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Death *ante ora parentum* in Virgil's *Aeneid**

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*matres atque viri defunctaque corpora vita
magnanimum heroum, pueri innuptaeque puellae,
impositique rogis iuvenes ante ora parentum*

Virg. *Geo.* 4.475–77 = *Aen.* 6.306–8

SUMMARY: Virgil's *Aeneid* includes a number of scenes in which children die in front of their parents. While the motif has a Homeric precedent, Virgil's invention of a formula (*ante ora parentum*: "before the faces of one's parents") suggests a particular interest in the theme. An analysis of scenes where the formula recurs (such as Aeneas's shipwreck, the fall of Troy, and the *lusus Troiae*) reveals a metapoetic resonance behind the motif, with the parent-child relationship acting as a metaphor for authorial influence and artistic creation. Thus the threat that Aeneas might die as Anchises looks on, for instance, evokes Virgil's own precarious position in relation to his "father," Homer. Aeneas's well-known transition into a father-figure as the poem progresses comes with the risk that he may become the parent who sees his own child die; Virgil exploits this transition, too, as a vehicle for self-reflection, concerned about the reception of his "child," the *Aeneid*, in the Augustan age.

LIKE MOST POEMS ABOUT WAR, VIRGIL'S *AENEID* IS FULL OF YOUNG MEN WHO die before their time. To a poet, the death of a young soldier is a natural symbol of the costs of war, in which individual lives are sacrificed for the life of the community. For this reason there is a special pathos in describing a death from the point of view of the surviving families, who feel most keenly the competing interests of familial and communal preservation. Yet readers

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familiar with Virgil's notorious "melancholy" will hardly be surprised to learn that the *Aeneid* poses this dilemma in particularly unsettling ways. Virgil includes an additional pathetic element: he describes death scenes in which the young man dies while his parent or parents look on. These deaths *ante ora parentum* ("before the faces of one's parents")¹ look back particularly to the climax of the *Iliad*, in which Priam and Hecuba witness the death of their son Hector from the walls of Troy. Moreover, Virgil creates a verbal formula for the motif: "ante ora parentum" and its variants occur eight times in the *Aeneid* (Table 1), and unlike many other Virgilian formulas, there is no Homeric precedent for the phrase.

Many scholars have noticed the particularly Virgilian resonance of death *ante ora parentum*.² That Virgil places more emphasis on these scenes than his Homeric model may reflect the realities of contemporary Rome: the premature death of young men was an all-too-familiar occurrence in an Italy torn apart by decades of civil war, the sort of Italy that Virgil famously describes in his first *Eclogue*.³ Moreover the inclusion of parents as "focalizers" of their children's deaths evokes the pathos of internecine conflict, which is commonly depicted in terms of its effects on families.⁴ But we may also view the topos through the lens of Virgilian poetics. Casting death through the eyes of the parent spectators is appropriate in a poem that is famously all about points of view, or what Conte has called Virgil's "tragic subjectivity" (2007: 46).⁵ As many scholars have shown, the poem's subjectivity has a self-reflexive quality, posing questions about how we readers should "see" the *Aeneid* and setting

¹ On *os* as implying not just "face" but also "vision" or "gaze," see *TLL* 9.2.1086.47–1087.71 (Teßmer).

² Briggs 1980: 24: "*Ante ora parentum* is, for Virgil, the most tragic way to die"; Clay 1988: 203–4n24: "What is pathetic about warfare in the *Aeneid*, and what distinguishes the *Aeneid* from the *Iliad*, is the law by which the young must die *ante ora parentum*"; Thomas 2006: 216: "that most characteristic aspect of the Virgilian tragic vision: the repeated obscenity that war brings, namely the death of the young *ante ora parentum*, before the eyes of their parents and elders." See also Austin 1971: 56; D. L. Miller 2003: 52–91; Smith 2005: 178–81. There is also a copious bibliography on the larger theme of *mors immatura* in Virgil; see especially Conte 1986: 185–95; Block 1980; Fowler 1987; Hardie 1997: 320–21; Reed 2007: 16–72.

³ On the influence of the civil wars on Virgil's poetry, see Hardie 1993b: 57–63.

⁴ On focalization in the *Aeneid*, see Fowler 1990. For an instance of the description of the civil wars in familial terms, see Horace *C.* 1.2.23–24: "audiet pugnans vitio parentum / rara iuventus."

⁵ On Virgilian subjectivity, see especially Heinze 1993: 289–97; Otis 1964: 41–96; La Penna 1967; Johnson 1976: 50–59; Conte 1986: 141–84; Fowler 1990; Syed 2005; Reed 2007.

TABLE 1. ANTE ORA PARENTUM AND RELATED FORMULAS IN THE AENEID

- A. 1.95: quis *ante ora patrum* Troiae sub moenibus altis
- A. 2.531: ut tandem *ante oculos* evasit *et ora parentum*
- A. 2.663: natum *ante ora patris*, patrem qui obruncat ad aras
- A. 2.681: namque manus inter maestorumque *ora parentum*
- A. 5.553: incedunt pueri pariterque *ante ora parentum*
- A. 5.576: Dardanidae, veterumque agnoscunt *ora parentum*
- A. 6.308 (= G. 4.477): impositique rogis iuvenes *ante ora parentum*
- A. 11.887: exclusi *ante oculos lacrimantumque ora parentum*
-

up moments of viewing in the poem as emblematic of our position in regard to the text.⁶ Thus Virgil's emphasis on the visibility of death *ante ora parentum* invites us to examine how these scenes participate in the construction of interpretation in the *Aeneid*, particularly the difficult question of how to interpret suffering and loss (Perkell 1997).

Nor is it an accident that Virgil turns *parents* into the viewers in these scenes. Death *ante ora parentum* is an obvious threat to patrilineal succession, and the issues at play in these scenes map rather well onto the concerns of the Augustan moment more broadly, as we shall see in the conclusion of this

⁶This self-reflexive quality of Virgilian viewing is most clearly seen in the abundant scholarship on ecphrasis in the poem, on which see especially Thomas 1983; Fowler 1991; Putnam 1998. More recently scholars have begun to widen the scope, showing how Virgil uses the twin motifs of paternal witness and sacrificed sons to represent the foundational traumas of empire and patriarchy (D. L. Miller 2003: 52–91); how the poem guides the reader to adopt Aeneas's point of view in its construction of ethnicity and gender (Syed 2005); how the emphasis on the persuasive power of sight over speech in the poem mirrors Augustan visual culture (Smith 2005); and how the Virgilian gaze operates at the intersection between desire (both erotic and imperial) and ethnic, national, and gender identity (Reed 2007).

paper.⁷ Moreover the emphasis on parental viewing offers added possibilities for self-conscious reflection by the poet, since the parent-child bond is a common metaphor for various aspects of artistic production, such as the relationship between artist and artwork, between reality and representation, and between poet and predecessor.⁸ Other scholars have studied the relationships between parents and children in the *Aeneid* in this light. Hardie (1993a: 88–119), for instance, has demonstrated the interaction of poetic, familial, and dynastic succession in the *Aeneid* and the epic tradition more broadly. In a similar vein, Farrell 1999 has proposed a metapoetic reading of the games in *Aeneid* 5, through which Aeneas honors his father Anchises just as Virgil pays tribute to his own “father,” Homer.⁹ To date, however, no one has fully explored the ways in which the topos of death *ante ora parentum* in the *Aeneid* raises broader concerns about the author’s relationship to his predecessors and to his text.

My argument in this paper is twofold: first, that Virgil uses the motif of death *ante ora parentum* to explore his relationship to his “father” Homer and to his “child” the *Aeneid* and to examine the ways in which literary production mimics biological reproduction. Second, I argue that the motif of death *ante ora parentum* undergoes a shift in emphasis as the poem progresses. Whereas early in the poem, Aeneas is the imperiled child who might die *ante ora parentum*, like Hector or Polites, gradually Aeneas becomes the father who risks seeing his own child die. Thus the well-known progression Aeneas makes in the poem—from son of Troy to father of Rome—evokes a parallel transformation by Virgil from heir of Homer to father of this new epic. The paper also examines the peculiar disappearance of the motif in the second half of the poem, both at the level of formula and at the level of theme. Moments of death *ante ora parentum* in the second half of the poem are comparatively rare, and many of the major death scenes (Euryalus, Pallas, Lausus, Turnus) call attention to the *lack* of parental witness. By the end of the poem, then, the dual threats of death *ante ora parentum*—dying in the face of one’s parent, or watching one’s own progeny die—yield to the realization of a greater

⁷ Moreover, as D. L. Miller 2003 has shown in his wide-ranging study of the fatherly gaze and the sacrificial son in Western literature (including the *Aeneid*), the issues raised by death *ante ora parentum* are the foundational issues of patriarchy more broadly.

⁸ Art and poetry have been figured as creative “birth” (and especially male birth) at least since the *Theogony*; see Arthur 1983. Ancient evidence for literary influence as genealogical succession includes the Homeridae (cf. Hardie 1993a: 99) and the Augustan trope of *pater Ennius* (Prop. 3.3.6; Hor. *Epist.* 1.19.7).

⁹ See section 3 below. Other explorations of parents and children in the *Aeneid* include Lee 1979; Block 1980; Lyne 1987: 145–206; James 1991: 74–156; Petrini 1997; Lloyd 1999; D. L. Miller 2003: 52–91; Newman and Newman 2005.

truth: the fate of one's offspring (biological or literary) is ultimately beyond a parent's control.

1. THE ANTE ORA PARENTUM MOTIF

That the premature death of the young was a common theme in Greek and Roman literature is hardly surprising, given the prevailing demographic conditions that made such deaths relatively common.¹⁰ Enduring the loss of a child was a fact of life, and a host of consolatory themes and rhetorical tropes helped the bereaved to talk about and endure *mors immatura*.¹¹ The inversion of the natural order, which dictates that children should bury their parents, is a recurrent motif; in Herodotus's famous formulation, in peacetime children bury their parents, while in wartime, parents bury their children.¹² War, however, also enables the young man to die before his time in such a way that he acquires poetic immortality; the *Iliad*, for example, is famous for its ability to convey both the glory of such achievements, through Achilles and Hector, and the pain of premature death, especially through its emphasis on Priam and Hecuba's reaction to the loss of their sons.¹³

Following the *Iliad*, there is a long tradition of evoking the reaction of the surviving parent(s) in the epitaphs of those who have died before their time, and this too is surely an influence on Virgil's handling of *mors immatura*.¹⁴ In fact, the first appearance of the *ante ora parentum* motif in Virgil evokes

¹⁰ Just how common is of course difficult to determine with any degree of specificity; see Scheidel 2001 for an overview of the difficulties and of the literature on the topic. For thoughtful considerations of how such demographic realities may have affected ancient *mentalité* regarding children, see Golden 1988; see also Hopkins 1983: 224–26.

