Aeneas in Carthage we must assume through her sexual wiles and in this way delays Aeneas in Carthage and prevents him from carrying out his mission.

Let us turn to Turnus. One way in which Turnus may be regarded as opposing the mission of Aeneas is the manner in which he forces Aeneas to break the mould of the new hero (see chapter two). The new hero may be described primarily as a rational man, who does not throw himself headlong into battle with the view to seeking glory in a warrior's death. Turnus incites Aeneas to anger twice (see chapter two); firstly, when he drives Aeneas to a bloodthirsty madness in which he sacrifices eight captured Rutulians and secondly when he takes Turnus' life at the close of the poem. Turnus like Dido prevents Aeneas from carrying out his mission.

Dido is not entirely a tragic victim of fate or circumstances beyond her power to control as suggested earlier in this chapter. Dido (like Helen hiding her Trojan husband's sword) makes use of a skilful deception to retain Aeneas in Carthage when he should be fighting for the establishment of Rome on Italian soil. Dido is also considered to share certain qualities with Cleopatra (see chapter two) who is considered notoriously exotic in her behaviour. Furthermore, the decorated sword that Dido presents to Aeneas in a supposed exchange and which he is seen to be wearing when Mercury finds him on top of Carthaginian battlements, may be interpreted as assimilating to Aeneas the very unwarlike and un-Roman characteristics of femininity and softness. This interpretation of the decorated sword also enables us to consider Aeneas as subservient to Dido and as an active agent in the outcome of events that lead to her death.

Each of the interpretations outlined above, and in particular the notion that Dido retains Aeneas in Carthage through her sexual prowess, all seem to point to deliberate efforts on the part of Dido to steer Aeneas away from his mission. Consequently, these observations work against the interpretation of Dido as a tragic victim of fate. Unlike Turnus Dido is no longer considered only an object of pity. Turnus, who is fated to die at the close of the poem, is also killed by Aeneas (see

earlier in this chapter) because he is helpless against Aeneas' inability to control his rage. Dido and Turnus are to be pitied and responsible for their own deaths.

In this chapter I conducted an own analysis of certain key scenes involving references to swords. I looked in particular at the references to swords in Dido and Turnus' death scenes, but I also introduced a number of other scenes involving references to swords that are relevant for the analyses in this chapter.

## Chapter V – Conclusion

My aim in this thesis was to investigate a number of key scenes in the *Aeneid* involving references to swords – particularly the scenes of the description of swords in Dido and Turnus' death scenes – in order to provide an overview of existing scholarship on the manner in which Dido and Turnus stand in relation to the mission of Aeneas.

I began Chapter Two by providing a description of the mission of Aeneas that would be relevant for my purposes in this thesis. I described the mission of Aeneas as comprising of three essential aspects: the mission is sanctioned by the gods; the mission's objectives are achieving peace and superimposing civilisation; and the mission has a social dimension that prescribes favourable qualities in a Roman.

Next I investigated the ways in which Dido is considered to be an opponent of the mission of Aeneas. I pointed to three views in scholarship that were relevant. Firstly, Dido's opposition is based on a historical enmity between Rome and Carthage. Secondly, Dido may be considered an opponent of the mission on the basis of her un-Roman behaviour, and finally Dido is an opponent of the mission because she delays Aeneas in Carthage.

I also looked at ways on which Turnus is considered as an opponent of the mission of Aeneas. Turnus may be considered an opponent of the mission of Aeneas firstly because he forces Aeneas to break the mould of the "new hero." Turnus may also be considered an opponent of the mission of Aeneas because his *furor* goes against the *humanitas* and *pietas* that form part of Aeneas' mission.



In Chapter Three I looked at scholarship in key scenes involving references to swords in the *Aeneid*. I discussed six scenes involving references to swords, each of these occurring in book four. In an attempt to provide a meaningful description of what constitutes a sword and how I intend for the sword to be understood I also defined the sword as a weapon alongside other weapons such as the bow and the spear.

I looked at scholarship in references to swords that involve the imagery of wounds. Here I was able to point to the role of the sword in an interpretation of the metaphorical wound that results in Dido's death at the close of book four, as well as the role of the sword in developing the interpretation of Dido's death from an erotic perspective. Scholarship in the description of swords that involve the imagery of wounds also enabled me to highlight an interpretation of the sword as a symbol of penetration.

I also looked at scholarship in references to swords that point to the sword as an instrument of exploitation. I am able to show that this interpretation of the sword is very closely related to the notion that women in epic are vulnerable and susceptible to sexual exploitation by the male figures in epic. I looked at scholarship that points to the decorated sword of Aeneas at *Aen.* 4.261 and the manner in which it creates a picture of Aeneas as poorly equipped to carry out his mission, makes Aeneas seem subservient to Dido, and bestows on Aeneas the unwarlike qualities of softness and femininity.

Towards the end of Chapter Three I looked at interpretations of references to swords in Turnus' death scene. Here I was able to point to an interpretation of the sword as an instrument of revenge, the sword as representative of barbarism in the *Aeneid*, and the sword as a literal tool of founding and an instrument of destruction.

In Chapter Four I conducted an analysis of scenes involving references to swords in the *Aeneid*. I prefaced this chapter with a brief overview of the reasons for Dido's death. In particular, I looked at the scene of Dido and Turnus' deaths, but I also looked in some detail at other scenes that involve the description of swords. These included the scene of the description of Deiphobus' death and deception by Helen on Troy's final night. Here I was able to show that Dido and Helen share a number of un-Roman qualities based on the location of the sword in these scenes – the bedchamber – and the sexual connotations associated with the location.

I also looked briefly at the scene in which Aeneas spots Helen cowering behind an altar on Troy's final night. I was able to link Aeneas' decision not to kill Helen with an interpretation of Priam's futile arming gesture and the image of Turnus' sword shattering in book twelve as powerlessness and impotency on the part of these male figures. Furthermore, I was able to show that the futility of Priam's arming act, the inability on the part of Deiphobus to survive the deception of Helen, and the image of Turnus' shattering sword, all support an interpretation of male figures as powerless.

Then I looked at scholarship on the reasons for Turnus' death at the close of the poem and finally looked at a parallels and differences between the manner in which Dido and Turnus stand in relation to the mission of Aeneas. I was able to show – based on my analyses – that unlike his role in Turnus' death Aeneas is only partly responsible for Dido's death. Consequently, Aeneas' indirect involvement in Dido's death means that she is not necessarily an opponent of the mission of Aeneas.

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