

**VIRGIL'S HERCULES:
ECHOES OF CIVIL STRIFE AND DUALITY**

LEE FRATANTUONO

ABSTRACT

Hercules is cited relatively frequently in Virgil's *Aeneid*, especially in the second, Italian half of the epic. Close consideration of the progression of the references to Hercules in the poem reveals a deliberate arrangement of passages that relate typologically to the characterization of both Aeneas and Augustus, in particular with respect literarily to the decision of the Trojan hero to slay his foe Turnus, and historically to the civil war with Mark Antony, in which the victor would surpass the deeds of the storied ancient hero from whom his rival claimed descent. Hercules is shown to have diverse associations for Virgil, and to serve as a cautionary mythological *exemplum* of the hazards of surrender to fury. The association of the demigod with the dichromatic poplar is interpreted as a symbol of the polar opposite facets of Hercules' nature.

Keywords: Hercules; Aeneas; Augustus; Virgil

The celebrated demigod Hercules is referenced several times in Virgil's poetry, especially in his *Aeneid*.¹ Careful study of all of the Virgilian citations of the Jovian hero will demonstrate how the epic poet employs Hercules as a key figure in the crafting of his depiction of both the Trojan Aeneas and the Arcadian Pallas, with the heroic son of the supreme god playing a not insignificant part in the narrative of Aeneas' sojourn and experiences in Italy.² In addition, our analysis will show that the Virgilian Hercules

¹ For general studies of the demigod in Virgil note especially Feeney (1986) and Galinsky (1985 and 2014); cf. also Galinsky (1990) (from Galinsky 1972). Cf. also Gilmartin (1968) (with consideration of how Virgil's Hercules is depicted as mirroring Aeneas' humility), and Zarker (1972) (in response to Gilmartin, on how Hercules is a negative model for Aeneas). Much of the previous work on the Virgilian Hercules has focused on the question of the typological associations of the god with Aeneas and Augustus, with reference in particular to the theme of the overcoming of hardship via impressive labor. Given that we are not seeking to offer a comprehensive study of the Augustan Hercules, in scope our investigation will focus solely on Virgil and not, for example, Propertius; likewise we do not engage with the vast fields of iconography and archaeology. I am grateful to the two anonymous referees for corrections and suggestions that greatly improved this study; all errors that remain are my own.

² Our focus is on the *Aeneid*, given that in the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* there are but two brief, passing Hercules citations: Verg. *Ecl.* VII, 61 *Populus Alcidae gratissima* ... and Verg. *Georg.* II, 66 ... *Herculeaeque arbos umbrosa coronae*. For the association of the poplar with Hercules see Cucchiarelli (2012) on the bucolics passage. We shall see, however, that the poplar holds possible significance for

serves as a signal figure in the Augustan author's divine machinery, as the poet alludes to contemporary historical and political affairs regarding the recently concluded civil conflict between Caesar's heir Octavian and Mark Antony. *In fine*, in the literary realm, Hercules will be revealed to be a crucial character in understanding the ramifications of the presentation of Aeneas in his final, fateful encounter with Pallas' slayer Turnus at the end of the epic, while from a historical perspective, Virgil's depiction of Hercules will be of particular importance in light of Antony's assertion of descent from the demigod's son Anton.³

Our method will be to proceed through the allusions to the god in the epic, with an eye both to possible patterns of reference, and to the web of relationships between Hercules and other figures in the Virgilian cast of characters (especially Aeneas and Pallas). We shall proceed in linear fashion through the poet's allusions to Hercules, both for the sake of a more comprehensive analysis, and also to avoid prejudicing the interpretation of the Virgilian depiction of the god by employing a more selective, thematic approach. Such a method will allow for consideration of the totality and progression of poetic allusions to the hero, particularly as we move from Books VI to VIII to X of the epic.

Juno contra Hercules

Hercules is cited first in the *Aeneid* seemingly in passing, as Aeneas recalls his itinerary after his departure from Buthrotum and his prophetic, haunting interlude with Helenus and Andromache:

*hinc sinus Herculei (si uera est fama) Tarenti
cernitur, attollit se diua Lacinia contra,
Caulonisque arces et nauifragum Scylaceum.* (Verg. *Aen.* III, 551–553)⁴

Hercules is credited with the foundation of Tarentum, “if the report be true.”⁵ Lacinium is highlighted next, a locale that was noteworthy for a temple to Juno Lacinia.⁶ The adverb *contra* refers not only to relative location, but to the animosity of Juno for the son of Jupiter's paramour Alcmena.⁷ Thirdly, the mood is markedly ominous as reference is

understanding Virgil's employment of Hercules imagery in his Augustan epic portrayal of Aeneas, as a veritable cipher that we shall consider at the end of our study as something of a botanical crown to our analysis of the poet's presentation of the demigod.

³ Vid. Plut. *Ant.* 4, with Pelling (1988: *ad loc.*). On Plutarch's reflections on the negative aspects of the association, see Stafford (2012: 152–153). For the Augustan Age iconographic, propaganda evidence (Apollo defeating Hercules, etc.) cf. Tuck (2015: 130).

⁴ Passages from the *Aeneid* are cited from Conte (2019).

⁵ On such signposts of alleged veracity see Horsfall (1991).

⁶ On this passage see Williams (1962), Horsfall (2006), and Heyworth, Morwood (2017: *ad loc.*). For the temple, note Benko (2004: 28–29, n. 13).

⁷ During the Second Punic War Hannibal desecrated the temple of the Lacinian Juno, for which he received a warning from the goddess (Cic. *Div.* I, 24, 48, citing Coelius Antipater). Virgil's concern is more to highlight the opposition of Hercules and the goddess than to recall any historical episodes *per se*, though the whole region Aeneas traverses here had a checkered history during both the Hannibalic War and the conflict with Pyrrhus; the passage may therefore set up further discussion relevant to the epic's engagement with Rome's Carthaginian wars. Cf. also Verg. *Aen.* I, 13.

made to *nauifragum Scylaceum*, where not only is there an explicit mention of shipwreck, but also a semantic (and possibly rationalizing) allusion to the monstrous Scylla.⁸ Soon enough there will be a warning about Etna and Charybdis (Verg. *Aen.* III, 554–560), as Anchises alerts his son to the hazards of navigation in these waters. As for the reference to the Caulonian citadels, the site had a history of destruction and abandonment, and mention of it as a gazetteer item on Aeneas' itinerary adds to the ominous import of the brief scene.⁹ Allusions to Juno, Caulonia, and to shipwrecks all contribute to the dark mood of the description of the hero's course.