¹¹ *Mors immatura*, a calque for θάνατος ἄωρος, first appears in Latin literature in Catullus 96.5; Evander uses the phrase for the death of Pallas at *A.* 11.166–67. On ancient beliefs about the fate of the premature dead, see Vrugt-Lentz 1960.

¹² Hdt. 1.87.4 (spoken by Croesus): οὐδεις γὰρ οὕτω ἀνόητός ἐστι ὅστις πόλεμον πρὸ εἰρήνης αἰρέεται· ἐν μὲν γὰρ τῇ οἱ παῖδες τοὺς πατέρας θάπτουσι, ἐν δὲ τῷ οἱ πατέρες τοὺς παῖδας. Cf. Evander on the death of Pallas (*A.* 11.160–61): “contra ego vivendo vici mea fata, superstes / restarem ut genitor.” On the topos of *mors immatura* as an inversion of the natural order, see Lattimore 1942: 187–91 and Griessmair 1966: 44–47. Observing the prevalence of the theme on Latin epitaphs in particular, Lattimore 1942: 191 goes so far as to claim that “the Romans were conscious of this feeling more universally, and more strongly, than the Greeks.”

¹³ As Jasper Griffin has noted, the theme of the “bereaved father” is one of the most important themes in the *Iliad*, and the figure of Priam is a focus for the theme; see Griffin 1980, 108 and 113n20.

¹⁴ On the topos of *mors immatura* on epitaphs, see Lier 1903: 453–67; Lattimore 1942: 177–99; Griessmair 1966; Martin-Kilcher 2000. A number of the epitaphs collected by VÉrilhac 1978 refer explicitly to the reaction of the surviving parents; see the instances collected in the index, under γονεύς and τοκεῖς.

a funereal context; in *Georgics* 4, during Proteus's description of Orpheus's visit to the underworld, the shades come out in droves to hear his song (G. 4.471–80):¹⁵

at cantu commotae Erebi de sedibus imis
 umbrae ibant tenues simulacraque luce carentum,
 quam multa in foliis avium se milia condunt,
 Vesper ubi aut hibernus agit de montibus imber,
matres atque viri defunctaque corpora vita
magnanimum heroum, pueri innuptaeque puellae,
impositique rogis iuvenes ante ora parentum.

Moved from the innermost seats of Erebus by the song, the thin shades kept coming, and the likenesses of those who lack the light—as many as the thousands of birds who conceal themselves in leaves when the evening or a winter storm drives them down from the mountains—mothers and husbands and bodies of great-souled heroes deprived of life; boys and unmarried girls, and young men placed on funeral pyres before the faces of their parents.

The three lines that describe the shades are duly famous, and carefully constructed: a tricolon crescens, the first colon is a hemiepes (“*matres atque viri*”), the second constitutes an enjambed hexameter (“*defunctaque corpora vita / magnanimum heroum*”), and the final colon extends to the end of the following line.¹⁶ Moreover each colon contains its own antithesis:

- A. *matres atque viri* (“*mothers and husbands*”)
- B. *defunctaque corpora vita / magnanimum heroum* (“and *bodies of great-souled heroes deprived of life*”)
- C. *pueri innuptaeque puellae, / impositique rogis iuvenes ante ora parentum* (“*boys and unmarried girls, and young men placed on funeral pyres before the faces of their parents*”)

The *matres* and *vir*i pair is perhaps the most straightforward: yet Virgil manages to avoid bathos here by varying the pair (rather than, say, *matres* and *patres*), while also evoking, by the use of family roles, the unexpressed relatives

¹⁵ As such the general instance of the topos introduced in *Georgics* 4 becomes in the *Aeneid* a recurrent topos with specific referents (a point made by Lindheim 1990: 23); on the fourth Georgic as “preparation” for the world and themes of the *Aeneid*, see Griffin 1979; Segal 1989: 50–53.

¹⁶ Alternatively, one could arrange the passage as two consecutive tricola: *matres-viri-(corpora) heroum* on one side, and *pueri-puellae-iuvenes* on the other. For other analyses of these lines (“obviously carefully worked”), see Briggs 1980: 24; Putnam 1979: 298–99; and, in the context of their reworking at A. 6.306–8, Norden 1957: 222–23, and Lee 1981: 14–15.

whom these mothers and husbands have left behind: the mourning children and wives. The second colon (B) is one conceptual unit, the dead bodies of great heroes, yet the unusual emphasis on corporeality in the world of shades is set off by the allusion to the *animi* of these heroes in the epic epithet “magnanimus.”¹⁷ The third element of the tricolon (C) is more complex. At first it appears that we have another straightforward antithesis, with only slight variation (boys and unwed girls), but the addition of a third element turns this last colon into its *own* tricolon crescens:

- C1. *pueri* (“boys”)
- C2. *innuptaeque puellae*, (“and unmarried girls”) /
- C3. *impositique rogis iuvenes ante ora parentum* (“and young men placed on funeral pyres before the faces of their parents”)

The emphasis is clearly on the tricolon, yet Virgil also manages to suggest a double pairing on either side of the line break: boys and unwed girls on one side, dead youths and their parents on the other.¹⁸

The significance of this elaborate double tricolon structure becomes even clearer when we compare the lines to their Homeric model in *Odyssey* 11, when the shades are summoned by Odysseus’s sacrifice. The Homeric description is also constructed as a double tricolon, thus Virgil manages to pay tribute to his model on the level of both form and content. Yet at the same time the motif of death *ante ora parentum*, so clearly emphasized as the culmination of these carefully constructed lines, is missing from the Homeric passage (Hom. *Od.* 11.38–41):

νύμφαι τ’ ἡἴθεοί τε πολύτλητοί τε γέροντες
 παρθενικαί τ’ ἀταλαί νεοπενθέα θυμὸν ἔχουσαι,
 πολλοὶ δ’ οὐτάμενοι χαλκῆρεσιν ἐγχεΐησιν,
 ἄνδρες ἀρηϊφατοὶ, βεβρωτωμένα τεύχε’ ἔχοντες.

Brides and bachelors and old men who endured much, and delicate virgins with newly mourning hearts, and many war-slain men wounded by bronze-tipped lances, wearing their gore-stained armor.

Virgil manages to evoke in structural form his relationship to the Homeric model: his passage has three lines where Homer has four, conveying his dependence on the “greater” text by self-effacing diminution (cf. his choice of 12

¹⁷ Oddly, Lee 1981: 14 calls it “an unwanted antithesis.”

¹⁸ Moreover, as Lee 1981: 15 notes, the entire three line vignette begins and ends with family members: *matres* and *viri* at the start, and *parentum* at the end; he however sees it as an optimistic reminder of the close-knit Roman family, while I would argue that the lines are meant to be poignant, not comforting.

books to Homer's 24). Furthermore, Virgil has also reversed Homer's double tricolon; in the Homeric passage, it is the *first* unit of the tricolon (brides, bachelors, and old men) that is itself another tricolon (cf. the *Aeneid's* "reversal" of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*). Moreover, the first two groups in Homer's list—the brides and unmarried young men (νύμφαι τ' ἡῖθεοί τε)—are almost exactly reversed by the first two groups of Virgil's final colon ("pueri innuptaeque puellae"). Yet *pueri* are clearly a different age-class from ἡῖθεοι, and the final, dramatic ending of Virgil's tricolon manages both to introduce the *iuvenes*, who correspond more closely to Homer's ἡῖθεοι, and to specify an experience of suffering (death *ante ora parentum*) more specific and evocative than that implied by the πολύτλητοι γέροντες of the original.¹⁹ Virgil also alludes to the final group of Homer's tricolon—heroes with their gore-stained armor—in his second group ("defunctaque corpora vita / magnanimum heroum"), and the inversion draws further attention to the poet's decision to cap his tricolon with the pathetic motif of parents watching their children's cremation.

Such a substitution—replacing the war dead with parents watching their children's burial—is symbolic of Virgilian poetics, in which epic wartime heroism takes second place to the elegiac effects of death on families.²⁰ In Virgil's formulation, the circumstances of the death of the *iuvenes* (war? disease?) is not the focus, but the reaction of the parents who suffer that loss. And while the literary topos of premature death is clearly Iliadic, the particular emphasis on the visual participation of the parents (complete with its own Homeric-style formula) is a Virgilian elaboration. That the lines are especially evocative of the Virgilian worldview is confirmed by their repetition, verbatim, in Book 6 of the *Aeneid*, during Aeneas's descent to the underworld (6.306–8). By including the motif at the start of Aeneas's catabasis the poet frames the entire episode with the theme of *mors immatura*, since the visit to Hades culminates with the lament for Marcellus (A. 6.860–86), another youth buried before the eyes of a parent.²¹

¹⁹ Knauer 1981: 898n41 calls the *ante ora parentum* formula "a typical Vergilian addition to this Odyssean model"; cf. Thomas 1988 ad loc.

²⁰ Cf. Nugent 1999: 254: "[Virgil focuses] not on the pathos *experienced* by these young men in meeting their untimely ends but on the pathos of *reception* as a parent is informed of tragic death . . ."

²¹ On the larger context of the death of Marcellus and *mors immatura*, see Hardie 1993a: 92–93; Reed 2007: 148–55. Book 6 also opens with a tale of death *ante ora parentum*: the Daedalus ecphrasis (see below). This transformative book, then, evokes the motif of premature death at its beginning, middle, and end.

2. DEATH ANTE ORA PARENTUM AND THE FALL OF TROY

The motif of death *ante ora parentum* is a framing element not simply for Aeneas's catabasis, but for the *Aeneid* as a whole; the hero Aeneas evokes it in his very first words in the poem, in his famous storm-trapped cry to the heavens. As in the *Georgics* passage above, the speech is a close adaptation of a Homeric model, but the introduction of the topos of death before parents' faces is a Virgilian elaboration (A. 1.94–101):²²

“o terque quaterque beati,
quis *ante ora patrum* Troiae sub moenibus altis
contigit oppetere! o Danaum fortissime gentis
Tydide! mene Iliacis occumbere campis
non potuisse, tuaque animam hanc effundere dextra,
saevus ubi Aeacidae telo iacet Hector, ubi ingens
Sarpedon, ubi tot Simois correpta sub undis
scuta virum galeasque et fortia corpora volvit?”

