



## A DOUBLE TRAGIC ALLUSION IN AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS 14.1.3\*

### ABSTRACT

This article identifies a double allusion to the tragic characters of Phaedra and Eriphyle in *Amm. Marc. 14.1.3* and considers its possible meanings. In combination, these allusions evoke the double nature of the story of Eriphyle, therefore functioning as a reference to the double nature of Caesar Gallus' depiction in Ammianus. The double allusion consequently forms part of Ammianus' tragic style throughout Book 14. Having identified the presence of this double allusion, the article illuminates its possible meaning by connecting Ammianus' passage to the Virgilian rewriting of the description of Eriphyle in Homer.

**Keywords:** Ammianus Marcellinus; intertextuality; allusion; history and tragedy; Phaedra; Eriphyle; Homer; Virgil

### INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of Book 14 of the *Res Gestae*, which is the first of the extant books of the work, Ammianus Marcellinus introduces Gallus, a grim and cruel character who had been recently appointed Caesar by Augustus Constantius II. The first chapter of Book 14 deals with the wicked personality of Gallus and recounts some dreadful deeds that he and his wife Constantina, sister of Constantius, had performed. Both Gallus and Constantina are described as unscrupulous characters: he came to the rank of Caesar *ex squalore imo miseriarum*<sup>1</sup> and, once there, *asperitate nimia cuncta foedabat* (14.1.1), but his temperament is encouraged by Constantina, *Megaera quaedam mortalis, inflammatrix saevientis assidua, humani cruoris auida nihil mitius quam maritus* (14.1.2). After these descriptions, the narrator tells a story that better reflects the unscrupulousness of Constantina and Gallus (14.1.3):

eminuit autem inter humilia supergressa iam potentia fines mediocrum delictorum nefanda Clematii cuiusdam Alexandrini nobilis mors repentina; cuius socrus cum misceri sibi generum flagrans eius amore non impetraret, ut ferebatur, per palatii pseudothyrum introducta oblato pretioso reginae monili id assecuta est, ut ad Honoratum tum comitem orientis formula missa letali homo scelere nullo contactus, idem Clematius, nec hiscere nec loqui permissus occideretur.

This short story shows the cruel character of Gallus and Constantina: among all their crimes, Ammianus chooses one in which a woman desires her son-in-law, a nobleman called Clematius, but cannot fulfil her desire, since Clematius rejects her. The woman visits Constantina and bribes Gallus' wife with a necklace; then, an order to kill Clematius is sent and he is executed.

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<sup>1</sup> For the Latin text, I follow W. Seyfarth's edition, *Ammiani Marcellini Rerum gestarum libri qui supersunt* (Leipzig, 1978).

This story contains some tragic elements that deserve attention. In particular, it is possible to perceive the silent presence of two tragic characters behind the narration: Phaedra and Eriphyle. The desire of Clematius' mother-in-law for him strongly recalls Phaedra's desire for her stepson Hippolytus, as does Clematius' rejection and its catastrophic outcome. It is indeed surprising that, at least to my knowledge, this connection has never been noted. Eriphyle has a more subtle but still discernible presence in the *pretiosum monile* that Constantina accepts as payment for the crime. As will be argued below, the connection between the necklace as bribe, the secret crime and the story of Eriphyle is inescapable once it is perceived. Moreover, the atmosphere that induces a tragic reading of the whole passage is emphasized by two further elements: (a) the previous presentation of Constantina as Megaera, a frequent tragic character,<sup>2</sup> and (b) the setting of a palace in which Clematius' mother-in-law is introduced through a *pseudothyrum*, 'a secret door', reminiscent of a *scaena*, as Alan Ross has already noted.<sup>3</sup>

The simultaneous and latent presence of two characters whose tales belong to tragedy raises questions about the meaning of Ammianus' story. As discussed below, the grouping of Phaedra and Eriphyle in the same scene is uncommon but does have illustrious antecedents, namely Homer and Virgil.<sup>4</sup> In what follows, Virgil's rewriting of this passage of Homer is analysed, since recognizing this intertextual connection leads to a better understanding of the meaning of Ammianus' story. Furthermore, the allusion is connected with the tragic nature of Book 14 and of Gallus' character, and this helps in achieving a broader understanding of Ammianus' tragic style and allusive art.