This first Hercules passage is easy to pass over quickly as mere mythological ornament to color an otherwise mundane travel report, but it makes a powerful, allusive statement about the goddess who was a perennial enemy of the Trojans, a goddess whose hatred was also manifested in the case of Hercules. It is a passage of subtle dread, with disquieting undertones that grow more pronounced as the description progresses. And *si uera est fama* offers an interesting, possible undercutting of the reference to Hercules. At the very least, we are reminded that Hercules is another object of Junonian wrath, like Aeneas and his Trojans, and fittingly the first reference to the demigod in the epic is cast in terms of this Junonian aversion.¹⁰ This theme of conflict will be revisited and honed throughout the epic, as references to Hercules multiply and become more laden with allusive import, and as Hercules is established as a figure endowed with a haunting duality as both savior and destroyer.

Hercules, slayer of Aeneas' *germanus*

The second mention of Hercules in the *Aeneid* comes amid the memorial games for Aeneas' father Anchises that are held in Sicily:

*quid, si quis caestus ipsius et Herculis arma
uidisset tristemque hoc ipso in litore pugnam?
haec germanus Eryx quondam tuus arma gerebat
(sanguine cretus adhuc sparsoque infecta cerebro)
his magnum Alciden contra stetit, his ego suetus,
dum melior uires sanguis dabat, aemula necdum
temporibus geminis canebat sparsa senectus.* (Verg. *Aen.* V, 410–416)

The scene is the boxing match that serves as the third contest of the day's games.¹¹ The aged Entellus has the boxing gloves with which Eryx once faced Alcides, i.e. the grandson of Alcaeus.¹² This more prominent allusion to the demigod offers a different image of Hercules from that of Book III. Here Hercules is presented as the consummate hero, one whose very status raises that of his opponents to legendary standing. A bygone world is

⁸ So Paschalis (1997: 147).

⁹ Campisi (2008) offers a helpful overview of the locale and its history and archaeology.

¹⁰ Cf. Verg. *Aen.* I, 37.

¹¹ For commentary here note Williams (1960) and Fratantuono, Smith (2015: *ad loc.*).

¹² The name Alcides highlights the remote past: Hercules was the son of Amphitryon, who was the son of Alcaeus.

recalled, as the games in honor of Anchises focus on the remembrance of the past age of immensely powerful heroic figures. Eryx was a son of Venus and thus a half-brother of Aeneas; he was slain in his bout with Hercules. The scene is replete with uneasy, contradictory and conflicting elements. Virgil's Entellus apparently is a Sicilian, though other traditions considered him a Trojan.¹³

Most disquieting of all is how Entellus' master Eryx had been killed by Hercules, the hero who had also once destroyed Troy.¹⁴ The Hercules who is referenced in the boxing match is thus presented as a less than auspicious figure with respect to Aeneas and Troy, a legendary hero who was associated with violence both to another son of Venus and to the great eastern city. Hercules thereby serves as a powerful reminder of the specter of internecine strife, indeed of fraternal violence.

In the actual pugilistic combat that ensues, Entellus will pummel his opponent Dares, who will be saved from certain death only by the intervention of Aeneas, who is depicted as imposing a limit on anger and the raging of a bitter spirit (Verg. *Aen.* V, 461–462 *Tum pater Aeneas procedere longius iras / et saeuire animis Entellum haud passus acerbis*) – games, after all, are not supposed to result in fatal injuries.

Entellus is a complex figure,¹⁵ but whatever wrath he manifests in the boxing match will not be allowed to follow a Herculean course to a fatal outcome – even if one could say that he is an “anti-Hercules,” given his Erycian connection.¹⁶ Entellus offers the image of someone who is at risk of proceeding too far, that is, to the deadly consequence of unbridled anger and unrestrained rage. Aeneas pacifies whatever aura of “superhuman violence” has appeared on the Sicilian strand.¹⁷ The whole passage takes on greater horror when one remembers both that the *caestus* that Entellus was not allowed to wield against Dares was the weapon of the loser, and that the aged Sicilian was once young and endowed presumably with even more impressive vigor. Hercules represents an almost unfathomable degree of superhuman strength and propensity for violence, and Aeneas is cast in the admirable role of restrainer and bringer of peace.

Hercules in the underworld

Hercules receives threefold notice in *Aeneid* VI, in conjunction with Aeneas' descent to the underworld. Alcides had, after all, been allowed to achieve exactly what Aeneas aspires to accomplish with respect to the lower regions – both to journey there and, more challengingly, to return to tell the tale:

quid memorem Alciden? ... (Verg. *Aen.* VI, 123)¹⁸

¹³ Vid. Fab. Pict. fr. 28 [Cornell]. “... local eponymous heroes remained part of the story, including Eryx, Elymus, Entellus, and Acestes ... in Virgil and Dionysius they were already in Sicily when Aeneas arrived, having experienced fewer misfortunes on the journey from Troy ...” (Cornell 2013: 44).

¹⁴ See here Feldherr (2002: 65–66).

¹⁵ Note further here Lovatt (2005: 148).

¹⁶ So Celotto (2002: 142).

¹⁷ Cf. Nelis (2001: 19).

¹⁸ Note that Mynors (1990: 231) and others punctuate so as to construe *magnum* (Verg. *Aen.* VI, 122) with *Alciden*.

Hercules is like Orpheus, Pollux, and Theseus. Aeneas notes that he, too, is of the lineage of Jupiter (Verg. *Aen.* VI, 123 ... *et mi genus ab Ioue summo*).¹⁹ Hercules had descended to the underworld in fulfillment of his task of retrieving Cerberus. Here we recall the celebrated labors of the hero, in particular the two final challenges that represent in part a conquest of death.²⁰ It is a fitting recollection that implicitly places Aeneas in the heroic tradition of Hercules.

