

Roman Identity in the Age of Augustus

A Critical Look at the Roles of Aeneas, Romulus, and Hercules in the Founding of Rome

by

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Abstract

As portrayed by the ancient sources, Aeneas and Romulus typically have been considered founders of Rome. In this paper, I argue that Hercules is also depicted as a founder of the city. Considering the works of historians, such as Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and poets, such as Vergil and Ovid, I examine the traits that Aeneas, Romulus, and Hercules have in common. Looking at episodes from the stories of Aeneas and Romulus, including the murders of Remus and Turnus and the rape of the Sabine women, I assert that these men show characteristics of violence as they execute civilizing acts. I then investigate Hercules' participation in the killing of Cacus, his establishment of the Ara Maxima, and his alteration of the Rite of the *Argei*, concluding that Hercules exhibits the same tendencies toward violence and civilization that Aeneas and Romulus do. Finally, I argue that the abundance of stories written about these three men during the Age of Augustus reveals the ambivalence of the Romans toward Augustus' involvement in civil war and his identity as a re-founder of Rome.

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Introduction

The growth of Rome from its small beginnings to the height of the empire is astounding to consider. At the beginning of this project, when I first reflected upon the origins of the city, I was fascinated by this transformation. The story of Romulus and Remus has been familiar to me for many years. The abandonment of the twins as babies, their survival by the nourishment of the she-wolf, and their modest upbringing by a shepherd make Romulus' eventual rise to power seem unlikely. Even after founding the city, Romulus struggles to build it to greatness, relying on fugitives, foreigners, and even trickery to amass a sustainable population. Aeneas' journey, as well, has a modest, and even hopeless, beginning. The first image of Aeneas in Vergil's *Aeneid* is not that of the victorious general or the confident and charismatic political leader that is often associated with Rome, but of a man who has been defeated in so many ways, the loser of a war and the victim of a goddess's wrath.¹ Taking these two accounts of the founding of Rome, it is a wonder that she grew from a single town into an empire, conquering many nations and dominating a vast region of the world.

Curious about how the Romans looked upon these stories and questioning whether or not these stories actually foreshadow the future success of Rome, I began to examine the traits of the founders. I was intrigued by Romulus' "wild" side, a part of his character I believed could also be found in Aeneas. Although this parallel was interesting, what I found even more remarkable was that another figure, Hercules, exhibits these traits and is present in these founding tales. When reading the various ancient accounts of Aeneas, Romulus, and Hercules, the similarities among the three begin to mount.

¹ Verg., *Aen.* 1.92-101.

In a basic sense, the three men are civilizers. They create order from uncertain and unstable situations; they are instrumental in the foundation of religious institutions that last for centuries in Rome; and they provide for the security and safety of the city by defeating outside threats. But beyond their civilizing actions, the three are linked through their characters, most importantly by their violence. It is not without violence that Aeneas defeats Turnus and establishes the Roman bloodline in Italy, nor does Romulus found Rome without bloodshed, his brother among the unfortunate victims. Hercules, too, exhibits violence and brutality in his killing of Cacus. The commonalities among Hercules and the two recognized founders, both as civilizers and as perpetrators of violence, are present in abundance in the ancient sources.

Scholarship on the foundation of Rome has focused on Aeneas and Romulus as the founders. Whether Aeneas is a pure role model for the Romans or a flawed founder has continuously been debated by scholars. Some, such as K. W. Gransden, argue that Aeneas is a civilizer and a driving force for good against evil, but others, such as Michael Putnam, question this wholehearted goodness and offer more complex readings of Aeneas' character.² The origins and development of the Romulus story have most notably been traced by T. P. Wiseman in his book *Remus: A Roman Myth*, and Cynthia Bannon discusses the implications of Romulus' story in *The Brothers of Romulus*. G. Karl Galinsky has done extensive work on Hercules and he, along with other scholars, has drawn parallels among Hercules and Aeneas and Romulus.³ These authors, however, have not gone so far as to identify Hercules as a founder of Rome.

My work will demonstrate that Hercules is indeed a founder of Rome, on a par with Aeneas and Romulus. Chapter One elaborates the familiar foundation stories of Aeneas and

² See Gransden's commentary *Virgil Aeneid Book VIII*, 1976 and Putnam's *Virgil's Aeneid: Interpretation and Influence*, 1995.

³ Most notably in "The Hercules-Cacus Episode in Aeneid VIII," 1966 and *The Herakles Theme*, 1972 (326-266).

Romulus, drawing particular attention to their civilizing acts and how these acts conflict with the violent nature of the men. In this chapter, I focus on the stories as told by Vergil, Livy, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Ovid, and Plutarch. Having established in Chapter One what I believe to be the most salient characteristics of these two founders, I move to a discussion of Hercules in Chapters Two and Three. Chapter Two begins to solidify the connection between Hercules and the established founders through an analysis of the story of Hercules and Cacus, which appears most famously in Book VIII of Vergil's *Aeneid* but also in Livy, Dionysius, Ovid, and Propertius. In drawing parallels among the founders, I emphasize the ways in which Hercules is a civilizer by killing Cacus yet also acts with unrestrained violence and fury in many of the accounts. I continue the discussion of Hercules in Chapter Three, with an examination of Hercules' role in the establishment of the Ara Maxima and the rite of the *Argei*, again looking to the accounts of Livy, Dionysius, Ovid, and Plutarch. Founders leave behind lasting institutions, and these rituals mark two ways in which Hercules participated in the creation of enduring traditions in Rome.

Chapter Four brings together the three founders to investigate how the stories of all three men as told by the ancient authors reflect upon Augustus and the decades preceding his rule. The foundation stories do help to confer legitimacy on Augustus as a new founder, but at the same time, they reveal a violent side to the leader. This brings to fulfillment the discussion of how the conflicting nature of these men—their ability to create order and civilization and their tendencies toward violence—informs their role as founders.

Chapter One

Aeneas and Romulus: The Acknowledged Founders

When considering the foundation of Rome, most scholars have focused their attention on the figures of Aeneas and Romulus. There is little doubt that Romulus, from whom Rome took her name, is considered the founder of the city,⁴ and the story of Romulus and Remus is abundant in ancient literature. In an early, variant tradition preserved in Hellanicus, Aeneas was considered the founder of Rome, though of course his more familiar role in the foundation story as the leader of the Trojan refugees into Italy was secured by Vergil's *Aeneid*.⁵ Dionysius of Halicarnassus provides an inventory of many versions of the founding story of Rome, including accounts that address the relationship between these two founders.⁶ Most ancient authors agree that Romulus descended from Aeneas, although the number of generations believed to have separated the two men varies. As this chapter explains, the ancient sources reveal that these two acknowledged founders of Rome, although civilizers, share the common characteristic of violence, a trait that I will later argue is shared by Hercules.

Most accounts note that in addition to founding the physical structures of the city, both Aeneas and Romulus established political, social, and religious institutions that became ingrained in Roman society. Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Livy give particular attention to the establishment of societal conventions. Yet to understand the impact that Aeneas and Romulus had as founders on the structure of Roman civilization and on the way the Romans viewed Augustus, it is also necessary to go beyond these typical markers of a founder and explore the personalities of the two men, which have much in common and, surprisingly, appear to conflict

⁴ The most famous account of Romulus is Liv. 1.4-16. Other accounts appear in D. H. 1.76-88; Ov., *F.* 2.129-44, 2.363-503, 3.1-78, 3.127-34, 4.807-62; Plu., *Rom.*; Verg., *Aen.* 6.777-83.

⁵ D. H. 1.72.2 mentions this early tradition.

⁶ D. H. 1.72.2-5.

with their role as founders. In the course of shaping Roman civilization through the enactment of laws and customs, Aeneas and Romulus occasionally act with great and startling violence. Aeneas participates in ruthless killings, including human sacrifice, in Book X of Vergil's *Aeneid*, and the epic ends with Aeneas' slaying of Turnus. Although killing one's enemies in war was expected by the Romans, some of Aeneas' actions are particularly brutal and at odds with his otherwise civilizing nature. Likewise, the story of Romulus contains episodes of violence, most notably the murder of his brother Remus and the rape of the Sabine women. Through their accounts, Dionysius and Livy, along with Ovid, Propertius, and Plutarch, also shed light on the potential fratricide and the violent seizure of the women, two acts that cast a shadow on Romulus' image as a civilizer. It is this combination of civilizing acts and barbaric qualities within Aeneas and Romulus that is essential to understanding their identity as founders of Rome.

Aeneas' arrival in Italy sets the stage for his founding of a new city. This founding comprises a political and domestic alliance between the Trojan people and the native Latin people, which in turn leads to the establishment of social and religious institutions and the construction of public buildings. The political alliance is outlined by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who states the terms of the treaty between the Trojans and the Latins: The Trojans would be granted land and the two peoples would provide arms and counsel to each other.⁷ This alliance is secured through a domestic union, the marriage of Aeneas to Lavinia. In Livy's account, Latinus' daughter is given to Aeneas *apud penates deos* (1.1.9), in front of the household gods. Considering that Aeneas had brought his own household gods out of burning Troy and established a temple for them in Italy, the fact of his marriage before the Latin

⁷ D. H. 1.59.1.

household gods shows that the Trojans and Latins both valued the worship of their gods.⁸ There can be no question that in forging this combined political and domestic alliance, Aeneas was acting as a founder since he subsequently founded the city Lavinium, named after his new bride.⁹

The alliance of the Latins and the Trojans ultimately gave rise to a new and lasting community comprised of people whose descendants would later identify themselves as Romans. Following their fight against the Rutulians, which culminated in Aeneas' victory over Turnus, the two peoples combined customs and adopted the name Latins. (Although we never see this come to fruition within the *Aeneid*, we know that it will happen because of a conversation between Juno and Jupiter that takes place as the war is drawing to a close.)¹⁰ Vergil attributes the merging of Trojan and Latin customs to Juno's acquiescence to fate when she makes requests of Jupiter that the Latin nation not be entirely extinguished in name and dress and declares the new nation as Roman (*cum iam leges et foedera iungent, ne vetus indigenas nomen mutare...sit Romana potens Itala virtute* [12.823-827]). That this merging of two peoples, made possible by Aeneas' victory, is destined to lead to a Roman nation once again is indicative of Aeneas' status as a founder of Rome and is an example of his role as a civilizer.

The social and religious institutions established by Aeneas had a lasting impact on Rome. Dionysius of Halicarnassus states that Aeneas' deeds are evident in the sacrifices, festivals, words of the Sibyl, and Pythian oracles, among many other things, and that all Romans confirm the arrival of Aeneas and the Trojans in Italy (τὰ δρώμενα ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἐν τε θυσίαις καὶ ἑορταῖς μηνύματα, Σιβύλλης τε λόγια καὶ χρησμοὶ Πυθικοὶ καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ τῆς δ' εἰς

⁸ Verg., *Aen.* 1.6: *inferretque deos Latio*, he brought the gods to Latium. D. H. 1.67.1 notes the temple Aeneas set up with the gods: κατασκευασθέντος τοῖς ἔδεσι τῶν θεῶν, οὓς Αἰνείας ἐκ τῆς Τρωάδος ἠνέγκατο καὶ καθίδρυσεν ἐν τῷ Λαουϊνίῳ, ναοῦ χωρίον ἔχοντος ἄβατον καὶ τῶν ἰδρυμάτων.