#### AMMIANUS' TRAGIC AND ALLUSIVE STYLE

The connection between tragic style and allusiveness in Book 14 is grounded on the contradictory nature of tragedy, which finds a correlation in the nature of some allusions in the episode. A contradiction can be seen as part of the tragic structure, where opposing views coexist while unresolved and invite the reader or the spectator to accept the impossibility of a solution.<sup>5</sup> Gallus' portrait shows a double face that may also be part of a tragic 'strategy of contradiction' reinforced by allusions which highlight the

<sup>2</sup> Megaera, one of the Furies, appears frequently in Seneca's tragedies (*HF* 102, *HO* 1006 and 1014, *Med.* 963, *Thy.* 252), but also in imperial epic (five times each in Silius' *Punica* and Statius' *Thebaid*, and three times in Lucan's *Pharsalia*). Ammianus is well acquainted with all these works: cf. G.B.A. Fletcher, 'Stylistic borrowings and parallels in Ammianus Marcellinus', *RPh* 11 (1937), 377–95; J.-M. Hulls, 'Raising one's standards: Domitian as model in Ammianus 14.1.10', *AClass* 51 (2008), 117–24, at 119–21; G. Kelly, *Ammianus Marcellinus: The Allusive Historian* (Cambridge, 2008), 22–4, 165, 168–9, 211, 289. In all these instances, Megaera is associated with death and fierce punishment, so the comparison between this character and Constantina reinforces the negative judgement about her.

<sup>3</sup> A.J. Ross, *Ammianus' Julian: Narrative and Genre in the Res Gestae* (Oxford, 2016), 70–1. The word *pseudothyrum* is extremely rare, as are the original Greek words *ψευδοθυρίς* and *ψευδοθύριον* which, according to LSJ and *TLG*, occur only once each in the Septuagint. In Classical Latin, *pseudothyrum* is only found twice in Cicero (*Verr.* 2.2.50, *Red. sen.* 14), and Ross argues that Ammianus takes it from the *Post reditum in senatu*. However, a subtle comparison between Constantina and the character of Verres lurks in this episode, as will be further argued below, so it looks more probable that Ammianus borrowed it from the *Verrines* rather than from the speech *Post reditum in senatu*.

<sup>4</sup> These two heroines notably appear in the underworld in both the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*. These passages will be discussed below.

<sup>5</sup> Gian Biagio Conte coined the expression 'strategy of contradiction' to reflect this narrative aporia,

opposing aspects of Caesar Gallus. The double allusion to Phaedra and Eriphyle helps to create a tragic flavour, both by alluding to tragic characters and by underpinning the contradictory nature of Gallus, as is argued in what follows.

The distinctively dramatic and tragic style of *Res Gestae* Book 14, and specifically of the story of Gallus, has often been recognized. Indeed, the first to suggest that Gallus' life (although not Ammianus' story of it, which was yet to be written) had tragic overtones was Emperor Julian, who wrote that it was a story ὡς περ ἐκ τραγωδίας (*Letter to the Senate and People of Athens* 270d), 'as if taken from some tragedy', quoting Euripides' *Orestes*.<sup>6</sup> Certainly, as has been suggested, Ammianus' episode has a tragic structure that might reflect Julian's opinion. In particular, as Ross has observed, '[t]he structure of the Gallus tale is ultimately one of descent into punishment, following a series of hubristic actions.'<sup>7</sup> Thompson had already recognized the unity of action of the whole Gallus episode, specifically in chapters 1, 7, 9 and 11, where he is the main character,<sup>8</sup> while Blockley acknowledged the episode's dramatic hybris–nemesis structure, although he thought that Gallus was 'too much a monster' to be a tragic hero in the Aristotelian sense.<sup>9</sup> Besides the Gallus episode, the presence of tragedy in Ammianus' work has been described as a general stylistic attribute<sup>10</sup> and as reflecting the author's comprehension of history.<sup>11</sup>

The tragic structure of the story of Gallus in Book 14 is disclosed in the last chapter, where he is deposed as Caesar and then executed on Constantius' orders. Until that point in the narration, the portrait of Gallus was unequivocally negative, being that of a villain and a cruel tyrant.<sup>12</sup> However, the last chapter of Book 14 shows a different face of Gallus, turning him from prosecutor to executioner's victim. As Tränkle wrote in an article on the narrative complexities of Gallus' downfall, 'Keine Spur also von Schwarzweissmalerei!', 'There is no trace of a black-and-white depiction!'<sup>13</sup>

More recently, Ross has unravelled some narrative techniques in play in this chapter, including changes of focalization and narratorial comments about the pitiful fate of Gallus, which reveal Gallus' inner thoughts and his growing awareness of being at

which he recognized and studied in Virgil's *Aeneid*. See G.B. Conte, *The Poetry of Pathos. Studies in Virgilian Epic* (Oxford, 2007), 150–69.

