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Source: *Comparative Literature Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Fall, 1984), pp. 255-269

Published by: Penn State University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40246487>

Accessed: 27-12-2018 08:30 UTC

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# *The Death of Vergil:* Broch's Reading of Vergil's *Aeneid*

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KATHLEEN L. KOMAR

Literary scholars have established convincingly that Hermann Broch knew very little about the details of the historical Vergil's life,<sup>1</sup> and that he knew him first as the author of the *Eclogues*.<sup>2</sup> We must then assume that Broch's interpretation of Vergil's *Aeneid* and his psychological reconstruction of Vergil's wish to burn the text must be largely his own.<sup>3</sup> Not heavily biased by the scholarly research on Vergil up to the 1930s, Broch was free to establish his own reading of the *Aeneid* and its author. *The Death of Vergil*, therefore, gives us a unique opportunity to study a productive reading of one world renowned author by another. Broch's novel becomes both a text and a reading, a primary literary document and a critical interpretation of an earlier literary work and life.

Broch's *Death of Vergil* thus offers perfect material for intertextual analysis.<sup>4</sup> I am using the term "intertextual" in a dual sense. First, the term implies "between texts" and suggests allusion and influence. In this case, an intertextual investigation would focus on Broch's use of quotations from and allusions to Vergil's *Aeneid* and other works in creating his own novel. Paul Michael Lützel has facilitated this type of investigation by listing the direct quotations of Vergil's *Aeneid*, *Eclogues* and *Georgics* in the various versions of Broch's *Death of Vergil*.<sup>5</sup> Lützel, however, offers no analysis or comment on the borrowings from Vergil's work. Second, "intertextual" implies what Michael Riffaterre discusses as the relation of a text to an "intertext," i.e., to an implied semiotic system running beneath the surface language of the text.<sup>6</sup> For Broch's *Death of Vergil*, this intertext is composed of Broch's own implied reading of Vergil's *Aeneid* rather than Vergil's actual text. This latter type of intertextual analysis goes beyond allusion to investigate the underlying suppositions of Broch's interpretation of Vergil's text which shape Broch's own work.

Neither of these specific types of intertextual investigation has been undertaken for Broch's novel. Manfred Durzak's *Forschungs-*

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*bericht* of 1969<sup>7</sup> makes this fact clear and the situation has not changed significantly since then. Joseph Strelka and Jean-Michel Rabaté<sup>8</sup> have looked at technical and stylistic resonances between Broch's *Vergil* and Joyce's *Ulysses*, while Timm Collmann, Gerald Harlass and Børge Kristiansen have examined the relationship of Broch's techniques in *Vergil* to those of Thomas Mann in his novels.<sup>9</sup> Walter Hinderer, Aniela Jaffé and Kristiansen have focused on Broch's depiction of Vergil himself and the mystical implications of Vergil's return to the All as he dies, while Maria Angela Winkel examines Vergil's biographical likeness to Broch.<sup>10</sup> Curt von Faber du Faur, Ernestine Schlant and Bengt Landgren examine classical allusions (generally pre-Vergilian) in Broch's text.<sup>11</sup> But few critics have analyzed Broch's specific use of the historical Vergil — and, more importantly, of his texts.

Endre Kiss mentions the *Aeneid* in passing and hints at Broch's Vergil's view of its profound inadequacy — and the inadequacy of art in general.<sup>12</sup> Ernestine Schlant does a more detailed analysis of the short-comings of art in terms of the aesthetic versus the ethical in Broch's novel.<sup>13</sup> Schlant focuses on Broch's epistemological theories rather than his use and interpretation of Vergil's texts. Kristiansen also discusses Broch's Vergil's view that the *Aeneid* is inadequate and degraded, but Kristiansen draws his conclusion from a comparison of Vergil's idealized vision to the degenerate actuality of Imperial Rome as Broch depicts it rather than from Broch's reading of the *Aeneid* itself.<sup>14</sup> Ziolkowski explores Broch's selection of Vergil as his central character and Broch's knowledge of the details of Vergil's life.<sup>15</sup> Timm Collmann investigates some of the historical dimensions of Vergil's relinquishing his desire to burn the *Aeneid* in order to give the poem as a gesture of love to Augustus.<sup>16</sup> And, finally, Lützel in *Materialien* lists specific quotations from the *Aeneid* as they appear in Broch's *Vergil*.

None of these critics, however, has investigated Broch's reading of Vergil's texts in any detail. Given the number of specific quotations from Vergil's works in Broch's *Death of Vergil*, the importance of the two prefacing quotations from the *Aeneid*, the depiction of Vergil as *the* artist, and the close parallels among Aeneas, Vergil and Broch himself,<sup>17</sup> it is surprising that critics have not more actively explored the implications of Broch's vision of Vergil's texts. I will investigate precisely that problem in this essay. My analysis will demonstrate that Broch's vision of Vergil's texts plays upon their reflexive, self-questioning aspects even more strongly than their prophetic characteristics. My examination of Broch's

reading of Vergil and his texts will also call into question the traditional interpretation of Vergil's surrender of the *Aeneid* as a newly humane and human gesture.