⁹ D. H. 1.59.3.

¹⁰ Verg., *Aen.* 12.791-842.

Ἰταλίαν Αἰνίου καὶ Τρώων ἀφίξεως Ῥωμαῖοί τε πάντες βεβαιωταὶ [D.H.1.49.2]). Aeneas left his mark not only through customs, practices, and institutions, but also through physical landmarks. Livy notes the physical remains of Aeneas' presence, locating his tomb by the river Numicus (*situs est...super Numicum flumen* [1.2.6]). Dionysius recognizes that after Aeneas' death honorary monuments were constructed in several locations across Italy, and he specifically uses these honorary monuments as evidence to refute those who claim that Aeneas never set foot in Italy.¹¹ He later notes that Aeneas furnished the city of Lavinium with temples and other buildings, most of which Dionysius claims still stood in his own time (Αἰνίας δὲ κατασκευάσας ἱεροῖς τε καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις κόσμοις ἀποχρώντως τὴν πόλιν, ὧν τὰ πλεῖστα ἔτι καὶ εἰς ἐμὲ ἦν [1.64.1]).

Romulus' status as a founder of Rome is even more clearly defined than Aeneas'. While Aeneas is responsible for establishing in Italy what will become the Roman bloodline, Romulus is considered the founder of the city itself. The most striking example Romulus' fundamental connection to the city is the city's name, Rome.¹² Further, Rex Stem claims that, at least in Livy's account, Romulus' acts as king “demonstrate the combination of power, divine sanction, and institutional tradition that will become the foundation of Rome's success as a Republic.”¹³ Indeed, his kingly acts did contribute to the foundation of a strong Roman community. Romulus built the physical structure of the city and, like Aeneas, established religious institutions, laws, and social structures. One of Romulus' acts as king was to build fortifications around the city. Livy notes that building a wall on the Palatine was one of the first things Romulus did, and

¹¹ Dionysius traces the travels of the Trojans from Sicily, where Aeneas built an altar and temple, to Italy, including the harbor of Palinurus and Laurentum: D. H. 1.53-54.

¹² Liv. 1.7.3; D. H. 1.45.3 and 2.46.2; Plutarch provides potential other sources for the name Rome but says that the tradition that is most true (δικαιοτάτῳ) is that the city is named after Romulus: Plu., *Rom.* 2.1.

¹³ Stem 2007, 466.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus describes how Romulus dug a furrow for the walls after participating in proper sacrifices and taking omens.¹⁴ Plutarch marks this furrow as the *pomerium*, a sacred line separating the city from the outside that the Romans maintained even as the boundaries of Rome expanded.¹⁵

Romulus' construction of Rome's first temple established religion in the city and provided a fundamental connection between himself and the rising city. After defeating the king of Caenina in battle, Romulus built a temple to Jupiter Feretrius, which Livy tells us is the first temple dedicated in Rome.¹⁶ Through his construction of this temple, Romulus provided a symbol that solidified the relationship between the Romans and the gods. Romulus dedicated the spoils of his victory, the *spolia opima*, at the temple, and both Livy and Dionysius note that only twice after Romulus were *spolia opima* granted.¹⁷ Romulus' victory in battle also marks the institution of the triumph, a ritual that was carried on by future Romans to honor an individual's military strength.

Dionysius attributes a large portion of Roman religion to Romulus, claiming that Romulus established temples, sacred spaces, altars, statues, the forms and powers and gifts of the gods, festivals, sacrifices, and holidays.¹⁸ Dionysius also observes how swiftly Romulus established religious institutions after founding the city, saying that in any other newly founded city, no one would be able to name so many priests and attendants of the gods appointed at the

¹⁴ Liv. 1.7.3; D. H. 1.88.2.

¹⁵ Plutarch uses the Latin word *pomerium* and even notes that it is an abbreviation meaning behind or next to the wall, *καλεῖται κατὰ συκοπὴν πωμήριον οἶον ὀπισθεν τείχους ἢ μετὰ τείχος*; Plu., *Rom.* 11.3.

¹⁶ Liv. 1.10.7; D. H. 2.34.4 asserts that the remains of the temple are present in his day.

¹⁷ Liv. 1.10.7; D. H. 2.34.4; Plu., *Rom.* 16.7 names Cornelius Cossus and Claudius Marcellus as the other two men to receive the *spolia opima*.

¹⁸ D. H. 2.18.2. Other authors (Such as Liv. 1.18-20 and Plu. *Num.*) attribute many major religious institutions to Numa.

beginning (ἐν γοῦν ἄλλῃ πόλει νεοκτίστῳ τοσοῦτους ἱερεῖς τε καὶ θεραπευτὰς θεῶν εὐθὺς ἀποδειχθέντας οὐδεὶς ἂν εἰπεῖν ἔχοι [2.21.1]).

Beyond establishing religion as a cornerstone of Roman society, Romulus created a political and social system in the new Rome. He divided the city into tribes and *curiae* and marked one hundred men as senators.¹⁹ Dionysius claims that the patron-client system of Rome was established under Romulus, and that the one hundred senators were chosen from the patrons of this system, the patricians.²⁰ Livy, however, asserts that it was the descendants of the original one hundred senators, or *patres*, who were called patricians (*patres certe ab honore, patriciique progenies eorum appellati* [8.4.7]). In either case, the hierarchy established by Romulus, which included senators and patricians, created a framework for the Roman political and social system.

An exploration of the roles of Aeneas and Romulus in establishing Roman civilization would be woefully incomplete without a consideration of their violent and barbarous acts, which also shed light on their essential character. Illustrative examples of these traits of Aeneas are found in Book X of the *Aeneid*, in which he participates in human sacrifice, and later in Book XII, where we read about his killing of Turnus.

Denis Feeney marks Book X as the first instance where Vergil's promised *arma virumque* are seen, and Peter Burnell also observes Aeneas' battle-fury and loss of self-control in this book.²¹ The Romans looked upon human sacrifice as barbaric,²² and Aeneas' act of human sacrifice displays his violence and rage:

¹⁹ Plut., *Rom.* 20.2 and D. H. 2.7.2 describe the division of tribes and Curiae. Liv. 1.8.7, D. H. 2.12.1-2, and Ov., *F.* 3.127-130 describe the appointment of senators.

²⁰ D. H. 2.9-10 outlines the patron-client system and D. H. 2.12 describes the selection of senators. Plut. *Rom.* 13.1-6 also describes the patron-client system, but equates the body of patricians with the senate.

²¹ Feeney 1999, 178; Burnell 1987, 192.

*Sulmone creatos
quattuor hic iuvenes, totidem quos educat Ufens,
viventis rapit, inferias quos immolet umbris
captivoque rogi perfundat sanguine flammis.* (Verg., *Aen.* 10.517-20)

Four youths, born of Sulmo, as many as Ufens raised,
[Aeneas] snatches, alive. He sacrifices them to the shades
and he sprinkles the flames of the pyre with the captive blood.

Steven Farron discusses the repulsiveness of Aeneas' sacrifice, claiming that the act is not justified because it is not required of him for a greater social benefit and because the ending of the epic is so brutal, not hopeful.²³ Farron further argues that Vergil intends for the reader to take note of this event since the epic poet refers to the sacrificial victims again in Book XI.²⁴

Putnam also does not ascribe a noble purpose to Aeneas' act, stating "it is rage, as we have seen, that in Book 10, drives Aeneas to take eight humans for sacrifice, kill a suppliant and a priest, and offer, to a body he has just beheaded, the epic's most jarring curse."²⁵

In the final scene of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas kills Turnus, who is kneeling at his feet as a suppliant. At the end of the *Aeneid*, we expect the realization of Aeneas' destiny, and in some ways, this culminating act of killing Turnus can be seen as Aeneas' fulfillment of his fate and therefore can be justified. Gary Miles, for example, claims that Turnus was an obstacle to the alliance between the Romans and Italians and that his death helped to define the new Roman community.²⁶ The killing, however, can better be seen as a violent and excessive manifestation of Aeneas' rage, with Turnus the subdued and suppliant recipient. As the fight between Turnus and Aeneas ensues through Book XII, Turnus himself is depicted as violent and full of rage. But

²² Sources detailing other episodes of human sacrifice from mythology, such as that of Iphigenia in Horace, Juvenal, and Ovid, or actual episodes from history, such as in Livy and Cicero, condemn the practice: Farron 1985, 22-23.

²³ Farron 1985, 28.

²⁴ Verg., *Aen.* 11.81-82.

²⁵ Putnam 1995, 193.

²⁶ Miles 1999, 234.

the tide turns as the battle continues, and the two men reverse roles at the end of the epic. In a dramatic simile, Vergil describes Aeneas hunting down Turnus like a dog chasing a stag. Turnus is hemmed in (*inclusam*), terrified (*terrītus*), and flees back and forth on a thousand paths (*mille fugit refugitque vias*), whereas Aeneas is the hunting dog, who pursues Turnus vehemently (*fervidus*) with his jaws gaping (*hians*).²⁷ Turnus is continuously in flight, and in the final scene, Turnus urges Aeneas to consider carefully the choice of killing or sparing his victim. Although Galinsky claims that Turnus is a “thug” and deserves to be shown no mercy,²⁸ at the end of the epic, Turnus has actually changed. Wounded by Aeneas, Turnus turns his eyes to the ground and stretches out his right hand to Aeneas in a gesture of supplication (*ille humilis supplex oculos dextramque precantem protendens* [12.930-31]). He even states that he has deserved this (*merui*), saying Aeneas has won (*vicisti*) and calling himself the conquered (*victum*).²⁹ Putnam regards Turnus as “already doomed” and “no match for” Aeneas; therefore, Aeneas’ violent acts against Turnus are beyond what is necessary to achieve his goals.³⁰ Turnus’ passivity in the final scene makes him a pitiable figure, one who does not deserve Aeneas’ excessive violence.

The contrast between the terrified suppliant Turnus and the raging, angry Aeneas could not be more stark. When Aeneas looks upon Pallas’ baldric slung across Turnus’ shoulder, he is inflamed by fury and terrible in his anger (*furiis accensus et ira terribilis* [12.946-47]). Aeneas’ apparent motive for violence is revenge for the death of Pallas, perhaps because of his duty to Evander, who had entrusted Pallas to Aeneas. Aeneas says, “it is Pallas who sacrifices you with this wound and Pallas who exacts the punishment from your wicked blood (*Pallas te hoc*

²⁷ Verg., *Aen.* 12.749-755.

²⁸ Galinsky 1988, 323. Galinsky (343) claims that Turnus’ anger is different from Aeneas’ because it serves no purpose and does not achieve an end, but I find it questionable whether Aeneas’ anger in killing Turnus is as well-intentioned as it may appear.

²⁹ Verg. *Aen.* 12.931 and 12.936.

³⁰ Putnam 1965, 164.

vulnere, Pallas immolat et poenam scelerato ex sanguine sumit [12.948-49]).” Burnell argues, however, that Roman morality would not support a deed done purely from revenge, as this one appears to be.³¹ Further, Aeneas’ anger and violence disregard Anchises’ instructions to him in the underworld: Spare the conquered and vanquish the proud (*parcere subiectis et debellare superbos* [6.853]). Putnam argues, “The killing of Turnus demonstrates not a willingness on the part of Aeneas to reconcile opposing elements into a creative harmony, as suggested by Anchises, but rather the opposite, an adherence to a type of personal vendetta.”³² Indeed, Aeneas’ actions cannot be explained fully without attributing them to an internal, personal anger.