<sup>6</sup> Eur. *Or.* 14 τί τῶρρητ' ἀναμετρήσασθαί με δεῖ; Julian writes τί με δεῖ νῦν ὡς περ ἐκ τραγωδίας τὰ ἄρρητα ἀναμετρεῖσθαι;

<sup>7</sup> Ross (n. 3), 70. H. Tränkle, 'Der Caesar Gallus bei Ammian', *MH* 33 (1976), 162–79 also suggested that Ammianus might have taken his model from the account of the sympathetic Julian.

<sup>8</sup> E.A. Thompson, *The Historical Work of Ammianus Marcellinus* (London, 1947), 60–71.

<sup>9</sup> R.C. Blockley, *Ammianus Marcellinus: A Study of his Historiography and Political Thought* (Brussels, 1975), 24. This deviation from the Aristotelian model of tragedy has recently prompted the suggestion that the whole episode was perhaps written in a parodic or inverted fashion; see F.J. Alonso, 'Parody and inversion of literary genres in Ammianus Marcellinus', in Á. Sánchez-Ostiz (ed.), *Beginning and End: From Ammianus Marcellinus to Eusebius of Caesarea* (Huelva, 2016), 243–60, at 250–4.

<sup>10</sup> A. Selem, 'Il senso del tragico in Ammiano Marcellino', *ASNP* 34 (1965), 404–14.

<sup>11</sup> I. Lana, 'La vision tragique de l'histoire chez Ammien Marcellin', *Pallas* 49 (1998), 237–45.

<sup>12</sup> As remarked by E.A. Thompson, 'Ammianus' account of Gallus Caesar', *AJPh* 64 (1943), 302–15, the narration is constructed in such a way that accentuates Gallus' negative traits and conceals the positive ones. For Blockley (n. 9), 20, Gallus is portrayed by Ammianus 'as a typical tyrant in the moralistic sense of an evil and immoderate ruler', comparable to Tacitus' Tiberius.

<sup>13</sup> Tränkle (n. 7), 172. Tränkle was disputing the view of Thompson (n. 12); the ambiguity and complexity of Gallus' portrait has subsequently been noted by T.D. Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality* (Ithaca, 1998), 129–31; Kelly (n. 2), 284–93; and Ross (n. 3), 71–6.

the mercy of Constantius, and thus make the reader sympathize with Gallus' suffering.<sup>14</sup> Certainly, the inner vision of the character in this chapter, along with the pathos of his harassment and eventual execution, produces a sympathetic feeling for the character, albeit mixed with the satisfaction produced by the poetic justice of the villain being punished (14.11.25). Gallus' execution, however, is indeed pitiful and merits its own revenge: *sed uigilabit utrobique superni numinis aequitas. nam et Gallum actus oppressere crudeles et non diu postea ambo cruciabili morte absumpti sunt* (14.11.24).

The juxtaposition of those two contradictory facets of Gallus—the tyrant and the victim—can be explained by arguing that it shows the evil character of both Gallus and Constantius, in contrast to their counterpart Julian, the model of the good ruler. However, this does not cancel out the fact that Gallus is presented in the narration under two contradictory masks that arouse contradictory feelings and responses. We could say, picking up on Tränkle's metaphor, that it *is* a black-and-white depiction but one in which black and white overlap in the same character. Gallus' double and contradictory face at the end of Book 14 confronts the reader with an aporia that shows the tragic 'strategy of contradiction'.