When Aeneas encounters Charon the ferryman, we find another remembrance of Hercules:

*nec uero Alciden me sum laetatus euntem
accepisse lacu ...* (Verg. *Aen.* VI, 392–393)

Charon was not happy to welcome Alcides, given that the hero had weighed down his boat and seemingly threatened to swamp it; likewise he was not pleased to receive Theseus and Pirithous, despite the fact that all these men were descended from the gods and unmatched in strength (Verg. *Aen.* VI, 394 *dis quamquam geniti atque inuicti uiribus essent*). Hercules had been allowed his infernal transit, and he had succeeded in his arduous labor in the lower realm.

But all of these reminiscences of grand valor and impressive victories are somewhat undercut by the last of the Hercules passages of Book VI. For another great figure is destined to surpass at least one (albeit significant) measure of Herculean success: the future Augustus will traverse more territory than even Hercules in his pacification and restoration of the glory of Rome:

*nec uero Alcides tantum telluris obiuit,
fixerit aripedem ceruam licet aut Erymanthi
pacarit nemora et Lernam tremefecerit arcu.* (Verg. *Aen.* VI, 801–803)

Another *nec uero* passage, with a miniature catalogue of heroic labors.²¹ The Ceryneian hind, the Erymanthian boar, and the Lernaean hydra offer an ascending tricolon of zoological menaces. The specific reference is to space traveled, but the implication is that Augustus' accomplishments will dwarf the legendary labors of Hercules.²² The verbs that describe Hercules' actions are interesting in sequence: *fixerit* refers to the successful shooting of the hind, *pacarit* to the bringing of peace via the subjugation of the boar, and *tremefecerit* to causing Lerna to tremble by repeated, resounding bow shots (i.e., because of the hydra's many heads). *Pacarit* has unquestionably positive connotations, while *tre-*

¹⁹ The assertion of Jovian lineage is aimed at justifying Aeneas' aspiration to make a successful, roundtrip visit to the lower regions. It also implicitly connects Aeneas to Hercules via shared descent from Jupiter.

²⁰ Cf. here Horsfall (2013), and Austin (1977: *ad loc.*).

²¹ *Labores* constituted an integral part of Hercules' identity, such that some have seen an Aeneas-Hercules typology even from Verg. *Aen.* I, 10 ... *tot adire labores* (so Farrell 2021: 154).

²² Cf. the aforementioned topos of the relationship of Aeneas' labors to those of Hercules; note here too Galinsky (1983: 49–50).

mefecerit introduces a hint of apprehension.²³ Augustus is associated with Hercules, but principally for the sake of comparison: Augustus will be greater.

In the first six books of the *Aeneid*, there are thus six references to Hercules by name, spread across three books: one in Book III (adjective *Herculeus*), two in Book V (*Hercules* and *Alcides*, in one scene), and three in Book VI (always *Alcides*). The framing allusions are enshrouded in either ominous, ambivalent, or less than glorious import: first, the opposition of Juno to Hercules, and second, Augustus' predicted triumph over both Hercules and Liber. The central, more extended panel recalls Hercules' vanquishing of Aeneas' *germanus* Eryx, and is marked by Aeneas intervening to save the life of Dares from Entellus' brutal, Herculean anger. By the close of *Aeneid* VI and the epic's first half, Aeneas has demonstrated that he can be a bringer of peace, and we have learned of a future Roman who will surpass the oftentimes violent, furious Hercules.²⁴ Hercules achieved unquestionably great accomplishments, not least in his successful infernal itinerary. But another hero will come, and he will outperform him.

Hercules' Aventinus

Book VII contains one passage in which Hercules figures: the description of his son Aventinus in the catalogue of the allies of Turnus that comes as the climax of the book, in something of a parallel to the *Heldenschau* from the end of VI and the images on Aeneas' shield in VIII:

*Post hos insignem palma per gramina currum
uictoresque ostentat equos satus Hercule pulchro
pulcher Auentinus, clipeoque insigne paternum
centum angues cinctamque gerit serpentibus Hydram;
collis Auentini silua quem Rhea sacerdos
furtiuum partu sub luminis edidit oras,
mixta deo mulier, postquam Laurentia uictor
Geryone exstincto Tiryntius attigit arua,
Tyrrhenoque boues in flumine lauit Hiberas.
pila manu saeuosque gerunt in bella dolones
et tereti pignant mucrone uerunque Sabello.
ipse pedes, tegumen torquens immane leonis,
terribili impexum saeta cum dentibus albis
indutus capiti, sic regia tecta subibat,
horridus Herculeoque umeros innexus amictu.* (Verg. *Aen.* VII, 655–669)

Aventinus is the third figure in the parade, succeeding the Etruscan Mezentius and his son Lausus.²⁵ (Since father and son constitute a closely linked pair, in some sense Aven-

²³ That is, Hercules does a positive thing in slaying the hydra, but the heroic deed is cast in language that subtly reminds us of the sometimes unrestrained wrath of the hero who cannot always control his unimaginable strength.

²⁴ Conversely, on the divine plane, we may note that Hercules' nemesis Juno will remain focused on her unrelenting rage until deep into Book XII.

²⁵ Helpful on this passage are the observations *ad loc.* of Horsfall (2000); cf. Fordyce (1977).

tinus is “second” in line, after the dyad Mezentius – Lausus.) The Aventinus passage, not surprisingly, is redolent with the spirit of Hercules and his astonishing victories. Just as in Book VI, so in Book VII the demigod is named three times, here as Hercules/Hercules in framing order around Tiryntius. Aventinus does not appear again after his introduction; Virgil does not reveal his fate.²⁶ Aventinus thus figures in the epic as a divine son without a role to play, except as a character in a parade. Aventinus’ conception is associated with Hercules’ return eastward after the episode with the cattle of Geryon, thus foreshadowing the poet’s principal Alcides passage at Pallanteum in Book VIII. The mention of the hydra emblem on Aventinus’ shield harks back to the previous Hercules reference from Book VI, where the hero’s Lernaean labor crowned a brief reminiscence of his exploits, one in which the demigod made Lerna tremble with fear.²⁷ Notably, the Aventinus vignette moves from an emphasis on handsome, lovely appearance – *Hercule pulchro* and *pulcher Auentinus* – to a description of the unkempt, shaggy appearance of the pelt of the Nemean lion.