Broch's initial choice of Vergil as his literary focus rests upon cultural and personal parallels between Broch's own situation and that of Vergil.<sup>18</sup> But there is also a strong literary affinity between the two men, an aesthetic mirroring, which increases the moral as well as the literary depth of the allusions Broch uses. Like Broch, Vergil in his own writings places himself firmly within an older tradition in which he feels himself both heir and outcast. Vergil's use of the Homeric texts and the legend of Troy links Rome to its past as Broch's use of Rome reminds one that Germany is descended from the Holy Roman Empire. But Vergil uses Homer in order to revise the Greek virtues of war and valor and to replace them with a new Roman order and *pietas*. Vergil, then, does his own productive reading of Homer as Broch does his of Vergil. Even as he attempts to replace Achilles with Aeneas, however, Vergil realizes the human cost of the founding of Rome — the sacrifice of Creusa, Dido and finally Turnus. The selfless piety that Aeneas displays in the first half of the *Aeneid* gives way at its close to the retributive slaying of Turnus, thus reintroducing Achilles as a model and foreshadowing the fratricide that would eventually give birth to Rome. For Broch, Vergil does not, finally, triumph over Homer, nor Aeneas over Achilles. Vergil's text is rather a surfacing of a darker anxiety about the nature of man and about the ability of the poet to shape a new religion and morality for him. Broch's recognition of Vergil's anxiety over mankind and over the function of the poet in the world truly determines his fascination for Broch as a writer during the Nazi era. And, indeed, Broch seems to have been ahead of his time in his interpretation of Vergil since it would have been the didactic and propagandistic version of Vergil which Broch would have received in school.<sup>19</sup>

Vergil represents for Broch the poet *par excellence*, the very image of the supreme literary craftsman — but he is also unavoidably Dante's Vergil,<sup>20</sup> guide through the darker realms of hell not privileged to enter into the final vision of light (as Broch's introductory quote from Dante's *Inferno*, XXXIV, 133-39 reminds us).<sup>21</sup> Broch describes Vergil as a "Vor-Prophet," a fore- or pre-prophet, who is not privileged to deliver the new word himself but who anticipates a new age. Much like his hero Aeneas, Vergil is, in Broch's eyes, the fore-founder of a new order, the pre-cursor of the coming Christian era. Broch sees Vergil's sense of preparation for that which is to come as Vergil's one consolation amidst his

despair over the inadequacy of his poetic vocation and the unworthiness of men to accept the poet's message.<sup>22</sup> In the same way, Broch felt his own writing to be this type of annunciation of a new order without much faith that men of his era would be able to discern his aesthetic message.<sup>23</sup> Broch saw himself very much in the position of the dying Vergil — operating at the very borders of the possible, approaching the edges of transcendence while knowing that the final triumph would come only in death itself. The sense of “not yet” and “yet still,” of the moment of transition to some finer state, runs throughout Broch's *Death of Vergil* as Broch felt it ran through Vergil's own writings, life, and death.

Let us turn, however, from generalizations about Broch's attitude toward Vergil to his actual use of Vergil's life and writings in his novel *The Death of Vergil*.<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, the majority of quotations from the *Aeneid* are from books one through six, and thus focus on the idea of being thrust out of a home, away from a cultural tradition, and the wandering in search of a new tradition. This feeling of seeking necessitated by fate itself is underlined in Broch's first prefacing quotation to the novel, “. . . fato profugus. . .” (compelled by fate) (*Aeneid* I, 2). Broch's vision of Vergil sets Vergil in a close parallel with his hero Aeneas: both are forced out of the life and home they knew in order to undertake a public task, a common contribution to a new cultural tradition. Aeneas's search for the site of Rome is analogous to Vergil's attempt to solidify the traditions and virtues of the Roman Republic under Augustus. Both men sacrifice personal comfort and happiness in order to advance the common good. Broch's vision of the artist in general and of himself personally corresponds to this concept.

The only difficulty is that the sacrifice is not guaranteed to be adequate. Broch's Vergil realizes ultimately that the *Aeneid* is a failed work — not only because it was unpolished but because language and the art it fashions cannot finally achieve transcendence either for the individual or for the state. Vergil's desire to burn the *Aeneid* is, for Broch, the realization that art, too, must be sacrificed to arrive at truth and unity. Broch himself suggests that his novel would have been better had it been destroyed before its appearance. Its truth for Broch lay in its composition, in the struggle for understanding, not in its final but unfinished form.<sup>25</sup> Schlant points out Broch's theory that “nothing less than continuous creation qualifies as ethical, and no regard for form (or tradition) must lure into the realm of the aesthetic.”<sup>26</sup> The drive to maintain a “permanent revolution” of creativity, what Schlant describes as a “constant cognitive breakthrough,” makes the finished artistic work always a falsification and betrayal.