Intertextuality plays a fundamental role in achieving this effect, as has been argued, for example, about the ambiguous depictions of Fortuna and Nemesis, and their conflation, in this episode.<sup>15</sup> In addition to the tragic style, the allusiveness of Ammianus has also been frequently noted, and an emphasis on allusion produced one of the most thorough and insightful works on Ammianus of recent decades, written by Gavin Kelly. In his book, Kelly points to a double Virgilian allusion—to both Cacus and Priam—in Gallus' execution, which further emphasizes the ambiguity of Ammianus' portrait of Gallus (14.11.23):<sup>16</sup>

et ita colligatis manibus in modum noxii cuiusdam latronis ceruice abscisa ereptaque uultus et capitis dignitate cadauer est relictum informe paulo ante urbibus et prouinciis formidatum.

Gallus' *cadauer informe* recalls Cacus' *informe cadauer* in *Aen.* 8.264–5 *pedibusque informe cadauer | protrahitur*. But his headless neck (*erepta uultus et capitis dignitate*) and the fear that he had sparked among the provinces (*urbibus et prouinciis formidatum*) are reminiscent of Priam's corpse in *Aen.* 2.556–8 *tot quondam populis terrisque superbum | regnatorem Asiae. iacet ingens litore truncus, | auulsumque umeris caput et sine nomine corpus*. As Kelly indicates, the double allusion doubtlessly underlines the ambiguity: Gallus is a monster, but he is also a ruler with *dignitas*.

Thus the allusive style of Ammianus is connected in this example with some of the qualities of his tragic style. As I argue in the next sections, the double allusion to Phaedra and to Eriphyle in 14.1.3 could be understood as serving the same purpose of promoting ambiguity.

<sup>14</sup> Ross (n. 3), 71–6.

<sup>15</sup> F.J. Alonso, 'Fortuna y Némesis como elementos trágicos en el libro 14 de Amiano Marcelino', *CFC(L)* 39 (2019), 245–55.

<sup>16</sup> Kelly (n. 2), 287–9. As Kelly notes, the allusion to Cacus had already been identified by Fletcher (n. 2), 382.

## THE MOTHER-IN-LAW AND THE NECKLACE

The connection of the story in 14.1.3 with Phaedra is apparent, as mentioned above. Clematius' mother-in-law burns with desire for her son-in-law and, upon facing his rejection, conspires to cause his death. There are some indubitable differences between the two stories, including Phaedra's suicide, but the main traits are present in Ammianus' story.

The allusion to Eriphyle is more subtle, but can be perceived in the presence of the precious necklace (*pretiosum monile*) that Clematius' mother-in-law uses to bribe Constantina. In the tragic tradition, Eriphyle was renowned for accepting a necklace as a bribe.<sup>17</sup> When Polynices was gathering an army to reclaim the throne of Thebes, he offered this gift to Eriphyle on the condition that she convinced her husband Amphiaraus to join the famous expedition of the Seven against Thebes. Eriphyle took the bribe and persuaded Amphiaraus to depart to Thebes even though he, being a seer, knew that his fate was to die in that expedition.

Although at first sight the connection may seem weak, this particular association between object and character was deeply rooted in the tradition. In his treatise the grammarian Festus referred to it in his definition of the word *monile*: *monile dictum est ornatus mulieris, qualem habuisse Eriphylam fabulae ferunt* (Gloss. Lat. 138.20–1 Lindsay). So closely connected is Eriphyle to the object 'necklace', therefore, that her name was even used by Festus to define the term.

There are at least three other references attesting to this connection between the necklace and Eriphyle's character. First, Cicero, in his second speech against Verres, used Eriphyle as a paradigm of greed to which he compares that of the defendant: *Eriphylam accepimus in fabulis ea cupiditate ut, cum uidisset monile, ut opinor, ex auro et gemmis, pulchritudine eius incensa salutem uiri proderet* (Cic. Verr. 2.4.39). Eriphyle's greed is triggered *cum uidisset monile ... ex auro et gemmis* or, in other words, *pretiosum*, therefore betraying her husband. Second, Pausanias attested to the exhibition of a necklace at the temple of Adonis and Aphrodite in the Cypriot city of Amathous; this was said to be the necklace that Eriphyle accepted in return for the betrayal of her husband: ἀνακεῖσθαι δὲ ἐνταῦθα λέγουσιν ὄρμον Ἄρμονία μὲν δοθέντα ἐξ ἀρχῆς, καλούμενον δὲ Ἐριφύλης, ὅτι αὐτὴ δῶρον ἔλαβεν ἐπὶ τῷ ἀνδρὶ (Paus. 9.41.2). The third reference is Statius' narration of how Eriphyle became owner of the necklace;<sup>18</sup> here Statius emphasizes the fatal consequences that the jewel will bring: *nam tu infaustos donante marito | ornatus, Argia, geris dirumque monile | Harmoniae (Theb. 2.265–7) and sic Eriphylaeos aurum fatale penates | inrumpit scelerumque ingentia semina mouit, | et graue Tisiphone risit gauisa futuris (Theb. 4.211–13).*