It is not simply revenge, however, that drives Aeneas to violence. In the account of the killing, Aeneas has a moment of hesitation, an instant in time that has received much scholarly attention. Upon hearing Turnus’ supplications, Aeneas, hesitating, begins to waver more and more because of the speech (*iam iamque magis cunctantem flectere sermo coeperat* [12.940-41]). To Burnell, this represents a moment of compassion by Aeneas, which Burnell likens to the scene in Book X when Aeneas stops to show compassion for Lausus.³³ Galinsky develops this view even further, claiming that Aeneas is humanized through his hesitation, which exhibits a softening of his emotions and therefore makes his killing of Turnus a moral act.³⁴ Putnam, however, disagrees and argues that the hesitation shows that Aeneas is not acting out of *pietas*.³⁵ Had Aeneas truly been acting from loyalty to Evander and been seeking proper vengeance for Pallas’ death, Putnam asserts, Aeneas never would have hesitated at all since the act would not

³¹ Burnell 1987, 191. As evidence for the Roman morality, Burnell cites Cicero’s *De Officiis* and Cato the Elder’s argument for clemency toward Rhodes.

³² Putnam 1965, xii-xiii.

³³ Burnell 1987, 195. The complete scene of Lausus’ death: Verg., *Aen.* 10.762-832; Aeneas’ reaction to Lausus dying at his hands: 10.821-832.

³⁴ Galinsky 1988, 341 and 325.

³⁵ Putnam 1995, 159.

need to be questioned.³⁶ Aeneas' hesitation may reflect a modicum of compassion, but in the end, the act of killing is itself full of anger. Aeneas is portrayed as mad as he drinks in (*hausit*) the spoils on Turnus' chest, and the description of him as *furiis accensus et ira terribilis* colors the entire passage.³⁷ Despite any initial provocation that may have come from Turnus, Aeneas ultimately kills a man who had already been conquered.

The violent qualities of Aeneas, depicted in the *Aeneid* through his human sacrifice and his killing of Turnus, are as much a part of Aeneas' character as his acts that created a lasting civilization, as described by Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Livy. As we turn to the second of Rome's acknowledged founders, Romulus, we see once again these dual qualities. The violent side of his nature is exhibited most clearly through his fratricide of Remus, which complicates the story of Romulus' founding of Rome, and his orchestration of the rape of the Sabine women.

Multiple authors recount the violence attendant to the story of Remus' death. All agree that the events leading up to Remus' death involved a quarrel between the two brothers after they take auguries concerning the location of the new city and who will be its founder. Both Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus mark the mutual desire for power as the reason for the struggle,³⁸ suggesting that the violence is motivated by personal ambition and disagreement, rather than by good intentions for the future city and its people. Wiseman claims that when the story of the conflict between the brothers initially had been created in the 4th century BCE, it was influenced by the power-sharing between patricians and plebeians at that time.³⁹ He suggests that the creation of a twin, Remus, reflects the struggles of the plebeians, and he draws this parallel

³⁶ Putnam 1995, 155.

³⁷ Verg., *Aen.* 12.946-7.

³⁸ Liv. 1.6.4 calls this an ancient evil, the desire for the kingship, *avatum malum, regni cupido*. D. H. 1.85.5 says that each wanted to rule the other and be greater, not equal, ὡς αὐτοῦ ἀρχῶν ἐκάτερος θατέρου, παρώσαντες τὸ ἴσον τοῦ πλείονος ὠρεγοντο.

³⁹ Wiseman 1995, 107.

especially because Remus chose to take auguries on the Aventine, the same location as the secession of the plebs. The implication of Wiseman's argument is that the struggle between Romulus and Remus is ultimately a struggle for power, just like that experienced in Republican Roman society. While it is commonly understood that people inherently do not want to be subject to another's authority, allowing one's desire for sole power rise to the level of fratricide can only be characterized as an unnecessary and extreme reaction.

The ancient authors give differing accounts of the culprit in Remus' death. According to Livy and Dionysius, Remus was killed in a scuffle involving more people than simply the two brothers.⁴⁰ Both of these authors, however, offer alternative stories. Livy, along with Ovid in his *Fasti II* and Plutarch, gives a second "more common report" that it was actually Romulus who killed Remus.⁴¹ There is even a third story—given by Dionysius and Plutarch as an alternative and also by Ovid's *Fasti IV*—that Celer, one of Romulus' men, killed Remus.⁴² Wiseman explains that Ovid's reassignment of blame to Celer reflects the changing message of the myth during the Augustan Age.⁴³ The ambiguities present in Ovid, who presents different versions of the story, are evidence that the Augustan authors were attempting to reconcile the actions of Romulus, actions that make him a problematic role model. This idea will be explored further in the Chapter Four.

Some scholars argue that Romulus, just like Aeneas, engaged in human sacrifice, a particularly barbaric action, when he killed his brother Remus. Wiseman asserts that while many versions of the story turn Romulus into an *exemplum*, other versions, such as that of Propertius,

⁴⁰ Liv. 1.7.2 merely says Remus fell by a blow in the tumult, *in turba ictus Remus cecidit*. D. H. 1.87.3 has a similarly terse description.

⁴¹ Liv. 1.7.2; Ov., *F.* 2.143: *te Remus incusat*, Remus accuses you; Plut., *Rom.* 10.1.

⁴² D. H. 1.87.4; Plut., *Rom.* 10.1; Ov., *F.* 4.843-44.

⁴³ Wiseman 1995, 149.

represent Remus' death correctly as a necessary sacrifice for the founding of Rome.⁴⁴ Bannon agrees that Propertius' phrase *caeso moenia firma Remo* (the walls made firm by the slaughter of Remus) refers to the human sacrifice required for the building of Rome's walls.⁴⁵

Whether or not Remus was killed by Romulus' hand, and whether or not it was a human sacrifice, we can read from Romulus' reaction that he is complicit in the violence. In Ovid's *Fasti IV*, Romulus reacts by swallowing the tears that have welled up inside him and holding the wound enclosed in his heart (*lacrimas introrsus obortas devorat et clauseum pectore volnus habet* [4.845-46]), but he also says, "Thus it will be if an enemy should cross over my walls (*sic que meos muros transeat hostis ait* [4.848])." The similarity between Romulus' words in Ovid's account and Livy's (*sic deinde, quicumque alius transiliet moenia mea* [1.7.2]) is hard to miss. Romulus was the culprit in Livy's account. Cynthia Bannon argues that Ovid, by attributing similar words to Romulus, is not accusing Romulus outright, but certainly is creating an ambiguous situation in which he may indeed be guilty.⁴⁶ Stephen Hinds finds this common thread between Livy and Ovid noteworthy, and also suggests that the amount of space given to the account of Remus' death and Romulus' reaction reveals that Ovid did not intend to clear Romulus of the disgrace of fratricide.⁴⁷ Even in accounts where Romulus is not identified as Remus' murderer, he either is physically present during the conflict leading up to Remus' death or responds to Remus' death with outward approval. Thus, whichever version one might accept, in each Romulus possesses a violent side to his nature that exposes itself at one of the most crucial moments during his founding of Rome.

⁴⁴ Wiseman 1995, 125.

⁴⁵ Prop. 3.9.48; Bannon, 1997, 169.

⁴⁶ Bannon 1997, 171.

⁴⁷ Hinds 1992, 143-44.

We witness the violent and barbaric side of Romulus a second time when he leads the Romans in the rape of the Sabine women. In discussing the motives for the crime, most authors treat Romulus leniently, claiming that the Sabine women were seized only out of necessity, when other options were exhausted. Livy claims that Romulus initially attempted to acquire women for Rome through intermarriage, and that only when these requests were refused did the affair begin to look to force (*ad vim spectare res coepit* [1.9.6]). Plutarch agrees, stating that this deed was undertaken not by wanton violence but through necessity, since voluntary marriages were lacking (οὐκ ὕβρει τολμηθὲν ἀλλὰ δι' ἀνάγκην, ἐκουσίων ἀπορία γάμων [*Rom.* 9.2]). Plutarch does state later, however, that some called Romulus warlike by nature (λέγουσι μὲν ἔνιοι τὸν Ῥωμύλον αὐτὸν τῇ φύσει φιλοπόλεμον ὄντα [14.1]) and accused him of wanting war rather than marriages (πολέμου μᾶλλον ἢ γάμων δεόμενον [14.1]), but Plutarch claims this theory is not likely (τοῦτο δὲ οὐκ εἰκός [14.2]). By drawing our attention to this negative reaction, Plutarch at the very least is allowing us to consider the warlike nature of Romulus, keeping it in the realm of possibility and at the forefront of our minds.

Although the accounts of the seizure of the Sabine women differ in their details, the use of violence remains consistent. Propertius claims that Romulus was the author of the crime (*criminis auctor* [2.6.19]), and therefore attributes the source of the violence to Romulus. In Plutarch's version, Romulus gives the signal to his men, who draw their swords, rush in with a shout, and seize the daughters of the Sabines (σπασάμενοι τὰ ξίφη και μετὰ βοῆς ὀρμήσαντες, ἥρπαζον τὰς θυγατέρας τῶν Σαβίων [14.5]). This capture takes place under the pretense of a religious festival, making it even more offensive and an even clearer departure from

his typical civilizing role.⁴⁸ The reactions of others, the non-Romans, reveal the magnitude of the impiety. Livy describes how the Sabine parents fled, accused the Romans of wickedly violating hospitality, and called upon the god being honored at the festival for assistance (*parentes virginum profugiunt incusantes violati hospitii scelus deumque invocantes* [1.9.13]). Plutarch paints a picture of Romulus through the eyes of Acron, the king of the Caeninenses, saying that after this deed Acron considered Romulus fearful to all and unbearable unless chastised (τῷ προαχθέντι περὶ τὰς γυναῖκας ἤδη φοβερὸν ἡγούμενος πᾶσιν εἶναι καὶ οὐκ ἀνεκτὸν εἰ μὴ κολασθεῖν [16.3]). Although Romulus' design to steal the Sabine women allowed the Roman society to grow through the addition of women, this beneficial outcome cannot mask the violent transgression that took place to achieve the goal.

Nor can Romulus' attempts to justify this violent event negate the fact that Romulus has a violent side to his nature. In Livy, Romulus claims that the deed resulted because of the pride of the Sabine fathers who denied the marriage of their daughters to their neighbors (*patrum id superbia factum, qui conubium finitimis negassent* [1.9.14]). Livy reports that Romulus also asserts that often from injury, love is later born (*saepe ex iniuria postmodum gratiam ortam* [1.9.15]), and that the Roman men would treat their new wives better for this reason.⁴⁹ Stem remarks that in Livy the violent act "is turned by the larger shape of Livy's narrative into an act that so contributes to the growth of the city that it is to be regarded as among the greatest of Romulus' exemplary achievements."⁵⁰ The women feel a kinship with the Romans, stepping in to stop the warring between the Sabine men and the Roman men, pleading that they do not wish

⁴⁸ Liv. 1.9.6 claims the festival was for Equestrian Neptune; D. H. 2.30.3, for Neptune; Plut., *Rom.* 14.3, for Consus or Equestrian Neptune.