O three and four-times blessed are they who died before their fathers' faces beneath the high walls of Troy! O Diomedes, bravest of the Greek nation! Alas that you could not lay me low on the plains of Troy, and pour out my life with your right hand, where fierce Hector lies low because of the weapon of Achilles, where huge Sarpedon lies, where the Simois rolls so many heroes' shields dragged beneath the waves, and helmets, and strong bodies.

“Despair” is the usual word used for Aeneas's mood here, and his opening lament has puzzled scholars since antiquity.²³ Our hero quotes Odysseus (*Od.* 5.306–12)—a fitting introduction to the Odyssean half of the *Aeneid*—yet at the same time the tenor of his opening cry has struck many readers as not suitably “heroic.”²⁴ In particular, Aeneas is not explicit about why he would have preferred to die at Troy; without the specific mention of *kleos* as in the

²² Knauer 1981: 898n41 also notes that the motif is a Virgilian addition to a Homeric citation.

²³ Servius (Serv. Dan. ad A. 1.92) cites a string of complaints by the anonymous critics; Gossage 1963: 131–32 addresses each criticism.

²⁴ See especially Clausen 1964: 140. For a defense of the heroism of Aeneas's lament, see Stahl 1981: 160–65. The most common interpretation is that these lines emphasize that Aeneas is a new type of hero in a more complex world (Pöschl 1962: 34–41; Otis 1964: 231–32; Wlosok 1967: 13–20; Austin 1971: 55; Smith 2005: 12–15); or that the utter desperation in this scene allows for the development of Aeneas's character over the course of the poem (Heinze 1993: 223–27; Highet 1972: 29, 187–91; De Grummond 1977; Mackie 1988: 16–20).

Odyssean source, there is only the barest hint that Aeneas is referring to the desirability of death in battle (and its concomitant fame) rather than an anonymous death at sea, and the emphasis is squarely placed on death, not glory.²⁵ The only hint, in fact, resides in the introduction of the parental audience for such deaths (“ante ora patrum”), and the theme is further highlighted by Aeneas’s mention of the two Iliadic prototypes for children dying as their parents watch: Sarpedon (*Il.* 16.431–61) and Hector (*Il.* 22.33–92; 405–36).²⁶ Yet a great deal has been asked of that small phrase by interpreters of this scene; those who dispute the “unheroic” nature of Aeneas’s complaint read into the phrase “ante ora patrum” not only the *Iliad*-style glory that accrues from death in battle, witnessed by fathers (and presumably others), but even in some cases a Roman-style patriotism.²⁷ Yet, as we shall see, death *ante ora parentum* carries no such glorious overtones elsewhere in the poem, and even if we accept the positive reading of these lines, the later emphasis on the tragedy of such deaths causes us to reconsider the tenor of Aeneas’s opening cry, even if we did not question it the first time.²⁸

Critics have paid less attention, however, to the self-reflexive qualities of this opening lament. Aeneas’s regret that he was not able to die at the hand of Diomedes is of course a reference to their duel in *Iliad* 5; he thereby shows an awareness of the double audience for those who died in the Trojan War: family members who watched from Troy’s walls, and the audience of the *Iliad* itself.²⁹ Moreover, if Aeneas’s wish were somehow to be fulfilled, the poem

²⁵ Even the most cogent defense of these lines as traditionally heroic must resort to paraphrase in order to get the point across: “Aeneas means to say: ‘Why could I not die where my famous comrades died (i.e., on the battlefield)!’” (Stahl 1981: 162; emphasis is mine). While Stahl is surely correct that the informed reader of these lines will recall that death without burial is *the* anxiety of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, we should not ignore the typically Virgilian dissonance between the heroic prototype and what his text actually says.

²⁶ As Quint 2001: 63–65 points out, the special treatment Aeneas receives from the gods, especially in contrast to more prominent Trojan heroes, is already an issue in the *Iliad*, and is clearly on the mind of both Virgil and his hero.

²⁷ See, e.g., Pöschl 1962: 41: “Aeneas’ first words show his *pietas* above all.” Cf. Highet 1972: 190 (on A. 1.94–96): “A favorite theme of Vergil: Trojans are nobler, being patriots, not aggressors.”

²⁸ Cf. Mackie 1988: 19–20: “Such is his despair that dying *ante ora patrum* (95) seems like good fortune.”

²⁹ Odysseus’s cry (*Od.* 5.299–312) has a similarly self-reflexive quality, in that he openly refers to an anxiety about his post-Trojan War status. Cf. Nagy 1979: 35, who reads this scene as the inverse of Achilles’ underworld lament (*Od.* 11.489–91), in which he seems “ready to trade an *Iliad* for an *Odyssey*.” In addition, just as Aeneas alludes to Odysseus’s opening cry, Odysseus alludes to Achilles’ cry in *Iliad* 21.273–83; see Usener 1990: 141–47.

itself would perish. Fittingly, our hero's very first words demonstrate how, in the words of Hardie (1993a: 2), "the *Aeneid* constantly works against its own closure."³⁰ In short, Aeneas takes on his shoulders the poet's anxieties here: concerns about moving forward, about finishing the story, about his post-Iliadic and post-Homeric status. In this sense, the *ante ora patrum* motif lends itself to a Bloomian reading, as the poet Virgil, embarking on his own epic journey, assumes the risk of falling flat in the overwhelming shadow of his literary father, Homer.³¹ Aeneas's opening wish is thus contrary to the aims of the poet: unlike Aeneas, the poet has no desire to "die" in the face of his father Homer, but also unlike Aeneas (whose father is now dead), for Virgil that is at this point still a possibility. And for both Aeneas and Virgil, the Trojan past is the overwhelming model that they must live up to. The critical discomfort with this entire scene, in other words, is not just for the impression of Aeneas's character, but also about the poem's (and poet's) character. What author would choose to introduce his hero in this way?

Aeneas's reference to fathers watching their sons die from the walls of Troy is a clear reference to the role of Priam in the *Iliad*, and the importance of Priam for this motif is made clear in Aeneas's own narrative of the end of the Trojan War in Book 2. Here Priam and Hecuba reprise their roles, familiar from epic and (in the case of Hecuba) tragedy, as the prototypical grieving parents, as they are forced to witness the death of their son Polites at the hands of Pyrrhus, the son of Achilles. In the *Iliad*, the reaction of Priam and Hecuba to the deaths of countless sons and relatives is an essential leitmotiv, and their suffering symbolizes the tragic fate of the entire city; most famous is their reaction from the walls of Troy as they watch Achilles drag Hector's body behind his chariot (*Il.* 22.405–36).³² In this sense, then, by drawing attention

³⁰ On the *Aeneid*'s difficult relationship with its own teleology, see Feeney 1991: 129–55; Quint 1993: 50–96; Hardie 1993a: 1–18; Fowler 1997: 259–62; Theodorakopoulos 1997.

³¹ In that context, notice also the two patronymics in the passage (*Aeacidae, Tydide*), and the appearance of Diomedes, who is one of the characters most concerned with living up to the model of his father in the *Iliad* (see *Il.* 4.364–400; 14.113–27). On literary "paternity," see Bloom 1973. For applications of his model to Latin poetry, see especially Hardie 1993a: 88–119; Hubbard 1998; Oliensis 2001: 43–44. Farrell 1999 draws connections between representations of paternity in the *Aeneid* and Virgil's "Oedipal agon against his literary 'father'" (quote at 110). Hardie 1986: 78 reads the Ennian traces at the end of Book 6 as "an act of piety on the part of Virgil towards his literary 'parent.'"

³² On Priam's suffering as a leitmotiv of the *Iliad*, see Griffin 1980: 113n20: "Scholars have been struck by the number of kinsmen of Priam who are killed in the course of the *Iliad* . . . Priam is the old man and father whom we see suffer in the poem . . . and the accumulation of disasters upon him can be made visible and tangible in terms of pathos." On the death of Priam as symbolic of the fall of Troy, see Bowie 1990: 470–73. Indeed Virgil dwells on Priam's grief to the exclusion of Hecuba, despite her status as "the archetype of

to their role as bereaved parents, Virgil emphasizes the connection between *Aeneid* 2 and the battle narratives of the *Iliad*; we are in the most Iliadic part of the Odyssean first half.³³ As we have already seen in Aeneas's opening lament, Virgil fixes on death *ante ora parentum* as a defining characteristic of the Iliadic world, so it is hardly surprising that the death of Polites evokes the topos, and even includes a verbal echo of Aeneas's first cry. Polites runs into the room, already wounded, with Pyrrhus at his heels, and collapses in front of his parents (A. 2.531–32):

ut tandem *ante oculos* evasit et *ora parentum*,
concidit ac multo vitam cum sanguine fudit.

When at last he ended up before the eyes and faces of his parents, he collapsed and poured out his life with copious blood.

In Aeneas's version of the events, it is as if Polites waited to die until his parents could see his demise, so that he too could become one of the heroes who fall at Troy *ante ora parentum*. His parents are also ready for the gruesome spectacle; just prior to Polites' entrance, Hecuba has convinced Priam to put aside thoughts of battle and have a seat on the altar, as if to emphasize their readiness to watch (A. 2.518–25).³⁴ But Priam and Hecuba are hardly the only spectators; there is also Aeneas, watching without interfering in someone else's story, and indeed the audience listening to Aeneas's story in Carthage.³⁵ Just as he will call attention to his own act of witness at the close of the story (A. 2.559–63), he begins the scene by evoking the participation of his Carthaginian audience (A. 2.506: "forsitan et Priami fuerint quae fata requiras").

extreme unhappiness and misfortune from antiquity onwards" (Mossman 1995: 2). I shall have more to say on the gendering of death *ante ora parentum* in the *Aeneid* below.

³³ Particularly since it was Virgil's choice to include the death of Polites. As Heinze 1993: 25 points out, Virgil is the first extant author to substitute Polites for Astyanax, although he speculates that the substitution may be Hellenistic. It is perhaps also significant that the *ante ora parentum* motif appears most often in Books 2 and 5, the two "Iliadic" moments in the Odyssean first half (see Table 1). On the ways in which Book 2 both is and is not Iliadic, see Hexter 1999: 67.

³⁴ Moreover the transitional word from Hecuba's persuasion of Priam to the scene of their son's death is *Ecce* (A. 2.526). The location of the murder at the altar reflects Virgil's preference for the *Iliou Persis* version; in the *Mikra Ilias*, Priam is dragged from the altar and killed at the threshold of his palace (see Anderson 1997: 28–38).