Furthermore, although Eriphyle is now less famous than Phaedra, she was the main or at least a secondary character in numerous lost tragedies, including some by Aeschylus and Sophocles<sup>19</sup> as well as in a Latin play by Accius. Eriphyle is even mentioned in Aristotle's *Poetics* (1453b24), whereas Phaedra is not. In that passage, Aristotle discusses the preference for fear (τὸ φοβερόν) and pity (τὸ ἐλεεινόν) to be

<sup>17</sup> This episode appears also in the epic tradition, as noted by M. Davies, 'Appendix 1. Eriphyle in the Theban Epics', in his online volume *The Theban Epics* (Washington, DC, 2014), <https://chs.harvard.edu/chapter/appendix-1-eriphyle-in-the-theban-epics>.

<sup>18</sup> Stat. *Theb.* 2.265–305, 4.187–213.

<sup>19</sup> M. Wright, *The Lost Plays of Greek Tragedy* (London and New York, 2016).

aroused by the plot rather than by the spectacle. After claiming that ὅταν δ' ἐν ταῖς φιλαίαις ἐγγένηται τὰ πάθη, ... ταῦτα ζητητέον (*Poet.* 1453b19–22), ‘whenever the misfortunes befall among kinship, ... this is what must be sought’, Aristotle illustrates the point with the traditional stories of Orestes’ murder of Clytemnestra and Alcmaeon’s killing of Eriphyle. Therefore, while Aristotle makes no mention of the necklace or of Eriphyle’s betrayal of Amphiarus, he refers instead to the second part of the story: Eriphyle’s murder at the hands of her son Alcmaeon, who sought to avenge his father’s death. Like Clytemnestra’s betrayal of Agamemnon and the later revenge of Orestes, both parts of the Eriphyle story were probably the subject of many tragedies,<sup>20</sup> and both, as argued below, can be seen reflected in Ammianus’ story of Clematius’ mother-in-law and Constantina.

The identification of Constantina with Eriphyle demonstrated above raises some questions about the meaning of the story. What are the implications of the association between Constantina and Eriphyle? And why combine the story of Eriphyle with that of Phaedra?

Understanding Constantina as a new Eriphyle could trigger different layers of meaning. In the first place, it is a paradigmatic statement about Constantina’s greed—a greed that was, as depicted in the Cicero reference above, impious to the point of sending a man to his death.<sup>21</sup> However, a problem arises: Eriphyle betrayed her husband, bringing a terrible doom on him, while Constantina is betraying a man, Clematius, who is indifferent to her. As has been shown above, Aristotle argued that the fear and pity of tragedy were better conveyed when the characters were kin, not when they were enemies or merely indifferent to one another. It could be argued, none the less, that Constantina was in fact a *graue incontinentium* for Gallus’ viciousness and an *inflammatrix saeuientis assidua* (14.1.2), and hence shared some responsibility not only for Gallus’ misdeeds (since they were also hers) but also for his final punishment. Gallus himself tries to escape his death by arguing *quod plerosque incitante coniuge iugulauerit Constantina* (14.11.22), although the narrator corrects him with the *exemplum* of Alexander the Great, who refused to kill an innocent man when his mother asked from him this favour. This correction in the assignment of moral responsibility, however, is only a denial of Gallus’ claim to innocence; it does not nullify the fact that Gallus was incited by his wife, nor that she shared some of the guilt. Especially relevant to this argument is the fact that the story of Clematius’ murder is signalled as an example of Gallus’ and Constantina’s cruelty, but she is in fact the main character and he is not explicitly named.