⁴⁹ Liv. 1.9.15.

⁵⁰ Stem 2007, 459.

to choose between husbands and fathers.⁵¹ Ovid, however, casts doubt upon these excuses, quoting Romulus: "What use is it for me to have seized the Sabine women, if my injury made not strength but war? It would have been better not to have had daughters-in-law (*quid mihi, clamabat, prodest rapuisse Sabinas...si mea non vires, sed bellum iniuria fecti? utilius fuerat non habuisse nurus* [F. 2.429-34])."⁵² Romulus' violent nature is still undisputed, despite his excuses, and, combined with his civilizing acts, we can see the complete picture of this founder of Rome.

Aeneas and Romulus, each of whom is a founder of the city Rome, have complex and parallel character traits. One side of their personalities allowed each of them to construct the landscape of the city, as well as establish many of the political, social, and religious institutions that shaped Roman civilization. Equally important, and not to be ignored, is the violent side of each man. This combination of traits formed the complete characters of Aeneas and Romulus, who, in turn, gave the city its identity.

⁵¹ Liv. 1.13.1-3; D. H. 2.45; Plut., *Rom.* 19.

⁵² Ov., *Fast.* 2.429-34.

Chapter Two

Hercules and Cacus: From Violence to Civil Order

There is no dispute that Aeneas and Romulus are founders of Rome. Scholars, however, have explored whether there are other figures whom the Romans elevated to the status of founders. Although H. Hill and later G. Karl Galinsky suggest that before the *Aeneid* was written, men such as Evander, Odysseus, and Hercules may have been considered founders of the city, they offer two reasons why Augustus chose to support Vergil in promoting Aeneas as the founder of Rome instead of these other men. First, Augustus valued Aeneas' lineage—he was not a Greek, but a Trojan—and second, Augustus tied himself to Aeneas' descendants, the Julii.⁵³ It is true that Evander appears in the canonical foundation story through his contact with Aeneas (as in Verg., *Aen.* 8.100-369), but he is not a founder of Rome itself because he does not create lasting social constructions like Romulus does. And although Odysseus is featured in several foundation stories of Rome, he appears only as a secondary figure and not as the founder himself.⁵⁴

After a reexamination of the sources, however, Hercules emerges as a strong candidate to be viewed as a founder of Rome. Although Hercules may not have founded the city in the traditional sense, his religious establishments show him to be an ancestor of the Roman people. Hercules arrived in Italy on his way back to Greece from Erytheia, bringing the Cattle of Geryon back from his tenth labor. The three main episodes in his visit to proto-Rome form a logical chronological sequence: his encounter with Cacus, the resulting foundation of the Ara Maxima, and the institution of the rite of the *Argei* sometime later. Several versions of these stories can be

⁵³ Hill 1961, 90; Galinsky 1969, 52-3.

⁵⁴ Dionysius of Halicarnassus (1.72.2-5) gives a catalogue of foundation stories for Rome, including one in which Odysseus is the companion to Aeneas and one in which Odysseus and Circe have a child Romus, who founds Rome.

found in the ancient literature, most significantly in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Livy, Vergil, and Propertius. Not only does the story of Hercules at Rome often appear in conjunction with, or nested within, the stories of Aeneas and Romulus, but the three figures also share similar characteristics. Like Aeneas and Romulus, whose mix of seemingly contradictory traits was addressed in Chapter One, Hercules displays both a civilizing quality and an unbridled, aggressive side.

In the Cacus story, Hercules acts as a civilizer by removing a threat to the people, while at the same time, many of the depictions of Hercules as he actually kills Cacus reveal his uncontrollable rage and brutal violence. Similarly, in an act to benefit the community, Hercules founds a major Roman religious institution through the construction of the Ara Maxima. He later plays a civilizing role in his amendments to the rite of the *Argei*, but his participation in this ritual and its associations with human sacrifice reveal his violent side. These three episodes will be taken up in order. In this chapter, I will detail the accounts of Hercules' killing of Cacus. In Chapter Three, I will discuss Hercules' role in the foundation of the Ara Maxima and the rite of the *Argei*.

The core of the Hercules and Cacus episode is as follows: Hercules arrives in Italy with the cattle of Geryon. Cacus, a mere shepherd or robber in some versions (Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus) and a terrifying monster in others (Propertius, Ovid, and Vergil), steals some of the herd. When Hercules discovers the theft, he kills Cacus and initiates sacrifices at a new altar, the Ara Maxima.

Before examining the details of Cacus' death at the hands of Hercules, it is important to understand that this story was transmitted within the context of the stories of Aeneas and Romulus, the two universally acknowledged founders of Rome. In many cases, Hercules is

connected to Aeneas through Evander, a mythical character who is most fully presented in Vergil's *Aeneid*. Originally from Arcadia, Evander is the king of the city Pallanteum, located on the site that will later become Rome, and he is a witness to the arrival of both Hercules and Aeneas. Vergil's *Aeneid VIII* highlights this connection by placing Hercules' story at a point of transformation for Aeneas, who is at last prepared to embrace his destiny of establishing a new homeland for the Trojan exiles.⁵⁵ Aeneas is equipped to go to war with Turnus, a war that will win him a homeland in Italy, and he forms an alliance with Evander's Arcadians, whose support is crucial to Aeneas' success. In addition, in Vergil's account, Evander relates to Aeneas the story of Hercules and Cacus and the origin of the sacrifices to Hercules at the Ara Maxima.

Vergil places the story of Hercules at a critical juncture in the text. In the same book in which Aeneas hears the story, he also receives from Vulcan his armor, most notably a shield depicting images of the future history of Rome from Romulus and Remus through Augustus. This gift signifies not only Aeneas' preparedness for battle but also his historical connection to the family of Rome. Having received his armor, Aeneas is ready to fight the Rutulians and secure Italy as a homeland. Just as Aeneas is about to accept the role of a leader and founder, so does Hercules fulfill this role in the Cacus story that Evander tells Aeneas. The common roles of Aeneas and Hercules solidify Hercules' place at the foundation of Rome.

In Strabo, too, the story of Hercules parallels those of Aeneas and Romulus. Strabo first summarizes Aeneas' story in Italy and then takes up the story of Romulus and Remus. He then introduces an alternative to Romulus' founding of Rome, saying that Evander founded Rome as an Arcadian colony. As evidence for the Greek origin of Rome, Strabo points to the altar established for Hercules and the rituals that honor him in the Greek manner. By doing so, Strabo

⁵⁵ Verg., *Aen.* 8.184-305.

ties Hercules to Aeneas and Romulus, as well as to Evander, whom Strabo also considers to be a founder (αὕτη μὲν οὖν ἡ μάλιστα πιστευομένη τῆς Ῥώμης κτίσις ἐστίν. ἄλλη δέ ...

Ἀρκαδικὴν λέγουσα γενέσθαι τὴν ἀποικίαν ὑπ' Εὐάνδρου [Str. 5.3]).

Dionysius of Halicarnassus depicts Hercules as a predecessor to Aeneas.⁵⁶ After his account of Hercules' defeat of Cacus, Dionysius introduces Latinus, who he claims is a son of Hercules. Dionysius then summarizes how Latinus' kingdom is passed down to Aeneas. In this way, Aeneas is presented as an heir to Hercules. This provides support for Dionysius' main argument in his *Roman Antiquities* that the founders of Rome were, in fact, Greek (δι' ἧς Ἕλληνας τε αὐτοὺς ὄντας ἐπιδείξειν ὑπισχνούμαι [D. H. 1.5.1]).

Whereas Vergil and Dionysius place their accounts of Hercules in the midst of the story of Aeneas, Livy places his immediately after Romulus becomes sole king of his new city, Rome. One of Romulus' first actions as king is to make sacrifices to Hercules. Moreover, these sacrifices are singled out from others as being done in the Greek tradition, that is, *aperto capite* (with the head uncovered [1.7.3]). That the sacrifices continued to be performed in the Greek custom reveals that the Greek Hercules had founded a lasting tradition for Rome. As John Scheid explains, ceremonies performed *graeco ritu*, like that at the Ara Maxima, were still considered Roman, even though they may have had rules different from traditional Roman practices.⁵⁷ Singling out of Romulus' sacrifice to Hercules as being performed *aperto capite* thus makes the practices Hercules founded seem less foreign.

In addition to creating an historical connection between Hercules and the founders Aeneas and Romulus, the ancient authors also depict Hercules' killing of Cacus in a way that graphically illustrates the duality of his character, a trait that he shares with the acknowledged

⁵⁶ D. H. 1.43.

⁵⁷ Scheid 1995, 19.

founders. Because Hercules and Cacus are opponents in this incident, the portrayal of Cacus helps define Hercules' character. Vergil and Livy offer contrasting accounts. Vergil gives a vivid and gruesome description of the monster Cacus and his lair. Cacus is half-human, half-beast (*semihominis* [8.194] and *semiferi* [8.267]), a monster who vomits black fire from his mouth (*monstro...illius atros ore vomens ignis* [8.198-9]). The ground in front of his cave is always warm with new slaughter (*semperque recenti caede tepebat humus* [8.195-6]), and his cave hung with the heads of men (*foribusque adfixa superbis ora virum* [8.196-7]). Vergil even compares the destruction of Cacus' cave to the opening to the underworld (8.243-6).

Just as Vergil, speaking through Evander, depicts Cacus as a savage monster, so does he show Hercules to be a civilized man by justifying his actions and treating him as a savior. After Evander describes the horridness of Cacus, he declares that the passage of time brought the help and the arrival of a god, exactly what his people had hoped for (*attulit et nobis aliquando optantibus aetas auxilium adventumque dei* [8.200-201]). He introduces Hercules as the greatest avenger (*maximus ultor* [8.201]), heightening the contrast between the monster Cacus and the civilizing Hercules. In addition, after vividly recounting how Hercules defeated Cacus, Evander claims that his people continue to make dedications to Hercules because they were saved from danger (*periclis servati* [8.188-9]). The *Salii* sing about the deeds of Hercules and add the slaying of Cacus to his labors, alongside the slaying of other dreadful monsters, such as the Cretan bull and the Hydra.⁵⁸ Whereas these labors require violent actions on Hercules' part, the *Salii* are careful to explain that Hercules' handling of Cacus was controlled and rational. Hercules is addressed as *non...rationis egentem* (not lacking in reason [8.299]). As Gransden notes, this phrase emphasizes the "controlled wrath" of Hercules as he fights against unrestrained

⁵⁸ Verg., *Aen.* 8.287-8, 8.303-4.

monsters.⁵⁹ Thus, in Vergil's account, Hercules creates stability by defeating the enemy Cacus who has no control over his violence. Although Hercules himself behaves violently, in the end he is victorious as a defender of civility.

The accounts that present Cacus as a less threatening figure, however, allow us to see Hercules' barbarity. Livy's Cacus is the least offensive. He is a *pastor* (1.7.5), a shepherd. In fact, Cacus even seems to be part of a community, certainly not a characteristic that is associated with monsters. Facing the wrath of Hercules, Cacus calls out to his fellow shepherds for assistance (*fidem pastorum nequiquam invocans* [1.7.7]). Although his plea is in vain, the shepherds do respond later by accusing Hercules of murder (*concurso pastorum... manifestae reum caedis* [1.7.9]).