³⁵ Aeneas's odd detachment from this scene may reflect the conflicting versions of his role in the fall of Troy in the epic cycle. According to the *Iliou Persis*, Aeneas and his men escaped to Mount Ida before the sack of Troy, whereas according to the *Little Iliad* Neoptolemus took Aeneas hostage after the sack; see Davies 1989: 69–71. On the conflicting versions of Aeneas's role in the fall, see Heinze 1993: 18–19. On the shifting nature of Aeneas's spectatorship in the poem, see Reed 2007: 173–202.

The narratological play in this scene continues in the conversation following the death of Polites, where at three distinct points either Priam or Pyrrhus alludes to his role in Homeric and post-Homeric narratives. Once again Virgil draws attention to the relationship between the *Aeneid* and its predecessors, and key scenes from Homer generate equally key scenes in the *Aeneid* at the very moment when generational succession is threatened or questioned. Immediately after Polites collapses in front of his parents, Priam tells Pyrrhus that the gods will punish him, as one “who made me watch my son die in front of me and who befouled a father’s face with death” (A. 2.538–39: “qui nati coram me cernere letum / fecisti et patrios foedasti funere vultus”). Priam once again draws attention to the topos of death *ante ora parentum*, and makes clear the special violation Pyrrhus has committed by making Priam witness his own son’s death.³⁶ But Priam takes the issue a step further and invokes Achilles as a witness to *this* scene, by alluding to his own encounter with his son’s murderer in *Iliad* 24 (A. 2.540–45):

“at non ille, satum quo te mentiris, Achilles
 talis in hoste fuit Priamo; sed iura fidemque
 supplicis erubuit corpusque exsanguie sepulcro
 reddidit Hectoreum meque in mea regna remisit.”
 sic fatus senior telumque imbelle sine ictu
 coniecit . . .

“Achilles—the man whose offspring you pretend to be—did not act this way toward Priam, his enemy. He respected the rules and the trust of a suppliant; he gave up Hector’s dead body for burial, and sent me back to my realm.” Thus did the old man speak, and he thrust his weak weapon without impact . . .

Priam refers to his Iliadic persona in the third person, thereby emphasizing that we are in a truly post-Iliadic world, and highlighting how far removed Pyrrhus’s blasphemy is from Achilles’ behavior. Yet it might seem to some that Priam’s recollection of Achilles’ behavior in the *Iliad* is a bit off the mark here; after all, Achilles *killed* Hector, and did even worse things to the body than Pyrrhus has done to Polites, and Priam witnessed it all.³⁷ Priam, in other words, selectively narrates from the *Iliad*, yet his narration fails, since Pyrrhus

³⁶ Moreover the topos will recur, albeit subtly, in Book 3, where Aeneas learns of the fate of Pyrrhus (A. 3.330–32); Virgil manages to ensure a parallel death by having him killed by Orestes (another son of an Iliadic hero) in front of Achilles’ altar—before the eyes, as it were, of Pyrrhus’s own father. Cf. Quint 1993: 59–60: “The death of Neoptolemus at his father’s altar may thus be understood . . . as a kind of poetic justice for having cut down Polites before Priam’s eyes.”

³⁷ Bowie 1990: 476–77 also notes the peculiarity of Priam’s recollection of Achilles’ behavior, and suggests that it may be motivated in part by the allegorical reading of Priam

dispatches him in short order, and his recollection of Achilles' behavior in the poem is as weak as his arm. Just as his thrown spear lands "without a blow" ("sine ictu"), his words fall "without a beat," and his attempt to play the epic narrator fails pathetically.³⁸

Or does it? There is a second way in which Priam functions as a narrator in this scene, and it also depends upon the reader's knowledge of the *Iliad*. In Book 22, Priam begs his son not to go face Achilles in combat, knowing that his death will result in the fall of Troy. He paints a picture for Hector of what that scene will be like (*Il.* 22.59–65), predicting that he will be forced to witness (ἐπιδόντα) many evils—sons killed, daughters dragged off, infants thrown down on the ground. As Anderson (1997: 28–38) has pointed out, Priam's speech contains specific references to events associated with the Fall of Troy, and narrated in the epic cycle. In a sense, then, Priam is the first narrator of the post-Iliadic world, and the fulfillment of his Iliadic prophecy becomes a clear concern not only for the poets of the cycle, but for Virgil himself; his *Aeneid* is, after all, an addition to the cycle.³⁹ Moreover Priam's speech in the *Iliad* is also a prototype for the rhetorical topos of the *urbs capta*, which, as Rossi (2004: 17–53) has convincingly shown, Virgil consciously evokes throughout his narrative of the fall of Troy. The topos made its way from the world of epic and tragedy to the so-called "tragic histories" of the Hellenistic tradition; by invoking the horrors of a captured city (particularly the effect of the invasion on those who normally are spared the brunt of the fighting—old men, women, and children) the historian or poet aimed to bring before the eyes of the listener or reader a vivid image of destruction.⁴⁰ In fact the extra addition to the *ante ora parentum* motif that Virgil adds in this scene (*A.* 2.531: "ut tandem *ante oculos* evasit et *ora parentum*") may allude to rhetorical discussions of the *urbs capta* topos, and of *enargeia* more generally; *ante oculos* is a standard Latin phrase for the desired effect of powerful rhetoric.⁴¹ It is as if the narrated version of the horrors of a captive city which Priam

as Pompey, who was killed by representatives of Ptolemy XIII (*RE* Ptolemaios 35) despite ties of friendship with his father Ptolemy XII (Auletes); among other clues is Virgil's insistence on referring to Pyrrhus as Neoptolemus, the "New Ptolemy."

³⁸ Priam's "unwarlike weapon" (*telum imbelles*) could also be "unaesthetic" (*imbellus*), given the regular use of *bellus* as an index of social and literary aesthetics in the 1st ce. B.C.E. (Krostenko 2001: 111–14).

³⁹ Cf. Kopff 1981: 944: "Virgil is himself a 'Cyclic' poet, and *epigonus* of Homer." On "secondary" epic more broadly, see Hinds 1998: 91–98.

⁴⁰ On the *urbs capta* topos, see Paul 1982. On vividness (*enargeia*), see Zanker 1981; on *enargeia* in historiography and its relationship to the *Aeneid*, see Rossi 2004: 125–49.

⁴¹ Cf. *Rhet. ad Her.* 4.68: "Demonstratio est, cum ita verbis res exprimitur, ut geri negotium et res *ante oculos* esse videatur." ("*Demonstratio* is when something is expressed

tried so hard to bring before Hector's eyes in *Iliad* 22 have now, in reality, come before Priam's own eyes in *Aeneid* 2 (and, metaphorically, before the eyes of the Carthaginian audience, and before our own).⁴²

There is a third metapoetic level at which this scene operates. The references to the world of the *Iliad* serve to remind us not only of the role of Priam in both poems but also to the fact that we are in a new, decidedly post-Iliadic world, in which the hero Achilles has been replaced by his "degenerate" son. When Priam reminds Pyrrhus that his father Achilles had behaved more mercifully at the end of the *Iliad*, Pyrrhus responds by noting, in effect, that we are not in the *Iliad* any more (A. 2.547–50):

"referes ergo haec et nuntius ibis
Pelidae genitori. illi mea tristia facta
degeneremque Neoptolemum narrare memento.
nunc morere."

"Well then—you will go as a messenger and report these things to my father Achilles. Remember to tell him about my sorry behavior and about degenerate Neoptolemus. Now die."

Pyrrhus invites Priam to reprise his role as narrator of the fall of Troy—in hell.⁴³ Like Priam before him, Pyrrhus refers to himself in the third person, but where Priam's reference was to his Iliadic persona, Pyrrhus calls attention to his starring role in post-Iliadic narratives, such as the *Mikra Ilias*, the *Iliou Persis*, and now the *Aeneid* as well. Moreover, it is not hard to see in his claim the charge by Hellenistic critics that the epic cycle is a "degeneration" of its Homeric progenitors.⁴⁴ Whereas in the first evocation of the *ante ora parentum* topos—Aeneas battered at sea—we saw the implication that Virgil

in words such that the activity itself seems to be going on and the very thing seems to exist before our eyes.") *Demonstratio* is one of many Latin translations of *enargeia*; see Lausberg 1998: 359–66 (under *evidentia*). Similarly, Cicero regularly invites the jurors to put the events of the crime or some other past events *ante oculos*; e.g., *Balb.* 65: "Simul et illa, iudices, omnia *ante oculos* vestros proponite." ("At the same time, judges, put all the following things before your eyes.") Cf. *OLD* "oculus" 7b; *TLL* 9.2.446.19–32 (Kuhlmann).

⁴² Harrison 2003: 15–16 argues for a similarly metaliterary reading of *ante oculos* at *Sil. Pun.* 12.234; if I am correct, Silius's use has a Virgilian precedent.

⁴³ As Quint 1993: 60 observes, the cruel taunt is a clever evocation of the *nekuia* in the *Odyssey*, where Agamemnon and Achilles inquire about the fates of their sons.

⁴⁴ Aristotle (*Poet.* 1459a–b) criticizes the *Cypria* and the *Little Iliad* for being more episodic than the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Hellenistic scholars such as Aristarchus clearly believed that the works of the cycle were post-Homeric and inferior (Pfeiffer 1968: 230–31), and the Homeric scholia often use οἱ νεώτεροι to refer to the cyclic poets (Davies 1986:

might die in the face of his metaphorical father, here, in the second evocation of the topos, there is open acknowledgment that successors do not always live up to the standards of their predecessors.

But there is yet another set of fathers and sons in this scene, since the spectator Aeneas evokes both Anchises and Ascanius. After his memorable description of Priam's body lying headless on the shore, Aeneas turns his narrative attention back to himself (A. 2.559: "at me . . .") and his own family; watching Priam die makes him think of his own father (A. 2.560: "subiit cari genitoris imago"), a grim reversal of Priam's embassy to Achilles at the end of the *Iliad*, where Priam succeeded by reminding Achilles of Peleus. By framing the narrative in this way, Virgil makes clear that Aeneas's line acts as a different genealogical model, with the possibility of a happier ending than the lines of Priam or Achilles. Aeneas represents a positive inversion of the *ante ora parentum* motif, a point that comes across clearly in two separate evocations of the formula later in Book 2. When Aeneas finds his family, Anchises refuses to budge, thereby evoking the behavior of the Roman noblemen in another *urbs capta*—the sack of Rome by the Gauls in Livy 5.41. Aeneas warns his father that Pyrrhus approaches, fresh from killing a father and son (A. 2.662–67):

"iamque aderit multo Priami de sanguine Pyrrhus,
natum *ante ora patris*, patrem qui obtruncat ad aras.
hoc erat, alma parens, quod me per tela, per ignis
eripis, ut mediis hostem in penetralibus utque
Ascanium patremque meum iuxtaque Creusam
alterum in alterius mactatos sanguine cernam?"