Broch underscores his realization of the inadequacy of art by the ambiguity of the phrase “fato profugus.” *Fatum* is most commonly taken here to mean “fate,” but the noun’s first meaning is “that which is said, an utterance.” “Fato profugus,” then, implies not only “compelled by fate” but also compelled or driven by language itself. The *Aeneid* becomes a self-sustaining construct carried forward by the legends and texts of pre-Rome but even more so by the momentum of its own poetic language. Broch’s test, too, is swept forward largely by the linguistic stream that moves relentlessly toward the broader sea of imagery of its last section just as Broch’s Vergil feels himself swept forward on a bark of death. Both Broch and Vergil, then, are driven by language, by the word itself, as much as by their visions of a larger poetic mission. The danger, in fact, is that the sheer swell of language for its own sake will swamp and thus conceal the truth which should be its source.

This fear of failing to grasp the essential truth is revealed again in Broch’s second prefacing quotation to the novel taken from *Aeneid*, VI, 697-702:

“ . . . Give me your hand,  
 let me embrace you, father: don’t slip away!”  
 So speaking, he let the tears course down his face.  
 Three times he tried to fold him in his arms:  
 three times an empty shade escaped his grasp,  
 light as the air, most like the wings of sleep.  
 (Frank Copley translation)

Like Aeneas, both Vergil and Broch find themselves attempting to embrace the shades of past traditions, of earlier texts and histories. And like Aeneas, each finds himself grasping an empty shade, the trace only of what was once a living tradition. And again, like Aeneas, Broch and his Vergil fear that they too are emerging through the gates of ivory along with the other false shades and false witnesses.<sup>27</sup> The central realization of the artist Vergil as well as his heir Broch is that art (and particularly language) will not reach and cannot hold truth. The desire to burn the *Aeneid* (perhaps like Aeneas’s desire to return to the burning Troy) is the acknowledgment that truth lies beyond physical annihilation.

This failure of the word in Vergil’s work is figured in two passages of the *Aeneid* — the first, the doors of Apollo’s temple at the opening of Book VI where Daedalus cannot bring himself to portray the fall of Icarus, and the second, the emergence from the gates of ivory — another Vergilian passage which Broch quotes directly in his novel. The temple door passage suggests the failure of another artist *par*

*excellence*, Daedalus, to depict that which is most vital to him, the death of the son. Art fails to capture the truly significant moment of the living world. Analogously, when Aeneas emerges from the gates of ivory, the historical text, the predictive words of the father, also fails or is, at least, distorted. The verification of the ultimate distortion of the historical word comes in another moment of death, that of the killing of Turnus by Aeneas who has been advised by Anchises to spare the conquered. Both of these instances in the *Aeneid* bespeak a deeply felt anxiety about the effectiveness of the poetic word either as art or as history.

The written text itself is called into question in yet another passage in Book III of the *Aeneid* when Helenus advises Aeneas as to how to approach the Sibyl. The Sibyl provides for the questioner an accurate written text; she “consigns to leaves her words and symbols.” The possibility of accurate, recorded truth is thus held out in the *Aeneid*; the Sibyl’s leaves cannot be read, however, without introducing the winds which stir the leaves and obscure their message by disordering them. Apparently only the unread, uninterpreted, untouched, primal text can contain the truth, but the very conditions necessary to convey that truth are disturbed by the process of reading itself.<sup>28</sup> Only the ambivalent disordered fragments of the text remain – and they fail to achieve the moment of truth.

Broch takes these passages most seriously in his implied reading of Vergil’s text. Broch’s Vergil laments precisely the cancellation of truth by distortion or artistic failure – or by the process of reading itself. In his debates with Augustus, Broch’s Vergil perceives that he was “impatient for perception . . . and that is why [he] wanted to write down everything . . . for this, alas, is what poetry is, the craving for truth; this is its desire and it is unable to penetrate beyond it. . . .”<sup>29</sup> Vergil realizes that his own impatience for truth induces him to falsify, to glorify at the expense of true perception in his epic. He realizes, finally, that the text is an “obstruction to perception: it is in [his] way” (p. 332). The text becomes an empty metaphor, an endless chain of metaphor which could be ended only by death itself, by the transcendence of the ultimate end (p. 357). Vergil realizes painfully that the poet can speak only in metaphor but that “. . . metaphor is not the same as perception, metaphor follows perception though sometimes it precedes it, rather like an inadmissible and incomplete forecast brought into being by words alone, in which case metaphor becomes nothing but a dark screen standing in front of truth and concealing it instead of shining out from its midst” (p. 327). This

passage recalls the *Aeneid's* description of the Sibyl's written texts and the uncertainty they produce; it reminds us that the written word obscures the truth when it must be deciphered. Broch's Vergil must destroy his written word, then, precisely in order to break through the screen and the ambivalent metaphor to truth itself.