While Cacus, because of his theft, may indeed be deserving of some punishment, Livy's account shows that he is not necessarily a savage enemy who must be destroyed. Unlike the monsters that Hercules slays, Livy's Cacus does not pose a physical threat to the people. The motivation for Cacus' theft is not violence against humans; rather, he is simply captivated by the beauty of Hercules' cattle (*captus pulchritudine boum* [1.7.5]). When Cacus is depicted as a mere thief, instead of as a terrible monster, Hercules appears all the more barbaric in killing him.

Other authors contribute to the tale of Cacus and Hercules, and the image of each character continues to be twofold. Some authors fall in line with Livy's account. According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Cacus is simply a ληστής (1.39.2), a robber, and is given no other characteristics or physical description that would distinguish him as particularly horrendous or justify Hercules' treatment of him. Other authors depict Cacus as in Vergil, a terrorizing monster for the people living along the Tiber. Propertius creates a fearsome image of the thief

⁵⁹ Gransden 1976, 122. Gransden also claims that Aeneas possesses this restrained anger.

Cacus through his cave (*metuendo raptor ab antro* [4.9.9]) and gives him the monstrous quality of projecting sound from three mouths (*per tria partitos qui dabat ora sonos* [4.9.10]). Ovid in more detail, depicts Cacus as *ferox*, both in the fearsomeness he brings to the Aventine forests (*Aventinae timor atque infamia silvae* [F. 1.551]), and in his dreadful appearance, great size, and strength (*dira viro facies, vires pro corpore, corpus grande* [1.553-4]). Ovid further shows the terror of the monster by describing his cave with the limbs and heads of men hanging above the doors and human bones on the ground in front (1.557-8). During the struggle with Hercules, Cacus vomits flames from his resounding mouth (*flammas ore sonante vomit* [1.572]).

Most authors locate Cacus' cave on the Palatine Hill or simply near the location where Hercules rests with his cattle. Ovid's shift of Cacus' cave from the Palatine to the Aventine is said by Gransden to add to Cacus' image as a monster because the Aventine is outside the *pomerium* and is associated with Remus.⁶⁰ As discussed in Chapter One, in the story of Romulus and Remus, Remus had claimed the Aventine for the site of a new city, whereas Romulus had claimed the Palatine. It is when Remus trespasses on Romulus' building of the city walls on the Palatine that Romulus kills Remus. Through his intentional change of the setting, Ovid establishes a link not only between Cacus and Remus but also between Hercules and Romulus. If Remus is behind Cacus, then it may be appropriate to see Hercules in the role of Romulus. Many authors place Evander's home on the Palatine, but Ovid also specifically notes that Hercules as well chose to rest with his cattle on this hill, adding another connection to Romulus.⁶¹

Just as the contrasting portrayals of Cacus shed light on Hercules' character, so Hercules' own behavior reveals his two sides. Dionysius of Halicarnassus emphasizes the civilizing role of

⁶⁰ Gransden 1976, 108.

⁶¹ Ov., F. 1.542-3.

Hercules by stressing the reason for the destruction of Cacus' cave after Hercules has killed Cacus: when he saw the place was suitable to harbor wrongdoing, he destroyed the cave with his shepherd's staff (ἐπειδὴ κακούργων ὑποδοχαῖς εὐθετον ἔώρα τὸ χωρίον, ἐπικατασκάπτει τῇ καλαύροπι τὸ σπήλαιον [1.39.4]). Hercules establishes the place as one where evil will not be tolerated.

On the other hand, Hercules' barbaric side is also present. Vergil and Propertius give the fullest accounts of Hercules' rage and violence, describing his transformation upon discovering that his cattle are in Cacus' cave. According to Vergil, Hercules' anguish blazes with black venom (*hic vero Alcidae furiis exarserat atro felle dolor* [8.219-220]). He is mad (*furens* [8.228]), gnashing his teeth (*dentibus infrendens* [8.230]), and boiling with anger (*fervidus ira* [8.230]). Galinsky's reading of Vergil surprisingly identifies Hercules as a more rational actor.⁶² He claims that after Hercules searches three times around Cacus' cave, and three times is defeated in his attempt move the stone blocking Cacus' door, his rage is calmed, and reason takes over. Galinsky maintains that with the word *nequiquam* (1.232) Hercules begins to act in a "deliberate and systematic" way and is able to conquer Cacus only through this model of *vis temperata*.⁶³

Although Galinsky does concede that Hercules' anger returns immediately before killing Cacus, I see no evidence that his madness ever abated.⁶⁴ Hercules is a madman as he runs in a frenzy around the entire hill three times, and Vergil vividly illustrates Hercules' ensuing rage. Hercules rests only for a moment before ripping up a massive rock from its roots (*acuta silex...altissima...imis...soluit radicibus* [8.233-8]), thereby creating turmoil in the heavens

⁶² Galinsky 1966, 41.

⁶³ For the discussion of *vis temperata*: Galinsky 1966, 50.

⁶⁴ Lyne 1987 agrees on this point.

(*maximus intonat aether* [8.239]) and causing the terrified rivers to pull from their broken banks (*dissultant ripae refluitque exterritus amnis* [8.240]), all the while revealing Cacus' huge cave (*Caci detecta apparuit ingens regia* [8.241-2]). Hercules then uses anything available to him as a weapon, throwing branches and massive boulders (*ramis vastisque molaribus instat* [8.250]). His killing of Cacus is filled with uninhibited violence: having seized Cacus in a knot-like grasp, Hercules strangles him, clinging until Cacus' eyes are destroyed and his throat is dry of blood (*corripit in nodum complexus, et angit inhaerens elisos oculos et siccum sanguine guttur* [8.260-1]).

Like Vergil, Propertius emphasizes Hercules' violence, but the elegist has a different focus. Propertius is unique in that his version details Hercules' exploits at the shrine of the Bona Dea after he has killed Cacus.⁶⁵ Hercules has an insatiable thirst, so measureless that the fruitful land did not provide any water (*terraque non ullas feta ministrat aquas* [4.9.22]). After begging unsuccessfully for entrance into the shrine, which is closed to men, Hercules forcefully enters. His raging thirst is too powerful for the doors to stop him, and he is able to conquer his rage only by draining the river (*nec tulit iratam ianua clausa sitim. at postquam exhausto iam flumine vicerat aestum* [4.9.63-4]). Again, Hercules acts violently, and just as his thirst is limitless, his rage is unrestrained as well.

The episode of the Bona Dea and the episode of Cacus are parallel to one another. Although Propertius describes Hercules' violence in considerably more detail within the Bona Dea episode, the parallel structure of the stories suggests that Hercules was also enraged as he broke down Cacus' door and killed the thief. William Anderson and Jeri Blair DeBrohun

⁶⁵ A summary of Varro's account of this story is available to us in Macrobius (*Saturnalia* 1.12.28). Otherwise, Propertius 4.9 is the only account of the encounter between Hercules and the Bona Dea.

identify Propertius 4.9 as a *paraklausithyron*, arguing that as he stands before Cacus and before the Bona Dea, Hercules is excluded and stranded in front of a doorway, just like the stock figure of Roman elegy, the *exclusus amator*.⁶⁶ It is humorous to imagine brawny Hercules in the role of a rejected lover, at the door of a goddess who tolerates no male presence at her rite.⁶⁷ Indeed, Galinsky calls Propertius' poem "the most comical and witty treatment of Herakles in Latin literature."⁶⁸ The contrast between Hercules' reaction to being shut out and that of the typical rejected suitor emphasizes Hercules' disproportionate response and makes him seem all the more brutish.

We can also take the parallels between the Bona Dea and Cacus episodes as evidence that the raging Hercules who kills Cacus is the same man who later raids the shrine of the Bona Dea. DeBrohun shows that in both his encounter with Cacus and with the Bona Dea, Hercules crosses a threshold.⁶⁹ She notes the similarity between the *metuendo...ab antro* (9) and the *metuenda lege* (55), which protects the altar. These two phrases, in a sense, create two thresholds: in the case of the cave, a physical threshold, and in the case of the law protecting the Bona Dea, a metaphorical one. Rage, rather than rationality, is clearly motivating Hercules' actions as he crosses each threshold.

The portrayal of Hercules' encounter with Cacus has led some scholars to consider the story as parallel to the Aeneas-Turnus episode. Gransden and Galinsky, in particular, have adopted this model. Galinsky gives a detailed account of the similarities between Cacus and Turnus in Vergil's *Aeneid*. He notes the imagery of darkness and fire seen in *Aen.* 7.456, which describes the torch, smoking with dark light, *atro lumine fumantis...taedas*, with which the Fury

⁶⁶ Anderson 1964, 4; DeBrohun 2003, 121.

⁶⁷ For the restrictions of the rite of the Bona Dea: Scullard 1981, 116.

⁶⁸ Galinsky 1972, 156.

⁶⁹ DeBrohun 2003, 121.

Allecto inflames Turnus, and later at 8.198-9, which describes Cacus vomiting black fire from his mouth, *atros ore vomens ignis*.⁷⁰ Galinsky also comments on how the imagery of the rocks signifies impending doom for each character.⁷¹ Vergil compares Turnus to a dislodged rock that rushes headlong from the peak of a mountain (*ac veluti montis saxum de vertice praeceps cum ruit avulsum* [12.684-5]), and Hercules exposes Cacus' cave by pulling up a rock, torn from its deepest roots (*imis avulsam solvit radicibus* [8.237-8]).

If Cacus is analogous to Turnus, then Hercules takes on the role of Aeneas. In Vergil's account, unlike others, Hercules kills Cacus by strangling him. Galinsky sees this as an instance of snake imagery, reminiscent of the imagery that is prevalent in Book II,⁷² and suggests that it is a precursor to the anger of Aeneas as he kills Turnus in Book XII.⁷³ Galinsky also notes other associations between Aeneas and Hercules that can be seen throughout the *Aeneid*, such as Aeneas' flight from Troy wearing a lion's skin (2.721-5) and Aeneas' experience in Hades, where he wishes to attack the shades of the monsters that Hercules had defeated, such as the Lernaean Hydra and three-bodied Geryon (6.287-9).⁷⁴

In addition, by examining the conflict between Hercules and Cacus within the larger context of Roman history, we discover similarities to the figures and events taking place in Rome in the first century BCE. Gransden claims that the struggle between Cacus and Hercules pits the

⁷⁰ Galinsky 1966, 27.

⁷¹ Galinsky 1966, 31.

⁷² The snake imagery in Book II is famously detailed in B. Knox's "The Serpent and the Flame," 1950.

⁷³ Galinsky 1966, 43.

⁷⁴ Galinsky 1969, 22. Galinsky 1972, 132-8 further elaborates on the parallels between Hercules and Aeneas in the *Aeneid*, using as evidence the fact that each man must complete labors and Aeneas' speech in the underworld: *quid Thesea magnum, / quid memorem Alciden?—et mi genus ab Iove summo* (6.122-3).