"And soon Pyrrhus will be here, straight from the copious blood of Priam, he who cuts down the son before the face of his father, and then the father before the altars. Kind mother, was this why you rescued me from weapons and fires, so that I might see the enemy in the middle of my house? So that I might see Ascanius and my father and Creusa beside them slaughtered in each other's blood?"

The generalizing present tense (*obtruncat*) perfectly captures Aeneas's fear: Pyrrhus kills sons while their fathers watch, and will gladly reprise his role for Aeneas and his family.⁴⁵ Yet Aeneas seems somewhat confused about whether

109–10). Though some modern scholars (e.g. Griffin 1977) concur that the cyclic poems are inferior, the salient point for my argument is Virgil would have been familiar with such claims (as, e.g., Hor. *AP* 131–52 would suggest: see Brink 1971: 210–14).

⁴⁵ Note, in addition, the evocation of the *ante ora parentum / patris* formula, and the repetition of "multo . . . sanguine" in the exact same position as in 2.532 and 2.551. Lee 1979: 42 also notes the recurrence of the *ante ora patris* formula here, and its connection to Aeneas's first speech and the death of Polites. See also D. L. Miller 2003: 58–59.

he will play the role of Priam or Polites; or perhaps he will simply reprise his role as passive spectator (666–67), since he will apparently watch his entire family die before taking his revenge. If his fate is to see his son and his father and his wife all die, he decides that he will take out some of the enemy on his way to his doom. As in his opening cry, Aeneas considers an action that, if carried through, will negate the possibility of the *Aeneid* itself.

What snaps Aeneas and Anchises out of this madness, and makes them adopt a different course than the Priam–Polites model, is the appearance of an omen (A. 2.681–84):

namque manus inter maestorumque ora parentum
 ecce levis summo de vertice visus Iuli
 fundere lumen apex, tactuque innoxia mollis
 lambere flamma comas et circum tempora pasci.

For behold! Amid the hands and faces of grieving parents a thin tip of flame seemed to pour out light from the very top of Iulus's head, and with its touch a harmless fire seemed to lick his soft hair and graze around his temples.

A second evocation of the motif suddenly transforms the scene into a positive foil to the death of Polites in the middle of the book. Aeneas and the Trojans will *not* look on as Ascanius is killed by Pyrrhus; instead, there appears *ante ora parentum* a sign from the gods that they will be delivered from the wreckage of Troy. The slight verbal echo at 2.681 might strike us as insufficient grounds to connect this scene to the larger pattern, if Hardie had not shown that the omen recalls two other instances of death *ante ora parentum* (1984: 409–12).⁴⁶ The serpent-like description of the flame that feeds on Iulus's head evokes the grim death of Laocoon's sons, as Knox (1950: 396–98) first argued; while that scene presaged the destruction of Troy, this scene offers hope for the continuation of the line. The second reference that Hardie discovers is intertextual: “manus inter maestorumque ora parentum” recalls the sacrifice of Iphigenia in Lucretius (1.89–90: “et maestum simul ante aras adstare parentum / sensit”). That scene functions as a reminder of the evils that religion can impose on men, while this scene serves as a positive inversion of two earlier “sacrifices” (Laocoon and sons, and Polites and Priam at the altar of Zeus Herkeios). As Putnam (1965: 3) has pointed out, *Aeneid* 2 has a (typically Virgilian) tripartite division: the build-up to the destruction of the city, the destruction, and then the decision by Aeneas and his family to depart. Recognition of the *ante ora parentum* topos reinforces this division: in the first two parts, the pathetic

⁴⁶ Other scholars have noted the connection between the miracle of the flame and the *ante ora parentum* topos: see, e.g., D. L. Miller 2003: 46–47 and 90; Smith 2005: 179; Newman and Newman 2005: 42–43.

highlight is a scene in which parents watch their children die, and then die alongside them. In the third, Aeneas's decision to abandon Troy and save his family alludes thematically and verbally to both stories.⁴⁷

Thus far we have seen the various ways in which the motif of death *ante ora parentum* functions as a shorthand for the suffering of war; the generic nature of the formula nicely conveys the wide effects of war's destruction. Moreover, when applied to Aeneas in particular the generic quality of the formula shades into ambiguity. Will Aeneas die as Anchises looks on? Or will Ascanius die while Aeneas and Creusa look on? Or both? Such ambiguity is in perfect keeping with Aeneas's transitional status between a Trojan and Italian identity, and will be the subject of further discussion in the next section. Moreover, the scenes where the motif recurs—Aeneas's cry of despair, the horrors of Priam's narrated *urbs capta* brought before his very eyes, Pyrrhus's embrace of generational decline—are moments when the poem calls attention to its status as fiction and to Virgil's own place in his poetic genealogy. Hence the special emphasis on the motif in Book 2, where the specter of Homer looms particularly large, and Virgil takes his epic to the gates of Troy itself.

3. LIFE ANTE ORA PARENTUM: AFTER TROY

Virgil's decision to emphasize Aeneas's transitional status is not without precedent in the tradition; think of the well-known image of the hero carrying his father and leading his son by the hand as they leave Troy—an iconographic parallel for his intermediate position in the *Aeneid*.⁴⁸ While the poet does invoke that particular image (*A.* 2.707–11; 723–24; 729; 804), it is Book 5 where, as many scholars have observed, the focus is most clearly on Aeneas's role as conduit between Anchises and Ascanius, between Troy and Rome. In his celebration of the funeral games for his father, Aeneas effectively transforms from an offspring of the previous generation into the head of the next one. As Glazewski and others have noted, Virgil marks this change in his hero by continuously referring to him as *pater* throughout the book.⁴⁹ As I show

⁴⁷ Further reinforcing Putnam's tripartite division is Virgil's use of *ecce* to announce the appearance of Sinon (2.57), Polites (2.526), and the flame (2.682); as we noted above, *Aeneid* 6 also alludes to the *ante ora parentum* topos at its beginning, middle, and end.

⁴⁸ It is widely accepted that the depiction of Aeneas in the Forum Augustum was of this type; see Galinsky 1969: 8–9.

⁴⁹ Glazewski 1972: 86–87; Farrell 1999: 98–99; Theodorakopoulos 2004: 65; more generally, Pavlovskis 1976: 200 notes that words referring to family relationships occur more often in Book 5 than elsewhere in the poem. The emphasis on Aeneas's transformation in this book is a frequent theme of Virgilian criticism: see, e.g., Galinsky 1968; Pavlovskis 1976: 203–4; Holt 1979–80; Nugent 1992: 259–60.

in this section, the reemergence of the *ante ora parentum* motif during the games reinforces this important transition; unlike earlier uses of the formula in Books 1 and 2, Aeneas and his generation are now the *parentes*, and not the imperiled sons. Virgil, moreover, uses the formula in this book to cast familial succession itself as a kind of artistic production, whereby each new generation mimetically reproduces the preceding one. Thus the oft-noted transitional focus of Book 5 has implications for the mimetic aims of the poem itself. The double vision that enables Aeneas to look at Ascanius and see Anchises is the same gaze that enables us to see in Aeneas his Trojan past and Roman future; to read the games for Anchises as both the heir of the games for Patroclus and the progenitor of the games of Augustus; and to see the poem itself as both post-Homeric and pre-Augustan.⁵⁰

At the end of the celebration of the funeral games for Anchises, Ascanius and his comrades put on the “Troy game” as their parents watch.⁵¹ Virgil describes the entrance of the boys (A. 5.553–55):

incedunt pueri pariterque *ante ora parentum*
frenatis lucent in equis, quos omnis euntis
Trinacriae mirata fremit Troiaequae iuventus.

The boys advance, and all together on their bridled horses they appear before their parents’ faces; all the youth of Troy and Sicily marvel at them as they go, and roar their approval.

Aeneas and his generation are now clearly the *parentes*, and not the youth who may die as their parents look on. It is as if the ambiguity at the end of Book 2—will Aeneas die as Anchises looks on, or will he watch his son Ascanius die?—has been resolved, and the focus of survival anxiety has shifted down one generation. Many have noted the inclusion of the *ante ora parentum* motif here, and suggest that it injects a note of gloom and doom in an otherwise happy occasion.⁵² Perhaps—yet the introduction of the motif also reminds the reader how far from Book 2 the Trojans have come.⁵³ Virgil chooses to evoke

⁵⁰ Cf. D. L. Miller 2003: 66: “[W]ithin Virgil’s layering of perspectives the Trojan boys always appear, explicitly or not, as Roman ancestors.” On the complexities of spectatorship in Book 5, see Feldherr 1995.

⁵¹ On the *lusus Troiaae*, see especially Heller 1946; Weeber 1974; Houston 1981–82; Fuchs 1990. On the *lusus Troiaae* in Virgil, see Heinze 1993: 128–29; Polverini 1990; Deremetz 1993; Feldherr 1995: 263–64; Theodorakopoulos 2004.

⁵² E.g., Putnam 1965: 86; Glazewski 1972: 90–91; Petrini 1997: 96; D. L. Miller 2003: 71; Newman and Newman 2005: 42–43.

⁵³ Cf. Lee 1979: 56–57; Holt 1979–80: 119–20n36. The *lusus* is also a non-competitive, non-violent military display, which further enhances the contrast.

in his introduction to the *lusus Troiae* the horrors of the *casus Troiae*, its exact opposite.⁵⁴ As if to emphasize the contrast, leading in the first group in the *lusus Troiae* is Priam, son of the very Polites whose death before the eyes of Priam (*senior*) symbolized the destruction of an entire city (A. 5.563–65):

una acies iuvenum, ducit quam parvus ovantem
nomen avi referens Priamus, tua clara, Polite,
progenies, auctura Italos.

Leading in one cheering line of young men is little Priam, bearing the name of his grandfather—your illustrious progeny, Polites, destined to augment the Italians.