The priestess Rhea is the only paramour of Hercules to be referenced anywhere in Virgil. The name is extraordinary for Virgil’s apparent invention of Hercules’ Aventinus.²⁸ We might think here of the lore of Romulus and Remus, of Palatine *versus* Aventine, of the not uncommon bane of civil strife in the history of the region. What is certain (and noteworthy) is the aforementioned fact that we never hear of this son of Hercules again. He is not so much as alluded to anywhere else in the epic. When Pallas is depicted as advancing to his doom in Book X, Hercules will lament the impending loss of the Arcadian, despite the fact that his own son by Rhea is serving on the opposing side. By the close of Book X, we shall see a balanced set of paired allusions: Hercules will mourn for Pallas, while saying nothing about Aventinus. And both Aeneas and Mezentius will slay victims who have associations with Hercules.

One might think that it would be unsettling for the readers to have Aeneas do battle with someone named after the storied Roman mount. Certainly a hero named after one of the seven hills would be difficult to depict as defeated in the uncomfortably civil conflict in Italy.²⁹ Whatever the lore of the Aventine in the misty mytho-historical record, it is convenient for Virgil to make Aventinus’ first appearance in the epic his last. For the duration of his vignette, he remains a potent symbol of civil war, not least to the extent that Aeneas is associated with Hercules. Further, the focus on fathers and sons is particularly appropriate in light of Antony’s claim of descent from Hercules, a lineage he shares with Aventinus.

²⁶ Basson (1975) is indispensable to the study of the figures in the procession.

²⁷ The hydra blazon thus implicitly both invites Aeneas to tread ground covered by Hercules, and recalls also how Augustus is said to be destined to outpace Hercules’ travels. With Aventinus’ hydra emblem compare Turnus’ similar chimaera device (Verg. *Aen.* VII, 785–788).

²⁸ Horsfall (2000: 432–433) finds the invention “rather dry and unconvincing,” and remarks on Rhea that “... V. therefore, by his choice of name, positively flaunts the rather banal origin of the details here related!”

²⁹ For an overview of Aventinus’ eponymous height, see Mignone (2016: 3–8). On mountains in the *Aeneid*’s patterns of giganomachic imagery see O’Hara (1994).

Hercules, Cacus, and the rites at Pallanteum

Hercules is referenced by name twelve times in Book VIII, the most occurrences of any book in the epic. Aeneas arrives at the Arcadian settlement of Pallanteum in Latium, on the very day of solemn rites in honor of the son of Amphitryon, who is introduced to the narrative via a grand patronymic, the first of two occasions in the extended scene in which it is employed by the poet:

*Forte die sollemnem illo rex Arcas honorem
Amphitryoniadae magno diuisque ferebat
ante urbem in luco ... (Verg. Aen. VIII, 102–104)³⁰*

Soon enough Evander relates the story behind the Hercules liturgies at his settlement: once upon a time, the demigod delivered the locale from the bane of the bloodthirsty, vicious Cacus.³¹ Hercules was returning from his quest in pursuit of the cattle of Geryon:

*attulit et nobis aliquando optantibus aetas
auxilium aduentumque dei. nam maximus ultor,
tergemini nece Geryonae spoliisque superbus,
Alcides aderat taurosque hac uictor agebat
ingentis ... (Verg. Aen. VIII, 200–204)*

Cacus steals from the captured herd, and soon enough his theft is discovered.³² The grandson of Alcaeus is consumed with extreme wrath (Verg. *Aen.* VIII, 219–220 *hic uero Alcidae furis exarserat atro / felle dolor ...*) as he proceeds to hunt down the monstrous thief. This emphasis on madness is underscored at Verg. *Aen.* VIII, 228–229 *ecce furens animis aderat Tirynthius omnemque / accessum lustrans hic ora ferebat et illuc*, as Hercules tries to find a way into the barred home of the cattle rustler.³³ This is one of two occurrences of the moniker *Tirynthius* in Virgil (cf. Verg. *Aen.* VII, 662). The descriptor is derived from a town in the Argolid that was traditionally hostile to Juno's Argos.³⁴

Cacus' cavernous dwelling is reduced to the locus of a great struggle between hero and horror, as the narrative depicts the ensuing smoky, fiery combat.³⁵ The name Alcides recurs at Verg. *Aen.* VIII, 219, 249, and 256 (cf. 203). Hercules is thus referred to as "Alcides" throughout the Cacus episode, except for the unique use of "Tirynthius" just after Cacus bolts himself inside his lair, thereby exacerbating the hero's fury, and the use

³⁰ The sonorous moniker is repeated at Verg. *Aen.* VIII, 214, during the account of the aftermath of the theft of Hercules' cattle.

³¹ See here Secci (2013). For the possible political implications of the episode, cf. Morgan (2007).

³² Cf. Liv. I, 7, 5, where the cattle are stolen while Hercules was intoxicated.

³³ Rohman (2022: 336–340) offers a cogent analysis of the violent actions of Hercules, through the particular lens of his status as a demigod and the implications thereof for a consideration of "divine violence".

³⁴ See here Fratantuono, Smith (2018: *ad loc.*) (with reference to Fowler 2013: 250). On *Aeneid* VIII a number of commentaries offer more or less extensive annotation; alongside the aforementioned, note especially Eden (1975) and Gransden (1976).

³⁵ It is an incendiary, violent episode in what has been called "... the most sunny and relaxed book of the *Aeneid*" (so Jenkyns 1998: 518).

of “Amphitryoniades” at Verg. *Aen.* VIII, 214. In the coda to the story of Hercules’ vanquishing of Cacus, there are three uses of the adjective *Herculeus* in connection to the commemorative worship of the demigod (Verg. *Aen.* VIII, 270, 276, and 288).