In death — the death of the poem as well as his own death — Broch's Vergil hopes to break the chain of infinite regression that metaphor and language represent:

. . . the chain of metaphor was endless and death alone was without metaphor, death to which this chain reached, as though death, even though lying outside it, were its last link, and as though all metaphors had been shaped simply for the sake of death, in order to grasp its lack of metaphor despite all . . . as if language could regain its native simplicity from death alone, as if there lay the birthplace of earth's simple language, the most earthly and yet the most divine of symbols: in all human language death smiled. And now Plotia spoke: "Reality is mute, and we shall live in its muteness. . ." (p. 357)

Death finally cancels metaphor and language in its ultimate transcendence.

Like Aeneas, Broch's Vergil too has his golden bough, the symbol predicted by the Sibyl that provides access to the underworld, to death figured by the stream of time broadening into infinity:

The drizzling continued, the drizzling of the wall-fountain, the drizzling in the leafy shadows, the drizzling of the stream, which, it is true, had become so broad that the other shore could not be reached, aye, it could not even be seen. But it was not necessary to stretch the hand out over the stream for already here on the shore, yes, here upon the cover, within reach of the hand, was a golden shimmer: the laural shoot, . . . and its golden leaves were shimmering. (p. 432)

This reference to the golden bough occurs immediately before Vergil dictates his last text, the text of his will giving the *Aeneid* over to Augustus, the text that cancels all previous texts by surrendering them to the world in which they have failed to reach perception. After this final gesture, Broch's Vergil can enter the underworld and achieve the unity of death. This last text literally renders unto Caesar that which is Caesar's. Vergil returns the *Aeneid* — which had failed to produce the enlightenment necessary to reach truth and transcendence, which has remained on the level of ambivalent metaphor — through the gates of ivory to the limited human world from which it arises.



The ultimate irony, of course, is that Vergil does not burn the poem any more than Broch burns his novel or than Aeneas is allowed to burn with Troy. But what does this surrender of the text to Augustus imply in the broader view of the novel? Broch's Augustus is a surprisingly attractive character who tends to make reasonably good (if very pragmatic) political sense. The depiction of Augustus is startling because one is expecting an analogy to Hitler — or perhaps even Mussolini, who became fond of using the Roman texts to justify his own new Roman state. Since Broch is directly suffering under the dictatorship of Hitler and his imperial expansion, one would expect a harsher vision of Augustus. Vergil, however, finally turns the poem over to Augustus as an act of love for the ruler but knowing full well that Augustus's vision of the poem as well as of himself is at odds with Vergil's intended message. Broch's Vergil foresees a Christ as the coming savior, not Augustus. Nonetheless, the poet capitulates to the dictator. The point here seems to be that the surrender of the *Aeneid* has finally become unavoidable since Vergil has moved beyond art and politics and even beyond language as he moves toward death. Vergil is now free of the earthly and free to die back into a unity with the cosmos in the imagery-rich last section of the novel. The surrender of the text, however, remains a point of failure for Broch as a living artist. If the only truth is in annihilation — of text as well as artist — what, then, does Broch's ultimate artist, or Broch himself, accomplish?

Most critics feel that since Vergil gives the poem to Augustus as an act of love, the gesture supports Vergil's perception that "there is only one reality, the reality of love!" (p. 247). Hermann Weigand is one of the earliest critics strongly to espouse this view. He offers the following commentary:

What, then, causes Vergil's face-about? If we persist in asking this question we shall never find the answer. There is no motivation to cause Vergil's yielding. That yielding takes place in a realm in which causation does not function as an operative concept. Causation belongs to the psychological realm. This face-about is a metaphysical experience, a miracle, a mutation of the soul. Let us ask, rather, what has happened. . . . This is what happened: love was born in Vergil's heart. He heard the cry of the kindred human soul through the ranting of the angry voice. For the first time in his life he felt touched by a simple sense of human fellowship, and he rose to the act of helpful, compassionate love. . . . Up to this moment he had remained wrapped within himself. In all his arguments with Augustus he had been essentially concerned with saving himself. His very

insistence upon destroying his work and deleting his name had been egocentrically conditioned. Suddenly all this is swept away like a cobweb. Love excogitated has been supplanted by love simply experienced. Love fills Vergil's heart, and even the realization that there was an element of craft mingled with the spontaneity of Augustus's passionate outburst does not dim its kindly radiance ever so slightly.<sup>30</sup>

Timm Collmann provides a more complicated interpretation of the surrender of the *Aeneid*.<sup>31</sup> He sees the gesture as an act of love but also as an act with ethical consequences — specifically Augustus's agreeing to free Vergil's slaves as a favor in return for the text. While I would agree with the ethical dimension Collmann suggests, it does not make any less problematic Broch's depiction of the ultimate inadequacy of *art* in society. Since there are few literary works whose political exchange value would be as great as Vergil's *Aeneid*, Collmann's reading is difficult to see in any larger context. If he is suggesting that the ethical act supersedes the literary work, then the issue remains of why Broch continues to *write the Death of Vergil* at all. Collmann's reading is enlightening, but does not solve the issue of the function and value of art as depicted in Broch's text.