As in Book 2, Virgil highlights the divergent fates of the lines of Priam and Anchises. The two grandsons Priam (*iunior*) and Ascanius lead in opposite branches of the *lusus* as father Aeneas looks on, and Anchises' burial is properly celebrated—a stark contrast to the entrance of Polites before the eyes of his parents, and the death of father and son at the hands of the same man. Priam is no longer a *sine nomine corpus* (A. 2.558), but now only a *nomen* carried on by his surviving grandson. Troy will live on, but only as a game played by the next generation, who march in *ante ora parentum*, very much alive. Yet this is no empty honor. These simulacra are a more successful commemorative mode than the simulated Troy of Andromache in Book 3; unlike her *parva Troia* (A. 3.349), the *lusus Troiae* looks forward as well as backward, and is a healthy ritual adapted to a new context, rather than a sterile imitation of a dead past.⁵⁵ The verbal repetition of the *ante ora parentum* formula draws attention to the reversal of Trojan fortunes in this book: if there is no greater pain than seeing your child die before your eyes, there can be no greater pleasure than seeing them display their virtue as you look on.

Just twenty lines later, Virgil evokes the formula a second time (A. 5.575–76):

⁵⁴ While Virgil never uses the exact phrase *casus Troiae*, he does evoke the phrase on occasion: A. 1.238 (*occasum Troiae*); A. 1.623–24 (*casus . . . urbis / Troianae*); cf. also A. 1.754, 2.10–11, 2.507, 10.61–62. Ovid uses *casus Troiae* three times (*Ars* 2.127, *Met.* 13.577, and *F.* 5.389), and Statius once (*Silv.* 5.3.148).

⁵⁵ In that sense the *lusus Troiae* is a better model for the *Aeneid* itself: just as Aeneas's success requires something more than a simple recreation of a "little Troy," Virgil's poem must be more than a cyclic sequel, more than a *Mikra Ilias* (as Hexter 1999: 76–77 points out in his excellent survey of the metapoetic resonance of Andromache's little Troy). On the conflation of past, present, and future in the *lusus Troiae*, see Pavlovskis 1976: 202–3; Holt 1979–80: 119–21; Feldherr 1995: 263–64; Theodorakopoulos 2004: 66.

excipiunt plausu pavidos gaudentque tuentes
Dardanidae, veterumque agnoscunt ora parentum.

The Trojans receive the frightened boys with applause and enjoy looking at them; they recognize the faces of their old parents.

The first instance of the formula makes the point clear enough: Ascanius and his cohort will live, not die, *ante ora parentum*. But this second evocation of the motif adds another layer, by evoking all three generations at once, and putting greater emphasis on the transitional generation of Aeneas and his men. This generation has escaped from Troy, and will not die *ante ora parentum*, even if at times they might have preferred it (cf. Aeneas's opening lament); their reward is that they themselves will recognize the faces of their parents in the next generation.⁵⁶ The recurrence of the motif, in other words, conveys at the narrative level their transitional status: in this scene, Aeneas and his men are no longer at risk of dying as their parents look on; instead, *they* are now the parents, watching their children, who will survive them (Table 2).⁵⁷ They are the viewers, not the viewed. They have completed the transition from a generation dying before their time in battle to a generation surviving in peace (at least for the present).

As we saw above, the repetition of the formula emphasizes the transition; when Ascanius and his cohort parade in *ante ora parentum* (5.553), the *parentes* in question are now (for the first time) the generation of Aeneas, and not of Anchises or Priam (as in Books 1 and 2). Yet when Aeneas and his men recognize the faces of their parents in their sons (5.576), the *parentes* referred to by "agnoscunt ora parentum" are again Priam's generation, but now there is a kind of double vision: the *ora* in question somehow belong to both Ascanius's generation *and* Anchises' generation, to both Priams.⁵⁸

Here I think we begin to see the real reason for Virgil's interest in the theme of transition. In its idealized form, familial succession offers a kind of immortality, as each generation preserves the features, names, and characteristics of the previous one.⁵⁹ Priam *iunior* is hardly the only boy to be named for his grandfather, and the popularity of this practice throughout the world testifies

⁵⁶ For a thoughtful essay on the theme of family resemblance in Roman culture, see Bettini 1999: 187–212 (and 190–91 on forms of *-gnosco* in allusions to this theme).

⁵⁷ Thereby satisfying the terms of Croesus's definition of peacetime (Hdt. 1.87.4), in which children bury their parents (see n12 above).

⁵⁸ Feldherr 1995: 264 also points out the changing referents of *parentum* in these two passages.

⁵⁹ For ancient versions of this idea, see Pl. *Leg.* 721b–c; Pl. *Symp.* 207c–208e; Dio Cass. 56.3.4–5.

TABLE 2. AENEAS'S TRANSITION

	TROY (war) death <i>ante ora parentum</i>	SICILY (games) life <i>ante ora parentum</i>
parents	Anchises' generation	Aeneas's generation
children	Aeneas's generation	Ascanius's generation
viewers	Anchises' generation	Aeneas's generation
viewed	Aeneas's generation	Ascanius's generation
living	Anchises' generation	Aeneas's and Ascanius's generation
dead	Aeneas's generation	—

to the symbolic power of such repetition: it is as if there are only two generations, repeating themselves in alternation far into the future.⁶⁰ Premature death is tragic precisely because it threatens this process of generational immortality. And if anyone was aware of the power of familial lineage, it was the Romans, whose onomastic practices, funeral celebrations, and statuary all participated in the recreation of past generations in the present. The connections between such recreation and artistic mimesis are obvious, and were not lost on the Romans. The Roman ideal was uncontested patrilineal succession, with each generation safely replicating the previous one, just as a statue replicates its referent.⁶¹ In Livy 5, for example, the old plebeian P. Licinius Calvus points to his son as an “image and portrait” of himself in his attempt to persuade the people to elect the younger Licinius as consular tribune in his stead (5.18.5: “effigiem atque imaginem”). Agrippina (the elder) plays with this analogy in her rebuke of Tiberius for his mistreatment: she bursts in on the emperor sacrificing to divus Augustus, and points out that *she* is his true image, not mute statues.⁶² Family transition is itself a kind of mimetic process, and a real-life cognate to the immortality that art objects can provide.

⁶⁰ Roman onomastic practice makes this metaphorical immortality even more pronounced, since (at least in the early and middle republic) the first son normally inherited his father's *praenomen* and *nomen*; almost all other Indo-European cultures employed a single name. In the late republic and early empire, individuating *cognomina* within the same family become more common; see Salway 1994.

⁶¹ Bettini 1999: 187–88 cites Augustine (*Solil.* 2.11), who claims that the physical resemblance of a child to his parent is akin to the relationship between an artwork and its referent.

⁶² Tac. *Ann.* 4.52: “non in effigies mutas divinum spiritum transfusum: se imaginem veram, caelesti sanguine ortam.” (“[Agrippina objected] that the divine spirit was not

For elite Romans, the boundaries between artistic and natural mimesis were often blurred. Elite Romans could see reflections of themselves both in the *imagines* on their walls (their past selves) and in the children playing in their halls (their future selves): precisely the position of Aeneas and his men as they watch Ascanius's cohort parade on their horses. Like the viewers of an artwork, the Trojans in *Aeneid* 5 marvel at their children not simply because of who they are, but because of whom they *resemble*; they are *imagines* of their parents, and of their parents' parents. The pleasure they take from seeing the faces of their children even evokes the language of Aristotle's famous explanation of mimetic pleasure (A. 5.575–76; Arist. *Poet.* 1448b15–17):

excipiunt plausu pavidos gaudentque tuentes
Dardanidae, veterumque agnoscunt ora parentum.

διὰ γὰρ τοῦτο χαίρουσι τὰς εἰκόνας ὁρῶντες, ὅτι συμβαίνει θεωροῦντας
μανθάνειν καὶ συλλογίζεσθαι τί ἕκαστον, οἷον ὅτι οὗτος ἐκεῖνος·
And it is for this reason that they enjoy looking at images, since it is fitting
for the viewers to learn and infer what each thing is; for example, that this is
that man.

οὗτος ἐκεῖνος—Ascanius *is* Anchises; Priam *is* Priam. Once again the *ante ora parentum* motif appears in a passage where artistic representation is the subtext. And the Trojan viewers are figures for the Roman readers in the text, who share this double vision.⁶³ The reader takes pleasure in seeing the faces and names of contemporary Romans in the Trojan competitors, and knowing that the *lusus Troiae* stretches not only back to the past, but also to the present. And the entire poem can make the same claim: the educated reader derives aesthetic pleasure from the recognition of the perfect union of the past and future, Trojan and Roman, mythical and historical. In this sense, Virgil himself is transitional in the same way as his hero: he is not merely an *epigonos* of Homer, but now the forefather of the Augustan age, and of future *epigono*i.⁶⁴ The recurrence of the *ante ora parentum* motif in the *lusus*

transferred to mute statues, but that *she* was [Augustus's] true image, that *she* was born from his heavenly blood.") Cf. Sen. *Ep. Mor.* 84.8, where Seneca insists that if Lucilius is to model himself after his favorite authors, his similarity should be that of a son (to his parent) rather than that of an image (to its referent), for "an image is an inanimate thing" ("imago res mortua est"); I owe this reference to James Ker.

⁶³ Holt 1979–80: 119 aptly notes that the phrase "gaudent tuentes . . . veterumque agnoscunt ora parentum" could apply just as easily to the experience of the Augustan reader, who "views" the people and institutions of Book 5 in both their contemporary and ancient context; cf. Petrini 1997: 93.

⁶⁴ For a suggestion that the paternal focus of the book has metaliterary implications, see Nugent 1992: 257–58; Farrell 1999 (who also emphasizes the often ignored role of *mater Venus* in the book, and in the poem more generally); Oliensis 2001: 60–61.

Troiae represents an about-face from the earlier instances of the motif. If the metapoetic resonance of the earlier instances suggested that Virgil risked dying in the face of father Homer, or being a “degenerate son” like Neoptolemos, hero of the Epic Cycle, here we have a rather optimistic celebration of the turn for the better, a poem confident in its in-between status between past and future, and a poet confident in his status as both son of Homer and father of future *epigonoï*.