The Hercules reference at Verg. *Aen.* VIII, 288 comes in the description of the hero’s deeds that provide the substance of the song in honor of the god that provides an interesting *curriculum vitae* for the hero.³⁶ The infant Hercules slew the snakes that his stepmother Juno had sent to his cradle. He destroyed cities – including Troy. He performed his storied labors under the orders of King Eurystheus. And – of greatest significance to the locals – he vanquished Cacus.³⁷

Most of the scholarly focus on the importance of Hercules to the *Aeneid* has considered the question of the possible typological associations of Aeneas with the hero.³⁸ Virgil himself seems to make the connection explicit, one could argue, to a degree that is rarely exhibited in his allegorical exercises. When Aeneas is welcomed into the home of Evander, the Arcadian lord recalls Hercules’ sojourn in the same humble abode:

*ut uentum ad sedes, ‘haec’ inquit ‘limina uictor
Alcides subiit, haec illum regia cepit.
aude, hospes, contemnere opes et te quoque dignum
finge deo rebusque ueni non asper egenis.’* (Verg. *Aen.* VIII, 362–365)

This passage bears close comparison with Verg. *Aen.* VI, 851–853, where the shade of Anchises gives advice to the Roman of the future. Evander’s admonition is to spurn luxury and riches, to be amenable to poor circumstances and to embrace austerity, as it were. The connection to Hercules is rooted in how the great hero was willing to spend the night in the modest accommodations, notwithstanding his impressive victories. The passage has been mined since Servius Auctus as a source of allusions to the honor paid to Hercules Invictus at Rome, and later for typological connections to Augustus in the wake of his victory over Antony and Cleopatra.³⁹

Aeneas will follow Evander’s advice – he will enter the dwelling and spend the night. He will emulate Hercules in the matter of *contemnere opes*. But at the end of the epic, Aeneas will imitate his typological model in a darker sense. He will succumb to rage, just as Hercules did with Cacus.⁴⁰

³⁶ On the hymnic interlude of Verg. *Aen.* VIII, 280–305 vid. especially Miller (2014).

³⁷ It has been argued that the hymn presents a rather sanitized version of Hercules’ exploits (cf. Heiden 1987).

³⁸ See, e.g., Gleii (1991: 324–332), which considers *inter al.* the question of whether there is a crude typology at play in the triads of Hercules – Aeneas – Augustus and Cacus – Turnus – Antonius. Not everyone has accepted the typological argument; see, e.g., Fordyce (1977: 226), and Stahl (2016: 322–323). On a possible Varronian background to Hercules as divinized mortal and the rites at the Ara Maxima see Mac Góráin (2020: 241).

³⁹ See here Binder (2019: 126–128) (with convenient appraisal of the questions of Hercules’ August festival and of the events of late summer, 29 BC). Cf. O’Hara (2017: 211). As aforementioned, the problems of Prop. IV, 9 are beyond the scope of the present study. The Propertian Hercules certainly surrenders to anger and precipitous action when he is refused water at the shrine of the Bona Dea.

⁴⁰ Galinsky (1966) makes the important point that Hercules succumbs to rage, but then defeats Cacus only after the application of his reason. The same transition from madness to a state of sober reflection is reversed at the end of the epic, where Aeneas first considers Turnus’ appeal, only then to surrender

The death of Pallas

After the Pallantean interlude, Hercules is not alluded to for some time.⁴¹ There are five more citations in the *Aeneid* of the demigod, all in Book X.⁴² There are thus twenty times in the second half of the epic where Hercules is named, or more than three times the number found in the first half. The Book X allusions come in three clusters that show something of a balanced order, as we move from 1) Aeneas' slaying of the sons of one of Hercules' companions, to 2) Hercules' association with the death of Pallas, to 3) Mezentius' killing of one of Hercules' comrades.⁴³ There is an elegant arrangement of the names of the demigod, as we proceed through the five citations in balanced order: Hercules – Alcides – Alcides – Alcides – Hercules. Hercules figures in the introduction of Pallas in Book VIII in the scenes at Evander's settlement, and now he plays a part in the depiction of the death of the young hero, a loss of incalculable significance to the closing of the epic and the resolution of the conflict between Aeneas and Turnus.

First, we have a scene of battle violence and of Aeneas' subduing of his enemies:

... *nec longe Cissea durum*
immanemque Gyan sternentis agmina claua
deiecit leto: nihil illos Herculis arma
nec ualidae iuuere manus genitorque Melampus,
Alcidae comes usque grauis dum terra labores
praebuilt ... (Verg. *Aen.* X, 317–322)

This is the first mention of Hercules since Evander's recollection of the hero's visit to his home. Aeneas slays the children of Hercules' companion Melampus, whose possession of Hercules' weaponry does not help them as they face the Trojan. The reference to the *Herculis arma* recalls Verg. *Aen.* V, 410, where Entellus recalled seeing Hercules' boxing gloves. Cisseus and Gyas are using Herculean weapons to mow down battle lines (the adjectives *durum* and *immanem* emphasize the formidable nature of these warriors). The warrior "Gyas" recalls the homonymous figure from the regatta from Book V, thus reminding us of the Sicilian games that were a mimicry of war.⁴⁴ The connection is reinforced if we remember that there is also a Cisseus in Book V – a Thracian who is recalled by Aeneas as having given a *crater* to Anchises (Verg. *Aen.* V, 535–538), which Aeneas bestows on Acestes at the archery contest.⁴⁵ It is striking that Aeneas is depicted here as

to rage after noticing Pallas' *balteus*: unlike Hercules with Cacus, Aeneas does not move from rage to reason.

⁴¹ The shouldering of the shield at the close of Book VIII may remind us of Hercules' temporary assumption of Atlas' burden in his quest for the Hesperidean apples, but that passage is multivalent in that Aeneas therein is also associated with the rebellious Atlas.

⁴² On this and the other Hercules passages in Book X, see especially Harrison (1991: *ad loc.*).

⁴³ See further here Quint (2018: 157, n. 9). Note that the three Hercules passages of Book X mirror the three in Book VI. The Book VI passages emphasized the hero's greatness, only to announce the coming of one greater. The Book X scenes all focus on the hero's losses.