“enemies of civilization” against its “defenders” in a “heroic encounter with evil.”⁷⁵ He further claims that Cacus is associated not only with Turnus, but also with Antony, and likewise, Hercules is paired with both Aeneas and Augustus.⁷⁶

The complexities of the parallels between the founders and Augustus, as well as the significance of these stories for his image as emperor, will be considered more fully in Chapter Four. The important point here is that even if the conflict between Hercules and Cacus may be similar to that between Aeneas and Turnus and later Augustus and Antony, the divide between good and evil is not as clear-cut as Gransden would have us believe. As Morgan and Lyne have noted, Vergil’s heroes often share characteristics with their monstrous enemies. For example, Lyne takes note of the flame imagery seen in Vergil’s Hercules and Cacus episode, particularly how Cacus vomits flames in 8.198 just as Aeneas’ helmet does in 8.620.⁷⁷ Morgan finds that the heads decorating Cacus’ cave are similar to the spoils decorating Latinus’ temple in 7.183-6.⁷⁸ Lyne claims that the associations between Aeneas and Cacus serve to show the *vis* of Aeneas, and later Augustus, a force that can be both temperate and *furens*.⁷⁹

In contrast, Morgan explains this crossover of imagery between good and evil as an example of civil war. He claims that Roman history was defined by civil wars, including not only between Aeneas and Turnus but also between Romulus and Remus. Morgan asserts that the story of Romulus and Remus underlies that of Hercules and Cacus, just as the Hercules and Cacus story is a “mythical model” for the Civil Wars between Caesar and Pompey and later

⁷⁵ Gransden 1976, 107.

⁷⁶ Gransden 1976, 107.

⁷⁷ Lyne 1987, 27.

⁷⁸ Morgan 1998, 178.

⁷⁹ Lyne 1987, 32.

Augustus and Antony.⁸⁰ To Morgan, the violence in these stories is ultimately constructive, and indeed even necessary. He equates it with a type of sacrifice that allows for a new foundation, terming it “constructive destruction.”⁸¹ As we will see in Chapter Four, there is no doubt that the Hercules and Cacus episode, just as the *Aeneid* as a whole, informs our perception of Augustus’ role in the Civil Wars as a re-founder of Rome, but it is difficult to accept Morgan’s explanation, which absolves Hercules, Romulus, and Augustus of any responsibility for their violent actions. Rather the violent nature of these men plays a prominent role in defining their characters, and it is this underlying quality that allows them to engage in these acts.

The parallels between Hercules, on the one hand, and Aeneas and Romulus, on the other, are striking. They will surface again as we examine Hercules’ role in the foundation of the Ara Maxima and the rite of the *Argei* and conclude that, like Aeneas and Romulus, Hercules is a founder of Rome.

⁸⁰ Morgan 1998, 185.

⁸¹ Morgan 1998, 184-86.

Chapter Three

The Ara Maxima and the Rite of the *Argei*: Hercules' Contributions to Roman Ritual

The rites of the Ara Maxima and the rite of the *Argei*, which Hercules helped establish, were lasting religious institutions that became part of the framework of Roman society during the Republic. In the historical period, these two rituals were performed *pro populo* and administered by the Roman state. The rites taking place at the Ara Maxima during the later Republic were administered by public slaves, and the ritual of the *Argei* was led by pontiffs, Vestal Virgins, and praetors.⁸²

The episode of the foundation of the Ara Maxima is marked by three features: a prophecy of Hercules' immortality, the construction of the altar, and the practice of the rites associated with it. According to Strabo, Ovid, Livy, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, by the time Hercules arrived in Italy, Evander had already received from his mother, a prophetic nymph, a prophecy of Hercules' immortality. The authors do not reveal the prophecy until immediately after Hercules has killed Cacus because only then does Evander recognize that the killer of Cacus is Hercules. By placing the prophecy at this point in the story, the authors make it clear that this deed can be considered among the civilizing acts that make Hercules worthy of immortality.

For example, in Livy, as Hercules is accused of murder by the surrounding shepherds, Evander begins to recognize him *postquam facinus facinorisque causam audivit* (after he heard the deed and the reason for it [1.7.9]). Only then, after learning Hercules' name, does he recall his mother's prophecy that Hercules would increase the number of the gods (*te mihi mater...aucturum caelestium numerum cecinit* [1.7.10]). Ovid also associates the prophecy of immortality with the killing of Cacus. In his account, Evander's mother is again identified as the

⁸² For the rituals at the Ara Maxima: Scullard 1981, 171. For the officials involved in the ritual of the *Argei*: D. H. 1.38.3.

prophetess who claims that the Earth would soon have had use enough for Hercules (*nec tacet Evandri mater prope tempus adesse Hercule quo tellus sit satis usa suo* [F. 1.583-4]). Again, this prophecy comes immediately after Hercules kills Cacus. Cacus dies, Hercules is identified as the *victor*, and the prophecy is revealed all within the span of six lines. In this way, even though the killing of Cacus is not one of Hercules' twelve labors, Hercules' immortality can be seen as a reward, at least in part, for his victory over Cacus, and, like the twelve labors, the killing shows Hercules to be a worthy agent of civilization.⁸³ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, most of all, emphasizes this quality of Hercules, by recalling the prophecy that Hercules would become immortal on account of his virtue (ἀθάνατον γενέσθαι δι' ἀρετήν [1.40.2]). The placement of this prophecy after the killing of Cacus by all these authors shows that, although violent and barbaric, Hercules' act could also be considered virtuous and worthy of reward.

Whereas the other authors include Hercules' killing of Cacus in their accounts of the Ara Maxima, albeit to a greater or lesser extent, Strabo fails to incorporate Cacus at all. In Strabo's account, Evander learns from his mother that Hercules would become a god after he had finished his labors (πυθόμενον δὲ τῆς μητρὸς...ὅτι τῷ Ἡρακλεῖ πεπωμένον ἢ τελέσαντι τοὺς ἄθλους θεῷ γενέσθαι [5.3.3]). By attributing Hercules' immortality to the completion of his labors, Strabo's account shows that it is the conquering of evil that earns Hercules a spot among the gods.

Even in Propertius, where the building of the Ara Maxima appears to follow more directly from Hercules' entrance into the shrine of the Bona Dea than from his slaughter of Cacus, the establishment of the altar reveals the virtue of Hercules as a civilizer. Propertius addresses Hercules as the *Sancte*, "sacred one," since he sanctified the world, cleansing it with

⁸³ Hercules' Twelve Labors are detailed in Diod. 4.8-39 and Apollod. 2.5.

his hands (*quoniam manibus purgatum sanxerat orbem* [4.9.71]). *Sancte* is an epigraphically attested cult epithet of Hercules, indicating that Propertius' words are tied to actual cult practice.⁸⁴ In the heavenly world, the reward for Hercules is immortality, but in the mortal world, it is an altar and ceremonies of worship that subsequently are practiced for generations.

The construction of the Ara Maxima itself is the marker of Hercules' victory over Cacus. The sources are divided over whether Hercules dedicated the altar himself (Liv. 1.7.12; Ov., *F.* 1.581.; Prop. 4.9) or whether Evander dedicated it to him (D. H. 1.40.2; Strabo 5.3.3).⁸⁵ Regardless of who built the Ara Maxima, its construction signifies Hercules' victory and thereby stands as a reminder of his impact on Rome. Vergil directly attributes the building of the altar to Hercules' slaying of Cacus, saying it is because of this deed that Potitius established this altar in this place (*ex illo...Potitius...hanc aram luco statuit* [*Aen.* 8.268-71]). Dionysius of Halicarnassus shows the swiftness of Evander's actions as he builds the altar to Hercules, again emphasizing the connection of the altar to Cacus' death: As soon as possible (τάχιστα [1.40.2]), Evander sets up with haste (σπουδῆς) an improvised altar (βωμὸν αὐτοσχέδιον). In the account of Ovid, it is Hercules himself who establishes the altar (*victor...constituitque sibi...aram* [*F.* 1.581]). In Livy, as well, Hercules dedicates the altar, this time to fulfill the prophecy (*accipere se omen impleturumque fata ara condita ac dicata ait* [1.7.12]).

The accounts in which Hercules himself founds the altar establish him as the creator of a structure in Rome that physically remained a part of the city for centuries. The Ara Maxima was in use well into the Imperial Period.⁸⁶ Moreover, even Vergil and Dionysius of Halicarnassus,

⁸⁴ *ILLRP* 149 = *CIL* 1².632, from Reate and *ILS* 9246, from Lanuvium.

⁸⁵ On the variant traditions about the founding of the Ara Maxima: F. Coarelli, "Hercules Invictus, Ara Maxima," *LTUR* 3.15-17.

⁸⁶ Richardson 1992, 186, s.v. "Hercules Invicti Ara Maxima."

who do not claim Hercules as the actual builder of the altar, acknowledge his role in its establishment since the altar was built to honor Hercules for a deed that took place at that site.

The ancient authors note that the altar is still present during their own times. Livy includes, as part of Evander's mother's prophecy, that one day the wealthiest race in the land will call the altar the greatest (*aram...quam opulentissima olim in terries gens maximam vocet* [1.7.11]). The Ara Maxima is indeed how later generations of Romans referred to this altar. Vergil extends the lifespan of the altar, claiming, still in the voice of Evander, that the altar will always be called the greatest and will always be the greatest (*aram...quae maxima semper dicetur nobis et erit quae maxima semper* [8.271-2]). It is significant not only that the altar was still physically present as the Ara Maxima at the time these authors were writing, but also that it was one of the city's oldest shrines.⁸⁷ The physical monument of the Ara Maxima, like other major structures in Rome, became an integral part of the city's identity, which lends credence to the argument that, by establishing the Ara Maxima, Hercules is a founder of the city.

Beyond the actual construction of the altar, the establishment of rites and practices to honor Hercules is worthy of exploration. Like the altar, these rituals, which consisted of sacrifices to Hercules, lasted for generations; they were still being practiced up to, during, and after the Age of Augustus. Two significant features of these rituals show Hercules' prominent role: the transfer of the administration of the rites to the people by Hercules and the fact that the practices took place in the Greek custom. Dionysius of Halicarnassus emphasizes that it is Hercules who initiates the ritual sacrifices. Hercules makes an entreaty to the people that they observe the honors (δέησίν τινα ποιήσαιο τῶν ἐπιχωρίων...διαφυλάττωσι τὰς τιμὰς), and he teaches them the sacrifices, (διδάξειεν αὐτοὺς τὰς θυσίας [1.40.3]).

⁸⁷ Winter 1910, 172.

Providing an historical context of the officials who administer the rites at the Ara Maxima helps to illustrate that the Ara Maxima story is among the foundation stories of Rome. Dionysius, Vergil, and Livy all name the Potitii and Pinarii as the first priests of this cult. Livy identifies the families as *familiae maxime inclitae ea loca incolebant* (the most renowned families living in that place [1.7.13]). Diodorus Siculus, writing in the first century BCE, observes that the Pinarii family still existed among the Romans at his time (τὸ τῶν Πιναρίων ὀνομαζομένων γένος διαμένει παρὰ τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις [4.21.2]). The priesthood was eventually passed on to slaves.⁸⁸ Livy claims that the Potitii became extinct in the 4th century BCE.⁸⁹ The Pinarii, however, were high-ranking nobles during the early and middle Republic, and their role within the sacrifices to Hercules may have been assumed by the praetor.⁹⁰ By recognizing the family names of those who had administered the rites for generations, the ancient authors allowed the founding story to become ingrained in the history of the people and enabled later generations to trace the rites back to their Herculean roots.