Yet the beauty of the *Aeneid* is that it refuses to allow such moments of optimistic clarity to last; the transitional Book 5 is followed by the more importantly transitional Book 6. And at the start of that book is the mythical prototype for death *ante ora parentum*: the story of Daedalus and Icarus on Apollo’s temple doors. The ecphrasis is one of the most intensely studied and appreciated moments in the entire poem, and I will not treat it in great detail here, other than to point out the connections to the death *ante ora parentum* motif.⁶⁵ The main connection is of course obvious: the scene is the mythical prototype for a child dying in front of his father. The myth is often treated as an allegory of the safe middle course, and the father-son connection confers added poignancy to this reading; the choice of a different path by Icarus bears a slight hint of generational conflict, and a rejection of the father.⁶⁶ Moreover, as Paschalis (1986) has shown, the entire mythical cycle surrounding Daedalus, like the *Aeneid*, is suffused with tales of children dying before their time: the 14 youths sent by Athens to Crete each year; the slaying of the Minotaur by Theseus in the halls of his father’s palace; even the return of Theseus, in which Aegeus kills himself when he thinks that his son is dead.

Virgil’s genius is (as so often) to add the theme of art to this nexus (*A.* 6.30–33):

tu quoque magnam
partem opere in tanto, sineret dolor, Icare, haberes.
bis conatus erat casus effingere in auro,
bis patriae cecidere manus.

You too would have a great share in so great a work, Icarus, if his pain allowed it. Twice he tried to fashion your fall in gold, twice his fatherly hands fell.

⁶⁵ On the ecphrasis, see especially Pöschl 1962: 149–50; Segal 1965: 643–45; Rutledge 1967; Rutledge 1972; Boyle 1972: 116–19; Fitzgerald 1984; Paschalis 1986; Putnam 1987; Bartsch 1998: 335–36. Numerous scholars have explored the parallels between the Daedalus and Aeneas stories; for useful summaries, see Sharrock 1994: 108–10; Casali 1995: 4n4.

⁶⁶ For an extensive discussion of metapoetic readings of the Daedalus myth (with a focus on Virgil, Horace, and Ovid), see Sharrock 1994: 87–195.

Daedalus's attempt to fashion his son's fall in gold is nothing less than an attempt to externalize his grief by transferring his son's death onto another medium, by looking at his death with the objective eye of an artist, and not of a grieving father. Instead of his son's fall being depicted by hammered gold, his fatherly hands do the imitating, falling in failure, and the grief must remain inside him.⁶⁷ The Daedalus ecphrasis is the most explicit way in which the father-son relationship is figured as the artist-artwork relationship in the poem, and it comes at an important transitional moment between Aeneas's travels and his adventures in Italy, just like the funeral games in Book 5.⁶⁸

The raising of these issues in Books 5 and 6 is thus important in two ways. First, we begin to see a transition in the *ante ora parentum* motif that mirrors the transition Aeneas is undergoing in the poem. In early instances of the motif, Aeneas is the child who risks dying in front of his parents. As the poem progresses, Aeneas is assured of survival, but along with survival comes the risk of becoming the parent that watches, like Daedalus, the death of the next generation. Second, Aeneas's transitional status situates him at a remove from both Troy and Rome. Here, too, the transition in the *ante ora parentum* motif nicely encapsulates his status. Whether Aeneas acts as a son of the previous generation or a father of the next, his status is always defined in relation to another; this ambiguity has encouraged, at the level of poetic interpretation, the treatment of Aeneas as a kind of cipher, representing, for various readers, various personae: Achilles, Hector, Odysseus, Augustus; Hellenistic hero, Stoic *proficiens*, Roman noble. The poem too hovers between different identities: it is Homeric without being Homer, it is about Augustus without being an *Augusteid*. Both Aeneas and the *Aeneid* engage in an act of doubled representation, representing not only their own interests but also the hopes of past and future generations.

⁶⁷ In a move typical of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid draws attention to Daedalus's hands at an earlier point in the story, as he puts the wings on his son (8.211: "et patriae tremuere manus"). Whereas in the *Aeneid* Daedalus's hands cannot create a representation of his winged son, in the *Metamorphoses*, his trembling hands have unmediated access to Icarus himself; moreover, by alluding to Virgil's *patriae manus* earlier in the narrative, Ovid is able to anticipate Daedalus's artistic failure, and "precede" Virgil himself: yet another instance of what Hinds 1998: 106 calls Ovid's "tendentious poetic appropriation of his predecessor—a kind of bid for teleological control. Rather than construct himself as an epigonal reader of the *Aeneid*, Ovid is constructing Virgil as a hesitant precursor of the *Metamorphoses*."

⁶⁸ As such, it is not insignificant that the description of the *lusus Troiae*, where these ideas of children as artworks are introduced, anticipates by simile the temple doors of Daedalus; the weaving movements of the riders is compared to the labyrinth, and the description of the labyrinth in Book 6 alludes to the original simile (5.591: "irremeabilis error"; 6.27: "inextricabilis error"). See Fitzgerald 1984; P. A. Miller 1995.

4. DEATH ANTE ORA PARENTUM IN ITALY

As demonstrated by Table 1, the *ante ora parentum* formula is predominantly a feature of the first half of the *Aeneid*; only one of its eight instances occurs in Books 7–12. But that is not to say that the motifs we have discussed thus far are absent from the second half of the poem. In fact most scholarly discussions of premature death in the poem have focused on the second half, in which the deaths of Nisus and Euryalus, Pallas, Lausus, Camilla, and Turnus dominate the last four books.⁶⁹ It has often been noted that the brutal conflicts in Latium pose a serious challenge to the ideological framework established in the first half of the poem.⁷⁰ In a way, this is true of death *ante ora parentum* as well. We have already seen how the recurrence of the formula conveys on the level of trope the transition that Aeneas undergoes in the first half of the poem from threatened son to worried father. Yet Virgil's contemporaries would surely have known that there was little risk of Ascanius dying in the poem, much less before his father's eyes. Virgil instead transfers the anxiety of survival onto other sons, such as Pallas and Lausus. In both cases, moreover, Aeneas plays the role of a *pater*, even in the case of his victim Lausus. In a sense, then, the disappearance of the *ante ora parentum* formula in the second half of the poem emphasizes that, despite all the tragedy of the war in Latium, Ascanius will emerge unscathed.

But I would argue that the disappearance of the motif also conveys a more ambiguous message to the reader. Despite the emphasis on the topos in Books 1–6, all the major death scenes in the second half (Nisus, Euryalus, Pallas, Lausus, Camilla, Turnus) take place *without* parental viewing, sometimes pointedly so: the exact inverse, in a way, of death *ante ora parentum*. Moreover, many of these deaths are followed by the reaction of a parent, but only after they learn about it at a remove; unlike Priam and Hecuba in the *Iliad* (and in *Aeneid* 2), the parents of Euryalus, Pallas, and Lausus do not watch their children die, but hear about it in a secondary way.⁷¹ One could say that as a result the evil is diminished. But I would argue that Virgil is conveying a dif-

⁶⁹ See, e.g., Block 1980; Conte 1986: 185–95; Fowler 1987; Petrini 1997: 21–86; Quint 2001.

⁷⁰ Thomas 2001: 39–40, for example, notes that Virgil avoided a public reading of the second half of the poem, “with its treatment of the Latin war, which so often resembles civil war, and which in so many ways tracks the progress of Augustus’s mythical ancestor from aggrieved to aggressor.”

⁷¹ Euryalus’s mother: A. 9.473–502; Mezentius: 10.841–56; Evander: 11.148–81. In all three instances Virgil emphasizes the parent’s viewing of his or her dead son, similar to the generic evocation of children placed on funeral pyres *ante ora parentum* at A. 6.308.

ferent point here. The pathos of these deaths is precisely that these children are unmoored from their parents, with no one to protect them.⁷² The anxiety of survival is thus projected onto the next generation at precisely the moment that the previous generation has no means to guard them, or to influence how they will be treated in the world at large. Virgil uses the topos of death *ante ora parentum* not only to convey an anxiety about succession, but also about the ultimate inability of parents to control the fate of their offspring.

Consider the death of Pallas, for example. The young Arcadian becomes yet another youth sacrificed in battle, yet another youth whose untimely death evokes sympathy in the reader and in the characters, and with whom we are encouraged to contrast the fortune of Ascanius, the youth who must survive. Given the importance of the scene and its connection to the major patterns of the poem, it is hardly surprising then that the *ante ora parentum* motif is evoked early on, in Turnus's brutal opening vaunt (A. 10.441–43):

“tempus desistere pugnae;
solus ego in Pallanta feror, soli mihi Pallas
debetur; cuperem ipse parens spectator adesset.”

Time to stop fighting. I go to meet Pallas alone. I alone deserve Pallas. I only wish his own father were here to watch.

Critics since Servius have noted not only the cruelty of Turnus's remark but also its connection to the motif of death *ante ora parentum* in the poem more broadly.⁷³ And yet it is undeniable that however much Turnus may want it, his murder of Pallas will *not* be an instance of death *ante ora parentum*. Why then introduce the topos just to draw attention to its inapplicability in this scene? A second reference to the motif in the scene has a similar effect: the conversation between Jupiter and Hercules (A. 10.464–73). After Pallas prays to Hercules for success, Hercules laments to Jupiter that he cannot help, at

⁷² Similarly, the only instance of the *ante ora parentum* formula in the second half of the poem emphasizes the helplessness of the dying Latins, shut out of the city (A. 11.887: “exclusi ante oculos lacrimantumque ora parentum”); their parents can only watch, not help. On the passage, see Rossi 2004: 108–15, where, among other things, we learn that once again the *ante ora parentum* topos is a Virgilian addition to a scene with clear Homeric precedents.

⁷³ Serv. Dan. ad A. 10.443: “aspera et amara dictum: multa enim mala graviora videntur si ante oculos nostros eveniant, quam si audiantur” (“A harsh and caustic thing to say, for many evils seem more painful when they happen before our eyes than when we are [only] told about them”); he goes on to cite a number of comparanda from the poem, including two that we have already considered (2.538–39 and 6.308). On the connections between Turnus's taunt and the death *ante ora parentum* topos, see also Barchiesi 1984: 37n47.

which point Jupiter comforts him by alluding to the glory of death in battle.⁷⁴ The scene is explicitly modeled on *Iliad* 16.431–61, when Hera convinces Zeus that he should not intervene in the death of his son Sarpedon; in his explication of the inevitability of human fate, Jupiter even makes explicit reference to the scene, showing that he has learned from his experience in the *Iliad* (*A* 10.469–71):

Troiae sub moenibus altis
tot gnati cecidere deum, quin occidit una
Sarpedon, mea progenies.

Beneath the high walls of Troy so many sons of the gods fell; indeed even Sarpedon, my own offspring, died together with them.