⁴⁴ Cf. Verg. *Aen.* V, 118–120. The captain Gyas helmed the Chimaera, which was noted for its tremendous size.

⁴⁵ See Fratantuono, Smith (2015: *ad loc.*) on Verg. *Aen.* V, 537 for consideration of the Dionysian associations of the name Cisseus (= "ivy-crowned"). As we have seen, Hercules and Bacchus are associated elsewhere in Virgil.

slaying two men who share names with honored men from the Sicilian games (especially when we consider that he is not yet enraged on account of the death of Pallas). We are very far from the time when Aeneas stopped a fight before someone might be fatally injured. The names “Gyas” and “Cisseus” are recycled from the comparatively peaceful and even happy times of the games, to underscore the essentially civil nature of the conflict in Italy. Aeneas has typological associations to Hercules, and here is depicted as slaying the offspring of a companion of Hercules.

Our next passage offers the sole occasion in the epic where Hercules is depicted as a character in the current action, as opposed to being glimpsed in reminiscences of past exploits (as with Cacus in Latium) or experiences (such as when he visited Evander’s hut).⁴⁶ It is a scene of immense significance for the end of the poem and the final clash of Aeneas and Turnus. The doomed Pallas calls on Hercules, invoking him by recollection of the hero’s arrival at Pallanteum and status as a guest-friend of the Arcadians.⁴⁷

*ire prior Pallas, si qua fors adiuuet ausum
uiribus imparibus, magnumque ita ad aethera fatur:
‘per patris hospitium et mensas, quas aduena adisti,
te precor, Alcide, coeptis ingentibus adsis.
cernat semineci sibi me rapere arma cruenta
uictoremque ferant morientia lumina Turni.’
audiit Alcides iuuenem magnumque sub imo
corde premit gemitum lacrimasque effundit inanis.
tum genitor natum dictis adfatur amicis. (Verg. Aen. X, 458–466)*

We see here the continuation of an interesting arrangement of allusions. The angry Hercules slew Cacus during a fit of great anger occasioned by the monster’s theft of his cattle. Evander recalled the humility of Hercules the guest, and urged Aeneas to follow Alcides’ example of modesty. But next we encounter a world of war and violence, as Aeneas kills two bearers of Hercules’ weapons. And now, the pastoral world of Arcadia and the reality of the Latin war are brought into sharp, conjoined relief as Pallas proceeds to his doom. He prays in vain to Hercules, the demigod who had once sojourned in Evander’s home – the detail with the young Arcadian opens his invocation (cf. Verg. *Aen.* X, 460).⁴⁸ Hercules can do nothing – even his father Jupiter suffered the loss of his son Sarpedon in war, after all.⁴⁹ And Pallas certainly will not achieve his wish to be a *uictor* (Verg. *Aen.* X, 463), a title that elsewhere is associated with Hercules (cf. Verg. *Aen.* VII, 661; VIII, 204; 362).⁵⁰ The only occasion in the epic where Hercules is an actual character is a scene of profound loss, a scene that leads directly to the final verses of the epic, where Aeneas will succumb to Herculean wrath and rage.⁵¹

⁴⁶ On the depiction of the immortals in the general battle sequence, see Kühn (1971: 142–147).

⁴⁷ For how Pallas calls on a god, while Turnus does not, see Smith (2005: 160).

⁴⁸ For the idea that Pallas calls on Hercules because he realizes that he is “overmatched”, see Clausen (2002: 204).

⁴⁹ On the supreme god’s emotions or lack thereof in this passage, note Hejduk (2020: 74–78).

⁵⁰ And cf. Aventinus’ *uictores equos* at Verg. *Aen.* VII, 656. Hercules’ son appears only once, and in a scene where he is already in a scene of victory.

⁵¹ Cf. Verg. *Aen.* X, 515–517 and XII, 945–947, with respect to the visual element of Aeneas’ rage toward Turnus on account of the loss of Pallas, on which see Smith (2000).

Aeneas slew the sons of Melampus, and Mezentius' spear strikes down Hercules' companion Antores, who had clung to Evander and settled in an *Italia urbs*:

... dixit stridentemque eminus hastam
iecit. at illa uolans clipeo excussa proculque
egregium Antoren latus inter et ilia figit,
Herculis Antoren comitem, qui missus ab Argis
haeserat Euandro atque Itala consederat urbe.
sternitur infelix alieno uulnere caelumque
aspicit et dulcis moriens reminiscitur Argos. (Verg. *Aen.* X, 776–782)

There is noteworthy emphasis in Antores' death scene on one's place of origin. Antores was from Argos, but he settled in Italy. He was slain by an *alienum uulnus* – Mezentius' Etruscan spear – and as he died he remembered sweet Argos. Antores has come full circle, as he dies with a poignant recollection of his homeland.⁵² Mezentius' spear had not been aimed at Antores (hence he is *infelix*); it ricocheted off of Aeneas' shield (*clipeo excussa*) and inflicted a fatal wound on Hercules' companion.⁵³ Antores – like Pallas – is a casualty from Evander's allied force, as Mezentius joins Turnus in slaying a Herculean figure. But Aeneas did the same, in a reminder of the gray areas inherent to internecine strife.

In context, Antores falls as Mezentius faces Aeneas; he hurls his weapon with a vow to his son Lausus, only to see his spear fell not his Trojan foe, but rather Hercules' companion Antores. Aeneas' spear is more on target as it strikes Mezentius' shield. It is Lausus who intervenes to rescue his father, in a passage where language and word order recall the scene of Jupiter with Alcides: *dum genitor nati parma protectus abiret* (Verg. *Aen.* X, 800; cf. 466 *tum genitor natum dictis adfatur amicis*).⁵⁴ The stage is set for Aeneas to face Lausus – the young man's doom – and for Mezentius to return to the fight so that father may seek in vain to avenge son. The Mezentius-Lausus episode, too, constitutes prolegomena for the end of the epic, with its depiction of a surrogate father exercising furious vengeance for his slain surrogate son.⁵⁵

We may discern an overarching pattern here in the Hercules references in the *Aeneid*. In Books V and VIII – the framing books of the poet's second third – the hero is recalled as a great figure from mythic history. In the boxing match of Book V he is remembered for his evocation of the age of men who were better by far in terms of valor and strength, one might think, than those of today – the world of aged Entellus and his forebears. At Pallanteum in Book VIII what was briefly sketched in Book V takes on inestimable significance, as the slayer of Cacus is remembered by grateful, adoring Arcadians – and as Aeneas is encouraged by Evander to emulate Hercules with respect to his humility and despising of riches.