Beyond Hercules' transfer of the rites to the people, the second significant feature of the observances at the Ara Maxima is that they were observed in the Greek manner, again pointing to the influence of Hercules. Dionysius of Halicarnassus mentions twice that the ceremonies were Greek (1.40.3, 1.40.4). Strabo also calls the ritual Greek, and comments that it was still kept to his day (θεύσαι θυσίαν Ἑλληνικὴν ἣν καὶ νῦν ἔτι φυλάττεσθαι τῷ Ἡρακλεῖ [5.3.3]). The perpetuation of a ritual founded by a Greek is particularly noteworthy because the Romans were generally distrustful of foreigners. Livy emphasizes that *haec tum sacra Romulus una ex omnibus peregrina suscepit* (Romulus took up this one foreign, sacred rite [i.e. the rites at the

⁸⁸ Liv. 1.7.15; D. H. 1.40.5.

⁸⁹ Liv. 9.29.9-11.

⁹⁰ Stephen P. Oakley (2005, 380-2) outlines the possible fortunes of the Potitii and Pinarii during the Republic.

Ara Maxima] from all others [1.7.15]). Hill notes that the enmity of the Greeks is stressed throughout Vergil, and that this hostility was ingrained from the time of the Trojan War.⁹¹ As was noted in Chapter Two, however, Scheid defines the Roman rituals practiced *Graeco ritu* as truly Roman rather than Greek.⁹² The observance of the rituals at the Ara Maxima in the Greek manner reflects the effect of Hercules, a Greek, as the initiator. Furthermore, because the Romans embraced this ritual, it serves as evidence of Hercules' role as a founder.

Hercules appears in the ancient texts as the founder of another ritual practice in Rome, entirely separate from the Cacus episode, the Ara Maxima, and the founding of Rome itself: the rite of the *Argei*. The rite of the *Argei* is difficult to understand within the context of Roman religious practices, in large part because of its uncertain origins and its connection to human sacrifice. Dionysius of Halicarnassus describes how the ritual was performed during Republican times: The Romans made effigies of men that they threw into the Tiber River each year in mid-May, and the pontiffs, praetors, Vestal Virgins, and other citizens took part in the ritual.⁹³ Dionysius, Ovid, and Plutarch all tell that this rite developed from a practice of throwing not effigies, but people, into the Tiber.⁹⁴ The three authors also agree that Hercules was responsible for substituting effigies for humans.⁹⁵

The origins of the rite of the *Argei*, as perceived by the Romans, are important to an understanding of the role Hercules played in changing it. The sacrifice was thought to have begun sometime before the arrival of Hercules at Rome, and therefore also before Aeneas and

⁹¹ Hill 1961, 90-91.

⁹² Scheid 1995, 19. See Chapter Two, *supra*, 22.

⁹³ D. H. 1.38.2-3.

⁹⁴ Ov., *F.* 5.623-662, D. H. 1.38.2, Plu., *Quaest. Rom.* 32.

⁹⁵ Although Hercules' substitution of effigies is a civilizing act, I will argue later that the associations with human sacrifice still remained tied to Hercules even after he had civilized the ritual.

Romulus. Dionysius claims that the original sacrifice was to Saturn (τὰς θυσίας ἐπιτελεῖν τῷ Κρόνῳ τοὺς παλαιούς [1.38.2]), notably referring to the people observing the sacrifice as “the ancients.” The placement of this story so long ago, as Schultz notes, ties it to the mythical history of Rome and therefore reveals the negative attitudes of the Romans toward human sacrifice as a ritual they had abolished as they grew more civilized.⁹⁶ Dionysius underscores this attitude of disdain when he notes that the ancient sacrifice of the Romans is just like the human sacrifices performed in Carthage, while it remained, and among the Gauls in his own time (ὥσπερ ἐν Καρχηδόνι τέως ἢ πόλις διέμεινε καὶ παρὰ Κελτοῖς εἰς τόδε χρόνου γίνεται [1.38.2]). In this way, Dionysius distinguishes the “modern” Romans from others, particularly two peoples that had been enemies of Rome and were known to have committed human sacrifice.

Ovid offers several explanations for the origins of the rite of the *Argei*: that it was a sacrifice to Saturn (*falcifero...mittere* [5.627]), that young men would kill old men for the vote (*ferrent iuvenes suffragia soli...praecipitassa sense* [5.633-4]), and the “true origin” (*verum* [5.635]) that one of Hercules’ comrades wished to be sent back to Greece in death (*mittite me in Tiberim...ut...litus ad Inachium...eam* [5.655-6]). Plutarch, a final source as to the origins of the sacrifice, gives a different account. He claims that in ancient days, there were barbarians living here who would thus kill Greeks whom they captured (οἱ περὶ τὸν τόπον οἰκοῦντες βάρβαροι τοὺς ἀλισκομένους Ἕλληνας οὕτως ἀπόλλυσαν [*Quaest. Rom.* 32]). This explanation, although certainly more violent, is related to Ovid’s “true” explanation because each identifies the victims as Greeks. Nagy argues that this sacrifice of Greeks, which Plutarch suggests may have led to the name *Argei*, would make sense only if it developed from an Etruscan rite at a

⁹⁶ Schultz 2010, 525.

time when the Greeks were perceived as enemies, but this meaning was lost to the Romans as time went on.⁹⁷ This connection to the Greeks as enemies is significant as we look at Hercules, who was also a Greek but had a civilizing effect on this ritual, turning it into the Roman ritual that it became.

The sacrifice as it was practiced in the most ancient times would not have been tolerable to the later Romans, but changes to the ritual attributable to Hercules made it acceptable. The substitution of effigies for live human beings, which allowed a tradition to continue while removing its violent and unrefined aspects, provides another example of Hercules as a civilizing force who contributes to the creation of the Roman identity. Yet even here Hercules is not portrayed in an entirely positive light. As his uncontrolled rage and violence against Cacus show, he has a more savage side, which is hinted at here again by his association with a practice that is closely tied to human sacrifice. Hercules may have civilized this practice, but he remains connected to the barbarity of human sacrifice. And like his killing of Cacus, Hercules' association with the rite of the *Argei* calls to mind Aeneas and Romulus. Each of the three is associated with human sacrifice: Hercules with the rite of the *Argei*, Aeneas with his sacrifices in Book X, and Romulus with the killing of Remus.

The story of Hercules' arrival in Rome is a complicated series of episodes that reveals the conflicted nature of the man and his similarity to the traditional founders of the city, Aeneas and Romulus. His brutal killing of Cacus is at once a civilizing and a barbaric act, and his establishment of the Ara Maxima is a symbol of each of these sides. His involvement in the rite of the *Argei* reveals as well a civilizing aspect but also creates a lasting tradition that is associated with human sacrifice. Like Aeneas and Romulus, Hercules should be considered a

⁹⁷ Nagy 1985, 20. On the name *Argei* originating from the sacrifice of Greeks: Plu., *Quaest. Rom.* 32.

founder of Rome. In the following chapter, an analysis of their stories within the context of Augustan Rome will show that the Roman authors portrayed each man as analogous to Augustus. The ancient authors used the story of Hercules, as well as those of the established founders, to reconcile Augustus' role in the civil wars with his image as the founder of a new Rome.

Chapter Four

Foundation Stories in the Age of Augustus: Reconciling Violence with Civic Leadership

Authors turned their attention to the foundation stories of Rome during the Age of Augustus, and modern scholarship on Aeneas, Romulus, and Hercules often discusses these men in terms of their relationship to Augustus. In telling the foundation stories, ancient authors were influenced by the civil wars that preceded Augustus' reign. They attempt to link Augustus' successes as a civilizer with those of the founders. Ultimately, however, the authors are not able to completely discount the negative qualities of these men, and their writings reveal that the Romans never quite shed their ambivalence toward the qualities that made up their leaders. In the context of Augustan history, the foundation stories reflect a conflicted image of Augustus as a man who establishes peace—what could be considered a re-founding of Rome—but who only accomplishes this through violent civil strife.

The familiar story of Augustus' rise to power begins with the death of Julius Caesar. After Caesar was assassinated, a series of civil wars broke out, first with Antony and Octavian defeating the assassins of Caesar, and next with Octavian defeating Antony and Cleopatra. Following these wars that tore apart the political framework of Roman society, Octavian emerged as the sole ruler of the Roman people, and later acquired the title Augustus.

It was after Augustus was established as emperor in 27 BCE that an abundance of writing about the foundation stories of Rome appeared. The historians Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Livy, whose works include episodes from the lives of all three founders, wrote their histories during the late first century BCE and early first century CE. Poets, as well, were recalling the foundation stories during this time. Although scholars have debated whether the *Aeneid* is a panegyric to Augustus or a subversive statement, Vergil's telling of Aeneas' arrival in Italy

certainly is commenting on Augustus, who supported Vergil's work.⁹⁸ In addition, Propertius' elegies, which recount portions of the stories of Hercules and Romulus, and Ovid's *Fasti*, which include elements of Romulus' founding of Rome, were both written during Augustus' time.

It is not surprising that retellings of the foundation stories proliferated during Augustus' rule, after decades of civil war. Civil war, which involves the killing of one's own, is particularly damaging to society, and indeed it was in the case of Rome. Those who witness the consequences of such a dramatic rending of the social fabric can be expected to try to give meaning both to the destruction that has occurred and to the resulting outcome. The Roman foundation stories provided a means by which these efforts might be undertaken by the authors of the time.

Civil war was not new to Rome. Romulus and Remus, as brothers, provide the most extreme example of this horrendous type of killing. In addition, as Miles argues, the analogy between civil war and conflict among relatives can be extended to Aeneas' story because of his relationship with Latinus and the similarities between the Trojan and Italian peoples.⁹⁹ Aeneas is fighting a war against Italians, even though he is promised in marriage to Latinus' daughter, Lavinia. Even the fight between Hercules and Cacus can be seen as civil war because, as Morgan notes, the two characters bear similarities in their rage and violence toward each other.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Compare Gransden 1976 (arguing that Aeneas is a worthy model of *pietas* for Augustus) and Putnam 1995 (arguing that character of Aeneas also reveals flaws in Augustus).

⁹⁹ Miles 1999 shows that the presence of hostility between the Trojans and Italians is also a case of civil conflict by citing the language Juno uses to express her desire to hinder the Roman destiny: "Let the son- and father-in-law pay / for peace with their own peoples' death (*hac gener atque soccer coeant mercede* [7.317]). The translation is Miles', 239. For similarities between the Trojan and Italian peoples, see Chapter One, *supra*, 5-6.

¹⁰⁰ Morgan 1998, 185.

The ancient texts often associate the founders as heroes with Augustus. In Chapter Two, I discussed the parallels that can be drawn in the Cacus episode of *Aeneid* VIII, with Cacus, Turnus, and Antony showing similar qualities on one side, and Hercules, Aeneas, and Augustus on the other.¹⁰¹ Further associations between the founders and Augustus are evident in the description of Aeneas' shield in Book VIII.¹⁰² Galinsky recognizes similarities between the shield's depiction of Augustus' defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium (8.675-713) and Hercules' defeat of Cacus. He notes that Aeneas' *penates* have become "Italianized" as Augustus also relies upon them for aid and that, by contrast, Antony, Cleopatra, and Cacus are united as barbaric.¹⁰³ Galinsky further argues that the contrasting representations of Cleopatra's monstrous gods and the Roman gods create a parallel between her and the monster Cacus.¹⁰⁴ In addition, Reed argues that Vergil's use of the term *barbarica* in reference to Antony's resources realigns the Romans, Italians, and Greeks on the same side against the Easterners, and he further asserts that this new alliance shows that Aeneas and his Trojan followers, by merging with the Italians, will eventually become Romans.¹⁰⁵ These associations not only show the connection of Augustus with the founders Aeneas and Hercules, but also portray Augustus as decidedly Roman by contrasting him with the monstrous, the barbarous, and the foreign.