Manfred Durzak in *Dichtung und Erkenntnis*<sup>32</sup> suggests that, as the novel ends, Vergil comes to perceive the *Aeneid* in a new light — as the announcement of a newly humanized world in which the individual will be ethically rejuvenated. While I agree that Broch emphasizes the prophetic nature of Vergil's text with regard to the coming Christian era, I do not see that this late perception on either Vergil's or Broch's part cancels totally the novel's critique of the inadequacies of art *as it exists* in Vergil's and Broch's own epochs. Indeed, Vergil is aware of the prophetic nature of his text before he surrenders it to Augustus — as his debates with Augustus demonstrate. This fact cannot, therefore, have motivated the final surrender of the poem and does not resolve the text's radical questioning of the value of art.

In any case, if the surrender of the poem is meant to demonstrate to some degree that love does indeed "conquer all," the resonance we have noted between Broch's and Vergil's texts may well work against Broch's own design. Broch's Vergil, for example, concludes in Book III that love is the essential principle upon which the secrets of existence and transcendence rest. Knowing Broch's own concern for his fellow men<sup>33</sup> and his rather naively moral view of political events, one is encouraged to take Broch's character's declarations about love seriously. In many of his other writings, Broch does seem to feel that love conquers all. He has in mind, of course, a broader love of humanity as well as personal love, but he does be-

lieve in the principle. Vergil, on the other hand, seems much less disposed to value love as the ultimate human principle. In both the *Georgics* (3. 242-84) and the *Eclogues* (10. 69), the concept of love is depicted as driving men and animals alike to distraction and desperation. When Gallus in the *Eclogues* declares that “love conquers all,” he does so from the point-of-view of a saddened unrequited lover. Broch, then, can hardly have derived his central message and discovery from the historical Vergil. Indeed, even Broch’s Vergil, who has come to realize the falsity and illusion of so much he has written, seems an unlikely candidate for so simple a solution to the complexity of existence – especially since he is willing enough to let Dido expire for love of Aeneas so that Rome and duty rather than love can conquer all.

This intertextual undercutting of Broch’s central declaration adds to the unsatisfactory interpretation of Vergil’s surrender of the *Aeneid* to Augustus as an act of love so powerful as to outweigh the possible political harm engendered by turning such a potent political weapon as the *Aeneid* over to the dictator. The fact that the poet *par excellence* capitulates to the politician *par excellence* is not satisfactorily offset by Vergil’s personal love for Augustus.

Karl Menges also calls into question the interpretation of this crucial gesture of surrendering the *Aeneid* as an act of friendship or love.<sup>34</sup> Menges rightly sees the gesture as “kaum überzeugend motiviert” (hardly convincingly motivated) and as a structural weakness in Broch’s attempt to create a unified totality in his novel. Menges, however, sees this weakness as a factor of Broch’s inability to reconcile his classical (and closed) view of art with the modern open-ended existence he seeks to record. Menges argues that Vergil’s surrender of the *Aeneid* as an act of love demonstrates Broch’s final retreat into a classical concept of the autonomy and totalizing power of art.

My investigation of the intertextual dimensions of Broch’s novel, however, suggests a contrary reading. I would argue that Broch’s feeling that art is impossible during an epoch of cultural crisis or, more accurately, the end of a cultural epoch, is most strongly if frustratingly embodied in this gesture of the surrender of the *Aeneid* to Augustus. The return to the cosmos that Broch’s Vergil experiences following this exchange with Augustus is indeed a transcendence, but one of an entirely individual nature. Art finally gives way to existence at its most overpowering in death. Vergil’s personal triumph and reunification with the all in death also marks the failure of his art. Broch’s depiction of the surrender of the poetic text is a

moment of honest (if pained) recognition of the inadequacy of art rather than an illusion of its ability to create a new totality. Broch's novel thus becomes the dazzling literary experiment that records the ultimate failure of literature in the world at large.

The direct quotations Broch chooses from the *Aeneid* strongly suggest this interpretation. Additionally, this reading corresponds to the "intertext" we have been tracing which is composed of Broch's implied reading of Vergil's works. The strongly self-questioning strain in the *Aeneid*, the vision of art as inadequate for depicting the truly significant moments of life, the anxiety over the capacities of language to convey either prophecy or truth, the fear that language becomes a self-perpetuating metaphor which only obscures true knowledge, the hopeless deformation of the written text when it is deciphered — all of these characteristics of Vergil's text are stressed by Broch in his novel. Each of them finds its echo in Broch's own fictional language and structures. The intertextual features — in both senses of "intertextual" — thus make problematic the positive interpretation of the surrender of the *Aeneid* which many critics have proposed.