⁵² For an argument that the death of Antores anticipates that of Lausus, see Paschalis (1997: 343).

⁵³ Paschalis' aforementioned semantic reading of Antores' name renders some aspects of his end ironic.

⁵⁴ On the noteworthiness of the collocation *genitor nati* see Stahl (2016: 143).

⁵⁵ For extended commentary and consideration of the parallel cases of Pallas and Lausus see Sisul (2018: 185–234), and note Barchiesi (2015) on the Pallas-Lausus-Mezentius dynamics as structurally relevant to the death of Turnus. The topos of paternal/filial relations is the subject of Lee (1982).

There is also the darker memory of how the great hero slew the *germanus* of Aeneas during a ferocious boxing bout, and too the reminiscence of the significant intervention of Aeneas to see to the rescue of Dares from his own pugilistic peril, lest he be a victim of Entellus' Herculean anger.

The first half of the *Aeneid* closes with an eye on another, Roman future – one in which Augustus will achieve more than Hercules. This revelation comes not long after Aeneas' father encouraged the Roman of the future to spare those who have been subjected – in other words, to do something akin to what the furious Entellus was not inclined to demonstrate, something that Aeneas had to intervene to accomplish.⁵⁶ Augustus – the supreme *Romanus* of the future, we might say – will surpass the achievements of Hercules and Liber, both of whom were associated with irrationality and frenzy (and, as we shall consider further below, with Mark Antony).

When Hercules finally appears as a figure in the epic timeline of the war in Italy, he is presented not as some victorious hero or triumphant demigod, but as someone shedding vain tears for a young hero whose death he cannot prevent.⁵⁷ From furious avenger of his stolen cattle in the matter of the destruction of the monstrous Cacus, Hercules in some sense is reduced to someone who is able only to cry and to mourn for the death of Pallas, and no more. That said, the depiction recalls that of Homer's Zeus shedding sanguinary tears for Sarpedon,⁵⁸ and it highlights too the image of Aeneas as surrogate father of Pallas: once again, the emphasis is on lineage and descent.⁵⁹ This emphasis takes on special resonance in light of Antony's claims of Herculean ancestry – he, too, was doomed, heroic sires notwithstanding. Further, Antony's vaunted, Herculean lineage boasted descent from a figure known for outbursts of fury and madness – exactly the opposite of the picture of Augustan order.⁶⁰

Zeus wept for Sarpedon, and Hercules laments the death of Pallas. Sarpedon was slain by Patroclus, for whom Virgil's Pallas serves as something of an epic comparand. The slayers of both Sarpedon and Pallas are doomed in turn.

In the final scene of Virgil's epic, Aeneas is confronted with something akin to the situation of Hercules from Book X. Where the demigod faced the imminent loss of the Arcadian who had just invoked his aid, the Trojan faces Pallas' killer, with the powerful visual reminder of the loss in the fateful *balteus* of his slain comrade. Aeneas' decision to reject Turnus' appeal and to slay his adversary has been the subject of extensive critical commentary.⁶¹ In his anger and fury, he resembles not the composed demigod Hercules who now sits among the Olympians, but the enraged Hercules glimpsed in Evander's rec-

⁵⁶ Put another way, what the shade of Anchises enjoins on the future Roman in Book VI is of a piece with what Aeneas had already seen to in his management of the boxing competition in V. Thus Virgil uses the boxing contest as evidence that Aeneas is familiar with the sort of thing his father is advising, and indeed that the Trojan hero has already shown an inclination to the same pacific, civilizing role.

⁵⁷ With the tears of Hercules compare the *lacrimae inanes* of Verg. *Aen.* IV, 449, which may be Aeneas' – thus drawing another connection between the two.

⁵⁸ Hom. *Il.* XVI, 459–461.

⁵⁹ The fact of the immutability of fate is at the center of the event, as I am reminded by an anonymous referee.

⁶⁰ But cf. here the dark reading of the end of the *Aeneid* (with Aeneas' anger as a negative commentary on Augustus) of Weeda (2015: 113–114). I would argue that the depiction of the furious Aeneas of the close of Book XII (modeled on the similarly mad Hercules) is a cautionary *exemplum* for Augustus.

⁶¹ Cf. here *ad loc.* Tarrant (2012) and Traina (2017).

ollection of the defeat of Cacus.⁶² In terms of response to instructional admonition from paternal figures, Aeneas accedes to Evander's injunction about imitating the humility of Hercules at Pallanteum. He does not heed the shade of Anchises in the matter of sparing one's defeated enemies.

Virgil underscores this point by having Aeneas respond not only to Evander's invitation to model himself on Hercules the guest, but also to the clear implications of the old man's comments about vengeance and retribution in the wake of Pallas' death:

*uadite et haec memores regi mandata referte:
quod uitam moror inuisam Pallante perempto
dextera causa tua est, Turnum gnato patrique
quam debere uides. meritis uacat hic tibi solus
fortunaque locus ... (Verg. Aen. XI, 176–180)⁶³*

Evander's remarks are couched, some have argued, in terms of memory.⁶⁴ Once again there is a powerful juxtaposition of son and father: *gnato patri*. Evander makes clear that there is only one place that remains empty for Aeneas' merits and fortune – he must avenge Pallas in order to fulfill his destiny, one might say. The dead demand no less.⁶⁵ Some might consider the whole matter an illustration of when *pietas* intersects with *furor*.⁶⁶ The overarching significance of the scheme is its place in the thread of admonitory passages whereby Aeneas hears suggestions made by paternal figures.