Consequently, the association of Constantina with Eriphyle functions also as tragic irony. By accepting the bribe and then ordering the execution of Clematius, Gallus and Constantina are sealing Gallus’ fate, although they do not yet know this. Clematius’ story is just an example to symbolize their numerous crimes: Gallus will be punished not only for this crime but for all of them. None the less, the story and the allusion to Eriphyle still bear some tragic significance. Gallus’ *hybris* is first exposed in a narratorial commentary, *ultra terminos potestatis delatae procurrens asperitate*

<sup>20</sup> The different titles of the lost tragedies about the Theban cycle (*Alcmaeon*, *Epigoni*, *Eriphyle*) suggest the possibility that both Eriphyle’s betrayal and Alcmaeon’s ensuing revenge were subjects for tragedies. See Wright (n. 19).

<sup>21</sup> As it has been already pointed out above, there seems to be a latent comparison between Constantina and Verres through the use of the character of Eriphyle and the allusion to Cicero’s *Verrines*.

*nimia cuncta foedabat* (14.1.1), which functions as blame for lack of *metriotēs* or moderation, and is then exemplified by the murder of Clematius.

#### DOUBLE-FACED TRAGEDY: HOMER AND VIRGIL IN PLAY

The combination of allusions to Eriphyle and to Phaedra recalls two other instances in which these two characters appear together: the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*. The scrutiny of these passages may help to reveal new layers of meaning in Ammianus' text. The references to the story of Eriphyle found in Cicero, Pausanias and Aristotle evoke the two parts of her story. In the first part, she was the treacherous and greedy wife who betrayed her husband, as recollected by Cicero and Pausanias; in the second part, she was the victim of the parricide committed by her son Alcmaeon, as mentioned by Aristotle. Ammianus' story of Constantina apparently relates only to the first part, given that the connection is found in the necklace and the death of a man as a consequence of bribery. However, the appearance of Eriphyle along with Phaedra could also evoke the second part, via Homer and Virgil.

When Odysseus visits the underworld, after bidding farewell to his mother, he sees a series of women from myth, traditionally called the catalogue of heroines, among whom are Phaedra and Eriphyle: Φαίδρην τε Πρόκριν τε ἴδον καλὴν τ' Ἀριάδνην, | ... | ... τε ἴδον στυγερὴν τ' Ἐριφύλην, | ἥ χρυσοῦν φίλου ἀνδρὸς ἐδέξατο τιμήντα (*Od.* 11.321, 326–7). In his rewriting of the underworld Virgil has Aeneas also run into these famous women. After reaching the Fields of Sorrow (*Lugentes Campi*), his *Phaedram Procrinque locis maestamque Eriphylen* | *crudelis nati monstrantem uulnera cernit* (*Aen.* 6.445–6). In these two verses, Virgil performs at least two rewritings of Homer's passage.

The first of these is the inclusion of Eriphyle in the same verse as Phaedra and Procris. This rewriting was indeed suggested by, or at least conceivable in, the Homeric verses, since the hemistich τε ἴδον καλὴν τ' Ἀριάδνην (*Od.* 11.321) that closes Phaedra's verse is equivalent to the hemistich τε ἴδον στυγερὴν τ' Ἐριφύλην (*Od.* 11.325), both metrically and grammatically (with a similar structure of τε ἴδον followed by an adjective and a name in the accusative). In fact, there is no hypothetical obstacle for a new arrangement in which Eriphyle's hemistich is included in Phaedra's verse in the place of Ariadne's hemistich, and the similar beginning of both hemistichs (τε ἴδον) could even be seen as an invitation to make such a rearrangement. With his rewriting, Virgil plays with this possibility or, better, creates it, as if his competition with Homer included exploring new elaborations that had been unexploited by the Greek poet.

The second Virgilian rewriting is of a more polemical nature. Eriphyle is described in the *Odyssey* as στυγερὴν, 'hateful', and Homer recalls her betrayal of Amphiarus in exchange for 'precious gold' (χρυσὸν ... τιμήντα, *Od.* 11.326–7).<sup>22</sup> In the *Aeneid*, however, Eriphyle is described as *maestam*, 'sorrowful', and Virgil recalls the wounds she suffered from her son Alcmaeon. Furthermore, Eriphyle 'shows her wounds' to Aeneas (*monstrantem uulnera*, *Aen.* 6.446), as though she was trying to vindicate herself from Homer's description of the encounter with Odysseus, and it is not she

<sup>22</sup> Homer does not mention any necklace. However, in the continuation of Pausanias' passage discussed above (Paus. 9.41.3–5), he refers to these Homeric verses assuming that the gold is the material of the necklace, not a substitute for it.

but her son who is *crudelis*. By mentioning a different part of the story, Virgil transforms Eriphyle into a victim, whereas in the Homeric text she was the culprit.