Ironically, Broch's fundamental feeling of the impossibility of literature during his own historical period<sup>35</sup> is retained even as his own literary text becomes increasingly esoteric. Weaving bits of Vergil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics* as well as the *Aeneid* into his text, Broch carefully intertwines moments of hallucination, interior monologue, actual dialogue, and finally the consciousness of existence at large to form a lyrical, narrative text that Broch himself was unwilling to label a "novel."<sup>36</sup>

Broch's use of the earlier texts was an attempt to expand the boundaries and limits of the novel form as well as those of language itself. He uses the texts to create sub-systems of meaning, and of political, moral, and aesthetic implications, which run beneath the surface language to which he himself is limited. Just as he uses archetypal images of death and the medieval systems of alchemy, Broch uses earlier texts as buttressing systems that allow him to convey much more in his writing than he can actually "say" in the surface of his book. As we have seen, however, Broch's use of intertextuality complicates as well as enriches his text. His novel, finally, indicts both Vergil's text and Broch's own as necessarily inadequate to the task of cognition which Broch sees as the highest ethical imperative. In the failure of the art of *the poet*, Vergil, Broch acknowledges the inevitable failure of his own most grand experiment.

Just as Vergil seeks to achieve an understanding beyond the lan-

guage of man and even of art in *The Death of Vergil*, Broch seeks to escape the limits of his own chosen form and language by incorporating his implied interpretations of earlier history, biography and literature into the substructure of his own work. In this process, Vergil becomes much more for Broch than just an earlier historical or even literary figure. He becomes *the* tortured artist whose art embodies the realization of its own inadequacy even as it stretches the boundaries of its limitations. In this sense, Broch becomes his own version of Vergil as he completes and delivers to the world a text that he knows will contribute, inadequately and ambivalently, to a cultural tradition that he both values and despairs of in the face of a world — like Vergil's — poised at the moment of cultural crisis, at the transition between an older dying order and an unforeseeable new age.

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#### NOTES

1. At the 1979 Yale Symposium on Hermann Broch, Theodore Ziolkowski argued convincingly that Broch's knowledge of the facts of Vergil's life or the scholarship surrounding his works was very limited. Ziolkowski points out that all the information Broch uses concerning the life of the historical Vergil can be found in the rather brief "life of Vergil by Donatus, a famous vita attached to scores of editions from the 15th century down through the 19th, including the standard Heyne-Wagner edition that was widely used well into the 20th century" ("Broch's Image of Vergil and Its Context," *Modern Austrian Literature*, 13, No. 4 [1980] 15). Ziolkowski suggests that Broch's choice of Vergil as his central character was probably triggered by the bimillennial festivities in honor of Vergil's birth, celebrated all over Europe in 1930, in which the parallel between Vergil's Rome and modern Europe was the dominant idea. Without reconstructing Ziolkowski's argument in its entirety, we can use several of his conclusions to direct our investigation here.

2. This is evidenced by quotations almost exclusively from the *Eclogues* in the earliest versions of *The Death of Vergil*.

3. The one secondary text that Broch mentions in his letters is a volume by Theodore Haecker entitled *Vergil Vater des Abendlands* (Leipzig: Jakob Hegner, 1935). Ziolkowski points out that "Haecker's book contains conspicuously few biographical facts, but it utilizes almost exactly those few details that Broch uses in "Die Heimkehr des Vergil" [an earlier version of the novel]. More importantly, his interpretation of Vergil parallels Broch's . . ." (p. 11). Broch later revises this early version of the story greatly, but Ziolkowski's point — that Broch uses Haecker's book almost exclusively for background material — is well taken.

4. On the theory and application of intertextual analysis, see Michael Riffaterre's *Semiotics of Poetry* (Bloomington, Ind., 1978), pp. 115-50, his "Syllepsis," *Critical Inquiry*, 6 (Summer 1980), 625-38, and his "Interpretation and Undecidability," *New Literary History*, 12 (Winter 1981), 227-43; Laurent Jenny's "Sémiotique de collage intertextuel," *Revue d'esthétique*, 3-4 (1978), 165-82, and the entire of *Poétique*, 27 (1976) which was devoted exclusively to intertextuality.

5. Paul Michael Lützel, "Nachweis der Vergil-Zitate aus *Der Tod des Vergil*" in *Materialien zu Hermann Broch "Der Tod des Vergil"* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976), ed. Paul Michael Lützel, pp. 306-63.

6. See especially Riffaterre's "Syllepsis."

7. Manfred Durzak, "Hermann Brochs *Der Tod des Vergil*: Echo und Wirkung," *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch*, 10 (Neue Folge) (1969), 273-347. Durzak does an exhaustive summary and critique of investigations of Broch's novel up to that point.