Aeneas had called a halt to the boxing match between Entellus and Dares. He did not allow Entellus' anger and wrath to proceed any further.⁶⁷ Hercules had slain Aeneas' own half-brother (the *germanus* relationship is highlighted in Virgil's account), and Aeneas as master of the games ensures that Entellus will not slay the Trojan Dares. Now, under the weight of Evander's expectation, the hero will see to the vengeance of Pallas. In his final outburst of anger, he will incarnate Hercules, just as he had at Pallanteum when Evander had enjoined a far less sanguinary manner of fashioning oneself on the demigod.⁶⁸

We have observed that some scholars have identified typological links between Hercules and Aeneas. One of the problems inherent to the interpretation of Virgil's Hercules is the question of Mark Antony. Octavian's rival and foe advertised his Herculean descent via the hero's son Anton.⁶⁹ Does Virgil provide something of a propaganda rebuke of Antony's genealogical fancies, with Aeneas and Augustus as the true inheritors of Hercules' mantle? Certainly the apparent tension has been noted by scholars of Augustan

⁶² On this see Farron (1977).

⁶³ For this key passage for understanding the end of the epic, cf. *ad loc.* Gransden (1991), Horsfall (2003), Fratantuono (2009), and McGill (2020).

⁶⁴ Cf. here Seider (2013: 152).

⁶⁵ So Nielson (1984).

⁶⁶ Cf. Spence (2002) and Quartarone (2002).

⁶⁷ Games offer a mimicry of war, but there is a significant degree of difference between them, and one should not die in the friendly rivalry of competition.

⁶⁸ The Virgilian depiction of Evander presents its own problems that are beyond the scope of the present study; see further Papaioannou (2003).

⁶⁹ As aforementioned, Plutarch records this (Plut. *Ant.* 4, 2–3; 36, 7; 60, 5); cf. App. *Civ.* III, 16, 60; III, 19, 72, and see Loar (2021: 508–509).

history and literature.⁷⁰ The solution here may lie in the dual nature of Hercules. He is an ambivalent figure, of mixed associations and significant negative qualities. Near the halfway point of his epic, Virgil introduces the idea that Augustus will surpass Liber and Hercules.⁷¹ Augustus will be greater, that is, than the Jovian demigod in Antony's genealogy. At the close of the poem, Aeneas succumbs to the same sort of rage that is linked elsewhere in its books with Hercules and Dido.⁷² Aeneas is a problematic figure, a bringer of violence to an Italy that was "often idealized as a realm of peace."⁷³ Certainly one may interpret the closing scene of the *Aeneid* in either more or less positive or negative, optimistic or pessimistic ways. What is clear, however, is that Aeneas exhibits the same sort of rage that is elsewhere associated with Hercules, the would-be patron of Antony. The disgraced triumvir had also fancied himself a devotee of Bacchus, not least in his luxurious, decadent lifestyle in Cleopatra's Alexandria. The announcement in Elysium that Augustus would take a crown superior to that of Liber and Hercules constitutes a double barb aimed at Antony, and it offers the reminder at the epic's midpoint that emulation of Hercules (not to mention Bacchus) is not without significant risk and, in the end, liability to bloodthirsty anger and violent fury.⁷⁴

We may make a final observation about the poet's depiction of the demigod. In all three works of Virgil, the (white) poplar is noted in passing for its special association with Hercules.⁷⁵ Servius Auctus argued that the poplar was of particular appropriateness for Hercules' *corona*, because its distinctive dichromatic leaves represented the hero's labors both in the lower and upper regions.⁷⁶ It might also be said that the poplar is a fitting plant for Hercules, given that its characteristic two-tone appearance reflects also the dual nature of the hero, both as a deliverer from harm and as a furious, wrathful avenger.

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⁷⁰ Cf., e.g., Moormann, Stocks (2021: 95).

⁷¹ Antony had his own connection to Liber/Bacchus, given the triumvir's notorious fondness for drink. Antony is said to have composed a *De sua ebrietate* (vid. Plin. *Nat.* XIV, 28, 148, where Antony is the crowning figure in a catalogue of notorious examples of bibulousness).

⁷² We may note the order here of Books IV, VIII, and XII – respective thirds of the epic.

⁷³ So Lowe (2015: 224).

⁷⁴ If there is any undercutting of the stature of Aeneas (either at the close of the poem or elsewhere), the rationale is to underscore how the future Rome will not be Trojan with respect to its *mores*.

⁷⁵ Cf. Verg. *Ecl.* VII, 61; *Georg.* II, 66; and *Aen.* VIII, 286. On the poplar in Virgil note Sargeant (1920: 105–106), Abbe (1965: 73), and the citations in Maggiulli (1995). Cf. also Armstrong (2019: 131–132).

⁷⁶ ... *qua corona usus, duplici colore foliorum geminos laborum (superorum) inferorumque testatus est* ... (Serv. *Ecl.* VII, 61). See further here Edgeworth (1992: 44–45). The duality of Hercules and his appropriateness as a figure emblematic of the bane of civil war derives in part from his status as an illegitimate son of Jupiter, as an incarnation of internecine strife in the household of the supreme god and his lawful wife.

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VERGILIOV HERCULES: OZVUKY OBČANSKÉHO SVÁRU A DVOJAKOST

Héraklés je ve Vergiliově *Aeneidě* zmiňován celkem často, zejména ve druhé, italské části eposu. Bližší pohled na to, jak po sobě odkazy k Hérakleovi v básni následují, odhaluje jejich promyšlené uspořádání. Tyto pasáže interagují s charakteristikou Aenea i Augusta, zejména v rovině literární s rozhodnutím trójského hrdiny zabít svého nepřítele Turna a v rovině historické s občanskou válkou proti Marcu Antoniovi. V této válce vítěz překonal činy bájemí opředěného dávného hrdiny, od něhož jeho soupeř proklamoval svůj původ. Ukazuje se, že Héraklés evokoval Vergilioví různé asociace a sloužil mu jako výstražné mytologické *exemplum* toho, jaké riziko přináší podlehnouti zuřivosti. Spojení poloboha s topolem, který se vyznačuje dvoubarevnými listy, je pak interpretováno jako symbol protikladných aspektů Hérakleovy povahy.

Lee Fratantuono
National University of Ireland, Maynooth
lee.fratantuono@mu.ie