There is still another twist to the allusion, suggested by the Virgilian commentator Servius, who says that *uituperatur sane Vergilius quod maestam dixerit quam στυγερήν legit, id est nocentem: nam maesta est στυγή* (Serv. on *Aen.* 6.445). According to Servius, Eriphyle's transformation in the *Aeneid* is the product of Virgil's sloppy misreading of στυγερήν, 'hateful', as στυγή, 'sorrowful'. This is indeed a possibility. However, it is also possible that Virgil was deliberately rewriting Homer, and this would be a typical Virgilian deviation from Homer, with the Roman poet conferring a more sentimental and poignant significance upon a character or a situation.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the departure from the Homeric model makes more sense if we consider that both Homer and Virgil use the brief appearance of the character according to their respective narrative plans. In the case of Homer, Eriphyle's appearance and her description as a treacherous wife serve as a new warning to Odysseus about the possibility of his own wife's betrayal (warnings which during the *Odyssey* are framed by Clytemnestra's murder of Agamemnon, a parallel story to Eriphyle's, as suggested by Aristotle's *Poetics*). In the case of Virgil, the sorrowful Eriphyle and her description as the victim of parricide precede the appearance of the similarly sorrowful and wounded Dido, over whom Aeneas laments.

The possible connection between the Homeric and Virgilian passages, on the one hand, and Ammianus' story of Clematius' mother-in-law, on the other, now becomes apparent. Certainly, the story told in 14.1.3 brings most strongly to mind the 'hateful' Eriphyle—her acceptance of a bribe and her betrayal of Amphiarus—to exemplify the wickedness of Constantina and Gallus. None the less, through the Virgilian reworking of Homer, the above-mentioned tragic irony of Gallus' eventual downfall, unknown to Gallus and Constantina at the time but not to the reader, and especially the presence of an allusion to Phaedra in the same short story, could reference the entire story of the tragic heroine Eriphyle up to her pitiful death.

If these references are present in Ammianus' story, then they might be seen as further instances of the tragic ambiguity of Book 14. The double aspect of Eriphyle's destiny could be a preview of the double face of Gallus revealed at the end of the story, which, in turn, may reveal the latent double face of Eriphyle in the story of 14.1.3. In fact, Ammianus' taste for masks and doubles throughout Book 14 is noteworthy. At the beginning, Constantina is depicted as *Megaera quaedam mortalis* (14.1.2) and as Eriphyle (14.1.3), while Gallus is depicted through *exempla* or allusions as Gallienus (14.1.9), Adrastus (*Adrasteo pallore perfusus*, 14.11.22), Cacus and Priam (14.11.23).

#### CLOSING REMARKS

It thus seems clear that Ammianus is making a double allusion to Phaedra and to Eriphyle in the short story told in 14.1.3. The identification of these allusions is valuable in itself, as it opens the episode to discussions about possible new meanings. Here some possible meanings behind the allusions have been further discussed and, in so doing, a

<sup>23</sup> This feature of the Virgilian allusions to Homer is noted by G.B. Conte, *Dell'imitazione: Furto e originalità* (Pisa, 2014), 38–47.



connection appears between these allusions and the general dramatic and tragic structure of Book 14, in particular with the story of Gallus. My conclusions cohere with the often-remarked upon tragic and allusive style of Ammianus.

In search for a possible meaning of the double allusion, and especially of the uncommon presence of both Phaedra and Eriphyle in the same story, I have resorted to a Virgilian and Homeric resonance which could seem overly speculative. Still, I believe that the discussion of the Virgilian rewriting presented here has its own value, while at the same time shedding light on Ammianus' own allusions. Besides, the allusions show Ammianus' general attraction to theatrical, and specifically tragic, models and characters throughout the Gallus episode.<sup>24</sup> The allusions identified could be seen as part of a strategy in which the story of Gallus is connected to tragedy, thus reinforcing the idea of a double face of the Caesar. However, once identified, the allusions are open to future discussion, and to interpretations that are likely to differ from those presented here.

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<sup>24</sup> The standard article on the theatrical aspects of Ammianus' work is F.W. Jenkins, 'Theatrical metaphors in Ammianus Marcellinus', *Eranos* 85 (1987), 55–63.