8. Joseph Strelka, "Hermann Broch: Comparatist and Humanist," *Comparative Literature Studies*, 12 (March 1975), 67-79; and Jean-Michel Rabaté, "Joyce and Broch: Or, Who Was the Crocodile?" *Comparative Literature Studies*, 19 (Summer 1982), 121-33.

9. Timm Collmann, *Zeit und Geschichte in Hermann Brochs Roman "Der Tod des Vergil"* (Bonn: H. Bouvier, 1967); Gerald Harlass, "Das Kunstmittel des Leitmotivs: Bemerkung zur motivischen Arbeit Thomas Mann und Hermann Broch," *Welt und Wort*, 15 (1960); and Børge Kristiansen, "Hermann Brochs Roman *Der Tod des Vergil*," *Orbis Litterarum*, 32 (1977), 116-39.

10. Walter Hinderer, "Grundzüge des *Tod des Vergil*" in *Hermann Broch: Perspektiven der Forschung*, ed. Manfred Durzak (München, Fink Verlag, 1972), pp. 89-134; Aniela Jaffé, "Hermann Broch: *Der Tod des Vergil*: Ein Beitrag zum Problem der Individuation" in *Studien zur analytischen Psychologie C. G. Jungs. Festschrift zum 80. Geburtstag von C. G. Jung* (Zürich: Rhein Verlag, 1955) II, pp. 288-343, rpt. in *Perspektiven*, pp. 135-76; Kristiansen, "Hermann Brochs Roman *Der Tod des Vergil*;" and Maria Angela Winkel, *Denkerische und dichterische Erkenntnis als Einheit: Eine Untersuchung zur Symbolik in Hermann Brochs "Tod des Vergil"* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter D. Lang, 1980).

11. Curt von Faber du Faur, "Der Seelenführer in Hermann Brochs *Tod des Vergil*," in *Perspektiven*, pp. 177-92; Ernestine Schlant, "Hermann Broch's Theory of Symbols Exemplified in a Scene from *Der Tod des Vergil*," *Neophilologus*, 54, 1 (1970), 53-64; and Bengt Landgren, *Hermann Brochs "Der Tod des Vergil"* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1978).

12. Endre Kiss, "Zur Theorie und Praxis des Modernen Romans: Über Hermann Brochs *Der Tod des Vergil*," *Neophilologus*, 62 (April 1978), 279-89. See especially p. 284.

13. Ernestine Schlant, *Hermann Broch* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978), pp. 102-24.

14. Kristiansen, p. 128.

15. Ziolkowski, "Broch's Image of Vergil."

16. Collmann, *Zeit und Geschichte*, particularly pp. 92-106.

17. Bengt Landgren does investigate the analogous situations of Aeneas, Vergil, and Broch — and also Orpheus and Dante — in his book *Hermann Brochs "Der Tod des Vergil"*.

18. Broch selected his historical material — the last day of Vergil's life, Vergil's desire to burn the *Aeneid*, his debates with Augustus — specifically to reflect the political climate and the political pressures on the poet of the 1930s and 40s. In a letter to Kurt Wolff in 1943, Broch suggests that "Vergil lived in a time which can be compared with our own in many ways, in a time which was filled with blood, horror, and death. . ." (See p. 216 of *Materialien zu Hermann Broch "Der Tod des Vergil"*, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1976] for the original German. Translation mine.) And in his letter to Hermann Weigand (*Materialien*, p. 234), he again cites parallels between the 1st century B.C. and Europe of the 1930s, parallels such as wide-spread war, dictatorship, decay of old religious forms, and even compulsory emigrations.

19. See Chapter I of W. R. Johnson, *Darkness Visible: A Study of Vergil's "Aeneid"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) for a summary of the critical attitudes of the first half of the 20th century.

20. Hermann Weigand suggests the influence of Dante in his very early and perceptive article "Broch's *Death of Vergil*: Program Notes." *PMLA*, 42 (1947), 529.

21. The Dante passage cited is the end of the *Inferno* and reads as follows:

My guide and I came on that hidden road  
to make our way back into the bright world;  
and with no care for any rest, we climbed —  
he first, I following — until I saw,  
through a round opening, some of those things  
of beauty Heaven bears. It was from there  
that we emerged, to see — once more — the stars.  
(Allen Mandelbaum translation)

22. See Broch's letter to Aldous Huxley, May 10, 1945 in *Materialien*, pp. 221-28. In the same letter, Broch suggests that it is given to art and to art alone to let man sense that which is still inexpressible and yet is at hand.

23. Broch had somewhat more faith that his book on Mass-Psychology (ironically never completed) would have the desired practical effect of re-humanizing the world, "einschliesslich Deutschlands" (including Germany). See Huxley letter p. 226.

24. A complete listing of actual quotes from Vergil's works in the five versions of Broch's novel are provided in Lützel's *Materialien*, pp. 306-63.