When reading these accounts, it is easy to justify the violence of Aeneas, Romulus, and Hercules as necessary to remove an immediate threat to the city so as to enable them to found the city and provide for its security. This reading has led some scholars, including Gransden and

¹⁰¹ Gransden 1976 explains this conflict as the enemies of civilization versus the defenders of civilization, 107. See Chapter Two, *supra*, 28-31.

¹⁰² Verg., *Aen.* 8.626-731.

¹⁰³ Galinsky 1966, 45 on Verg., *Aen.* 8.679.

¹⁰⁴ Galinsky 1966, 47-8 on Verg., *Aen.* 8.698-99.

¹⁰⁵ Reed 2007, 105. The Greeks are added into the equation because of the references to the Greco-Roman gods already mentioned.

Galinsky in their discussions of the Cacus episode in the *Aeneid*, to view Augustus as a figure who banishes evil through the civil wars.¹⁰⁶ Galinsky asserts that Hercules and Aeneas, whom he has already identified as parallel to Augustus, “are not bent on bloodshed. They are goaded into a righteous rage by the deceitfulness and cruelty of their opponents.”¹⁰⁷ Others, notably Putnam in his discussion of Aeneas, reject this “simple” interpretation and recognize that these stories are more complex.¹⁰⁸

Amidst these stories of civil conflict, we see negative characteristics attributed to the men who are analogous to Augustus: Aeneas is filled with rage and violent vengeance when he kills Turnus, Romulus commits fratricide, and Hercules’ anger and pride are as vivid as Cacus’. Portraying Augustus as another founder of Rome presents difficulties for the ancient authors as they try to reconcile his image as a civilizer with the brutal realities of civil war. This is particularly evident in the treatment of the foundation stories during the Age of Augustus. Although themes of violence, civil war, and brother killing brother are present in these accounts, the Augustan authors handle these issues in various ways by refashioning the identities of the founders.

Romulus’ story, in particular, is carefully crafted by the Augustan authors. Cynthia Bannon asserts that the story of Romulus killing Remus is the “original fratricide” that the Romans saw as a “paradigm for the civil wars which eroded what we might call the social contract among Roman citizens and the fraternal sentiments that united them.”¹⁰⁹ If this were the only representation of Romulus as a model for Augustus, we would condemn Augustus, but

¹⁰⁶ Gransden, 1976, 107 and Galinsky 1966 and 1972.

¹⁰⁷ Galinsky 1972, 138. For Galinsky’s reasoning regarding the associations among Augustus, Hercules, and Aeneas, see Galinsky 1972, 138-141. Interestingly, Galinsky also claims that Vergil intended to “hint at” Augustus’ deification by associating Augustus with Hercules (138).

¹⁰⁸ Putnam 1995, 291.

¹⁰⁹ Bannon 1997, 137.

Bannon further argues that the story of Romulus and Remus, as it is told during the Augustan Age, is also about fraternal cooperation.¹¹⁰ She recognizes that the ancient authors are often ambivalent about the actual culprit of Remus' murder. Bannon claims that these more forgiving versions develop because the authors, after experiencing the civil wars at the end of the Republic, are attempting to modify the story into an exemplary tale. By putting the stories in this light, the ancient authors temper what would otherwise be an even more unsympathetic image of Romulus, and, in turn, Augustus.

The Augustan authors struggled to justify the presence of civil war and fraternal conflict as part of Augustus' rise to power. They wrestled with how to put the apparent destruction of Roman society into a positive light. A resolution to this struggle is evident in Vergil's portrayal of Romulus. In *Aeneid* I, Jupiter prophesies that Romulus, whom he identifies by his deified name Quirinus, will give laws with his brother Remus; the gates of war, dreadful with iron and with firm bonds, will be closed (*Remo cum fratre Quirinus, iura dabunt; dirae ferro et compagibus artis claudentur Belli portae* [1.292-93]). This passage clearly refers not only to Romulus, but Augustus as well, who closed the gates of war three times, representing peace for Rome.¹¹¹ Wiseman reads further into this prophecy, claiming that Vergil includes Remus and uses Romulus' deified name Quirinus to obscure the murderous actions of Romulus.¹¹² Even more striking, rather than aligning Romulus with Augustus and Remus with Antony, as many scholars have done, Wiseman chooses to pair Remus with Agrippa, a close friend of Augustus.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ For the development of Romulus story during the Republic: Bannon 1997, 138; For the Romulus story as an *exemplum*: Bannon 1997, 160 and 165. Bannon uses Livy's narrative as an example of the ambiguity of the fratricide because Livy gives multiple accounts, one of which provides no agent for the killing, and he does not mention Remus again after the murder.

¹¹¹ Aug. *RG* 13. Gransden 1976, 23 explains that Augustus revived this practice.

¹¹² Wiseman 1995, 145.

¹¹³ Wiseman 1995, 145. Wiseman notes that this is also the interpretation of Servius.

Like Bannon, Wiseman is emphasizing the camaraderie of the brothers, but his take on the characters uniquely neglects the aspects of civil conflict that the more traditional interpretation addresses.¹¹⁴ Nonetheless, his ability to interpret the story of Romulus and Remus as parallel to Augustus and Agrippa provides evidence that the foundation stories were intentionally constructed during the Republic to present the civil wars as less destructive than they might have been portrayed.

Despite the careful reworking of the foundation stories during the Age of Augustus, the use of violence by the founders still surfaces in each of these accounts. Indeed, Augustus' participation in the wars is an essential part of his image. Therefore, Morgan asserts that Vergil, for example, must acknowledge the civil wars if he is to be a propagandist for Augustus.¹¹⁵ To understand these conflicting images of Augustus, we must explore how modern scholars have characterized the violence in the foundation stories as necessary for Rome's safety and further examine whether these explanations are satisfactory.

Treating the civil strife in these foundation stories as a necessary evil, scholars have focused on the outcome rather than the conflict. I have already examined in Chapters One and Two how scholars have treated Romulus' victory over Remus and Hercules' over Cacus in such a way, and how these stories can also be extrapolated to apply to Augustus. Similarly, in examining the *Aeneid*, Miles claims that "the 'civil war' between the Trojans and Italians is essential to the two peoples' eventual union" and that Augustus similarly unifies the Italian people after the civil wars of the late Republic by sponsoring the admission of Italians into the

¹¹⁴ Wiseman explains that tensions that occurred after the death of potential heirs Drusus, Lucius, and Gaius—Lucius and Gaius being Agrippa's sons—are related to the conflict portrayed in the Romulus and Remus story (Wiseman 1995, 149). This is not as convincing as the argument for a connection between Romulus' fratricide and the civil war between Augustus and Antony.

¹¹⁵ Morgan 1998, 182.

Roman Senate.¹¹⁶ In addition, Putnam acknowledges that the killing of Turnus could be viewed as a vital “bloodletting” for the foundation of Rome, one that is similar to the end of the Republic.¹¹⁷ Putnam also uses Vergil’s description of Aeneas’ shield and the emphasis he places on the triple triumph of Augustus as evidence of Vergil’s admiration for the peace that Augustus obtained through his military victory.¹¹⁸

Putnam, however, is the first to note that these interpretations do not tell the whole story, stating that the parallel between Aeneas and Augustus “warns against too trusting a belief in the capability of Aeneas-Augustus to renew a golden age.”¹¹⁹ He suggests that, although victorious over his enemy, Aeneas succumbs to violence and irrationality rather than overcoming them.¹²⁰ A similar conclusion can be drawn from Ovid’s *Fasti II*. Ovid lists condemnations of Romulus alongside praises of Augustus, alternating between the two leaders (2.133-44). Notably, Ovid contrasts Romulus’ rape of the Sabine women with Augustus’ laws of chastity (*tu rapis, hic castas duce se iubet esse maritas* [2.139]) and Romulus’ rule by force with the law flourishing under Augustus (*vis tibi grata fuit, florent sub Caesare leges* [2.141]). Although Ovid appears to place Augustus as the antithesis of Romulus through this arrangement, Hinds argues that this characterization is inaccurate.¹²¹ Since Romulus is a chosen model for Augustus as a founder of the city Rome, Ovid may actually be revealing that the negative qualities he attributes to Romulus can also be found in Augustus. Bannon also questions the representation of Romulus, and therefore Augustus, as acting only as a civilizer of the Roman state. She appropriately links

¹¹⁶ On the essential nature of the war between the Trojans and Italians: Miles 1999, 239-40; on Augustus’ unification of Italy: Miles 1999, 244-5.

¹¹⁷ Putnam 1995, 24.

¹¹⁸ Putnam 1965, 150.

¹¹⁹ Putnam 1995, 291.

¹²⁰ Putnam 1965, 192.

¹²¹ Hinds 1992, 133-34.

the story of Hercules and Cacus with Romulus' murder of Remus, but asks whether Hercules' slaughter of a monster is truly the same as Romulus' killing of his own brother.¹²² It is doubtful that Romulus' act can be justified as necessary for the protection of Rome.

Even if we can establish that there is a significant civilizing quality to the three founders of Rome—and I believe this certainly is the case—the presence of violence in their stories is unavoidable. The traits shared by Aeneas, Romulus, and Hercules must necessarily be applied to Augustus since the prominent stories of the founders were written during Augustus' time and influenced by his reign. Although the authors often attempted to soften this violence or justify its use, it is clear that the Romans were conflicted about Augustus' role in the civil wars preceding his rise to power.

¹²² Bannon 1997, 166.

Conclusion

The foundation stories of Rome provide interesting insight into the ways the Romans viewed their history and its connection to their present lives. These accounts especially reveal the qualities shared among the founders and Augustus. Aeneas and Romulus, who were recognized as founders during the Age of Augustus, exhibit common traits of violence as they begin to construct Roman society. Hercules must be considered a founder along with these two men due to his unrestrained wrath as he slaughters Cacus, his civilizing role in this deed, and his contributions to the establishment of the Ara Maxima and rite of the *Argei*. The abundance of writers recounting the stories of these men during Augustus' rule demonstrates that the Romans saw similar civilizing and barbaric traits in Augustus, and the attempts of the authors to reconcile the conflicting sides of his character through the foundation stories are not successful in discounting or entirely justifying Augustus' violence.

I embarked on this project hoping to demonstrate Hercules as a founder of Rome and to satisfy my curiosity about whether his story, and those of the other founders, provides evidence for Rome's later prosperity and success. I found that the violence of these men that I observed in my initial readings of the texts was still striking, even after exploring the various ways the ancient authors manipulated their stories to temper it. Nonetheless, the parallels between the founders and Augustus show that these accounts are not at odds with Rome's greatness during the Age of Augustus.

Abbreviations:

ILLRP A. Degrassi, *Inscriptiones Latinae Liberae Rei Publicae*. 2 vols. Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1957-1963.

CIL *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1863-.

LTUR E. M. Steinby, ed. *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*. 6 vols. Rome: Quasar, 1993-2000.

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