25. See letter to Werner Kraft of Nov., 1948 in *Materialien*, p. 244.

26. Schlant, *Hermann Broch*, p. 109. Manfred Durzak makes a similar point when he analyzes the stages of Broch's revisions of the novel in *Hermann Broch: Dichtung und Erkenntnis* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1978), pp. 80-110.

27. Schlant points out the consistently negative implications of ivory in Broch's novel. Schlant, *Hermann Broch*, pp. 177-78.

28. A particularly fine analysis of this passage and its analogy to the reading process was presented by a graduate student, Marc Wiesmann, for the UCLA "Work in Progress Forum" in Feb., 1983.

29. All quotations are from Hermann Broch's *The Death of Vergil*, trans. Jean Starr Untermeyer (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1965). This passage is located on p. 320.

30. Hermann Weigand, "Program Notes," pp. 544-45.

31. Timm Collmann, see especially pp. 92-106.

32. Manfred Durzak, *Dichtung und Erkenntnis*, pp. 117-24.

33. During the time that Broch spent in exile in the United States during World War II, he dedicated a large portion of his meager income from grants and temporary teaching positions to helping others escape from Nazi held Austria.

34. Karl Menges, "Bemerkungen zum Problem der ästhetischen Zeitgenossenschaft in Hermann Broch's *Der Tod des Vergil*," *Modern Austrian Literature*, 13 (1980), 31-50. This volume is a special issue dedicated to Hermann Broch. See especially pp. 41-46.

35. According to Broch, when in the mid 1930s he was invited to read one of his stories on the Viennese Radio, he offered instead an essay on "Kultur-Ende und Literatur," ("Literature at the End of a Cultural Epoch"). The topic arose from Broch's growing conviction that to write literature during a time of such intense moral and political crisis as the 1930s was an act of immorality in itself. (See letter to Hermann Weigand of Feb. 12, 1946 in *Materialien*, pp. 233-39.) During such a time, literature would allow, at best, a comfortable but irresponsible escape from the political world and, at worst, a means of justifying and glorifying the political destruction taking place. The radio, however, was interested in fiction not essay, and so Broch claims he was constrained to convey his concerns in a short story of approximately 20 pages entitled "The Homecoming of Vergil" ("Die Heimkehr des Vergil"). This original short story — after several extensive reworkings — eventually became the roughly 600-page novel *The Death of Vergil*. By examining Broch's correspondence, scholars have now established that Broch's version of the novel's genesis is somewhat inaccurate. There was no such immediate connection between the radio talk and the Vergil story. "Die Kunst am Ende einer Kultur" was written in 1933 not 1935. (See letters to Edith Ludovik-Gyömroi [May 31, 1933] and Daniel Brody [June 2, 1933] and note by Lützel in *Materialien*, p. 239). The 20-page short story "Die Heimkehr des Vergil" was composed almost four years later in late 1936 or early 1937 and part of it was indeed read on Viennese Radio on March 17, 1937. (See *Materialien*, p. 239, note 3.) Nevertheless it is indicative of Broch's feeling about the state of literature that he should link the essay so closely to the initial Vergil story. Broch interpreted the legend of Vergil's desire to burn the *Aeneid* as a gesture akin to his own increasing need to turn from literature to more practically oriented action against the Nazi threat. (See letter to Huxley of May 10, 1945 in *Materialien*, p. 226.)

36. In the letter to Huxley of May 10, 1945, Broch comments:

Ob man diesen Vorgang eine Ausweitung der Romanform oder deren Durchbrechung nennen will, ist nebensächlich; ich habe mir niemals darüber den Kopf zerbrochen, empfinde aber das Buch sicherlich nicht als "Roman," sondern einfach als etwas, das in Notwendigkeit aus seiner Problemkonstellation

entstanden ist und diese, eben infolge solcher Notwendigkeit, hoffentlich halbwegs adäquat darstellt.

(*Materialien*, p. 224)

(Whether one wants to call this event an expansion of the novel form or a breaking through it is beside the point; I have never worried my head over it, but I view the book surely not as a "novel," but simply as something which is engendered by necessity out of its constellation of problems and which, precisely as a consequence of such necessity, hopefully represents it halfway adequately.) (translation mine)

See also Broch's self-commentary (included in the notes to Hermann Broch, *Der Tod des Vergil* [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976] pp. 457 ff.) in which he describes his text as "nichts anderes als ein einziges lyrisches Gedicht, das wie jede Lyrik als Ausdruck eines einzigen Lebensmomentes zu gelten hat, eines einzigen Lebensaugenblickes, der hier allerdings der des Sterbens ist" (p. 458) ("nothing else than a single lyric poem, which like every lyric, represents the expression of a single life moment, a single second of life, which here, to be sure, is the moment of dying"). Broch refers to his method of composition in the book as "Methode des lyrischen Kommentars" ("method of lyrical commentary") (same essay, p. 458).