Jupiter's consoling words represent the third use of the phrase "Troiae sub moenibus altis" in the poem, after Aeneas's opening lament (which also mentioned Sarpedon) and Andromache's complaint at Buthrotum.⁷⁵ In all three cases, the phrase is spoken by characters contemplating their post-Trojan world, but here the speaker is the parent who has had to watch his child die at Troy, rather than the child who wishes he could have died there *ante ora parentum*. Such a transition is part of the larger move the poem makes, where as we have seen the anxiety shifts from the survival of the current generation to the survival of the next one. Moreover, once again a father-son relationship in the poem alludes to literary filiation, and specifically the relationship of Virgil and Homer. The lamenter in the Virgilian scene (Hercules) is the son of the lamenting figure in the Homeric model, another evocation of the *Aeneid's* "secondariness" vis-à-vis the Homeric model.⁷⁶

The scene, then, clearly evokes the broader metapoetic resonance of the death *ante ora parentum* motif. Here, however, Jupiter turns his eyes from the battlefield; does Hercules turn away as well? Virgil does not tell us, yet the scene surely draws added attention to Turnus's point that Pallas's death takes place *away* from the eyes of his father; Hercules is, after all, another paternal figure for the young warrior, and Virgil emphasizes his inability to intervene.⁷⁷ Moreover, there is an even more pointed absence here: that of

⁷⁴ On the scene, see Barchiesi 1984: 16–43; Harrison 1991: 191–93; Quint 2001.

⁷⁵ *A.* 3.321–33: "o felix una ante alias Priameia virgo, / hostilem ad tumulum Troiae sub moenibus altis / iussa mori . . ."

⁷⁶ Similar to the key role played by Achilles' son Neoptolemus in the "Iliadic" Book 2.

⁷⁷ Perhaps more than just a paternal figure; Harrison 1991: 192 notes a variant tradition that Pallas was the son of Hercules rather than Evander.

Aeneas himself, to whose charge Evander had entrusted his son.⁷⁸ Virgil has overdetermined the helplessness of Pallas by drawing attention to the absence of not only his father but also his divine and human paternal figures, Hercules and Aeneas.⁷⁹

Even the ecphrasis of the slaughtered bridegrooms on Pallas's baldric (A. 10.497–98) participates in this inversion of the *ante ora parentum* motif. Many scholars have catalogued the ways in which the Danaid ecphrasis is emblematic of the larger concerns of the *Aeneid* as a whole, and particularly its fixation on *mors immatura*.⁸⁰ The death of the bridegrooms takes place not before the eyes of their father, but just out of reach, just at the moment they were leaving the world of paternal protection; this too evokes the turn in the death *ante ora parentum* motif in the second half of the poem. And just as the bridegrooms (and Pallas himself) die without their father's witness, so too does Virgil complicate the viewing of the baldric itself by the two major characters who interact with it as the poem progresses. Neither Turnus nor Aeneas actually *looks* at the engraved story. In the case of Turnus, the narrator's description of his enjoyment encapsulates his failure to look at the baldric. It is the object itself that Turnus rejoices in (A. 10.500: "quo nunc Turnus ovat spolio gaudetque potitus"), and he takes pleasure not in viewing it, but in *possessing* it.⁸¹ The latter is particularly significant, since *gaudere* is used elsewhere of the enjoyment of an artwork, namely the shield of Aeneas.⁸² Turnus's failure to look at the murdered bridegrooms, to ponder

⁷⁸ For readings of Aeneas as Pallas's surrogate father, see Moskalew 1982: 179–83; and Petrini 1997: 71–75 (who rightly points out that part of the difficulty of understanding Aeneas's reaction in the poem's final scene is the *underdevelopment* of a paternal bond between Aeneas and Pallas).

⁷⁹ Turnus once again calls attention to the absence of Evander in his words over the dead body of his combatant, as he strips him of his baldric (A. 10.491–92): "Arcades, haec inquit memores mea dicta referte / Evandro: qualem meruit, Pallanta remitto." ("Arcadians,' he said, 'be mindful and report these words of mine to Evander: I am returning Pallas just as he deserved him.") The words recall Neoptolemus's instructions to Priam just before he kills him (A. 2.547–49): "referes ergo haec et nuntius ibis / Pelidae genitori. illi mea tristia facta / degeneremque Neoptoleum narrare memento." ("Well then—you will go as a messenger and *report these things* to my father Achilles. *Remember* to tell him about my sorry behavior and about degenerate Neoptolemus.")

⁸⁰ On the connection between the slaughtered bridegrooms on the baldric and the victims of the *Aeneid*, see Conte 1986: 185–95. For a useful survey of scholarly interpretations of the baldric, see Harrison 1998.

⁸¹ Harrison 1998: 228 argues that it is Turnus's *possession* of the baldric that is the real *nefas*; rules of war require him to dedicate the spoils as a trophy.

⁸² A. 8.729–31: "talia per clipeum Volcani, dona parentis, / miratur rerumque ignarus imagine gaudet / attollens umero famamque et fata nepotum." ("He *marvels* at these things

the symbolic significance of the *impressum nefas*, is indicative of his inability to see that his actions here will lead to his death at the end of the poem, a connection that the narrator makes explicit in the lines that follow Turnus's deed. Virgil flags Turnus's inattention to the baldric's message by an inversion of the vocabulary of artistic appreciation.

So too at the end of the poem: Aeneas rolls his eyes around and fixes on the baldric (just as he had rolled his eyes around the shield: A. 8.618), and only sees the baldric for its function within the plot, not for its engraved warning.⁸³ The dual function of the baldric that Aeneas fails to appreciate is perfectly encapsulated in the language used to identify it at the end of the poem; as Bartsch (1998: 334) has shown, the baldric serves as "*saevi monimenta doloris*" (A. 12.945) in two senses. The immediate meaning is that the baldric recalls the death of the young Pallas, and is therefore itself a monument of Aeneas's grief (we might call this the baldric's "external" story). But we cannot forget what is depicted on the baldric; the ecphrasis itself is a monument of another savage grief, the *impressum nefas* of the Danaids' crime (we might call this its "internal" story).⁸⁴ Aeneas ignores the latter *dolor* in favor of the former, and unlike his earlier misreading of the temple walls of Juno in Book 1, where he read a victory monument as a lament for the defeated, here he fails to appreciate the possible sympathetic reaction to unmarried youth such as Pallas, Lausus, and now Turnus himself. For by killing Turnus, Aeneas may avenge his young friend, but he also turns him into another youth whose father cannot keep him from dying young. In this way, as Barchiesi has shown, the evocation of both Daunus and Anchises in the final supplication connects the end of the poem to the topos of death *ante ora parentum*.⁸⁵ Moreover, by casting

all over Vulcan's shield, the gifts of his mother; and, having no knowledge of the subject matter, he *enjoys* the image, lifting on his shoulder the fame and fates of his descendants"). Breed 2000: 334–37 argues that Virgil uses both *mirari* and *gaudere* to evoke Hellenistic literary criticism. Recall too the metapoetic connotations of the Trojan parents' enjoyment of their children's faces in the *lusus Troiae* (A. 5.575–76).

⁸³ As Spence 1991: 11–12 points out: "There are, in short, not one but two subtexts at work here: the presence of Pallas, invoked specifically by Aeneas and represented by the sword belt, and the actual scene depicted on the sword belt."

⁸⁴ The distinction is Spence's (1991: 11–12) who calls the external story of the baldric its "metonymic function" and the internal story its "metaphoric" function.

⁸⁵ Barchiesi 1984: 37n47; Smith 2005: 171 also notes the connection. In a sense, Turnus is trying to force Aeneas to think of his father *before* he kills his enemy; in two earlier instances, the thought of Anchises entered Aeneas's mind *after* he witnessed the death: "subiit cari genitoris imago" (2.560, the death of Priam); "et mentem patriae subiit pietatis imago" (10.824, the death of Lausus).

Aeneas's choice at the end of the poem as a choice of whether or not to take pity on Turnus's father, Virgil makes the end of his poem the antithesis of the closural moment of the *Iliad*, when Achilles relents because he sees Priam and thinks of Peleus. Just as Aeneas rejects the appeal to his father, so too Virgil rejects his (paternal) Homeric model for closure.

Here, as his poem concludes, Virgil calls attention to art's inability to control its reception in the real world. Virgil, the author of this *saevi monumentum doloris*, cannot control what happens to his monument, or how it will be received by others, just as Clonus, the artist of the baldric, cannot predict Turnus's and Aeneas's failure to appreciate the full message of the savage grief depicted thereon.⁸⁶ Moreover, the *Aeneid*, like the baldric, is a monument to both external and internal pain, and thus liable to similar misreadings; the *Aeneid* depicts a great deal of savage grief within the poem (Dido, Aeneas, Pallas, Lausus, and now Turnus too), but it also participates in the culture of "savage pain" external to the poem itself: the pain of decades of civil war, of Antony, Cleopatra, Augustus, and Rome herself. This, I think, is the final metapoetic resonance of the *ante ora parentum* motif in the *Aeneid*. The shift in the second half of the poem, in which the major characters die just out of their parents' field of vision, finds its artistic analog not only in the baldric but also in the final scene as a whole; just as Clonus is absent, so too is Homer's absence highlighted by Virgil, and Anchises' absence highlighted by Aeneas, whose wavering exposes the false dichotomy behind his father's advice about warring down the proud and sparing the defeated (*A.* 6.853). The end of the poem symbolizes the resurgence of art unmoored from its creator, and from concrete acts of viewing, just as Turnus and Aeneas act at a remove from the eyes of their fathers.

5. CONCLUSION

Two centuries after the reign of Augustus, the historian Cassius Dio imagines the emperor angrily rebuking his citizens for their failure to procreate (56.9.2–3):

ἢ πῶς μὲν ἂν καλῶς ἄρχοιμι ὑμῶν, ἂν ἐλάττους ὑμᾶς ἀεὶ γιγνομένους ὀρών
ἀνέχωμαι; πῶς δ' ἂν ἔτι πατήρ ὑμῶν ὀρθῶς ὀνομαζοίμην, ἂν μὴ καὶ παῖδας
τρέφῃτε; ὥστ' εἴπερ ὄντως τὰ τε ἄλλα ἀγαπᾶτέ με, καὶ ταύτην μοι τήν

⁸⁶ As Bartsch 1998: 335 points out. Considering the likelihood that the metaphorical temple in the proem of *Georgics* 3 represents the *Aeneid*, and that the temple decorations in *A.* 1 and 6 are also symbolic of the poem, it is somewhat surprising that the *monimentum* that stands in for the *Aeneid* in the end turns out to be far less grand, and not fully appreciated by the characters in the poem itself.

προσηγορίαν οὐχ ὡς κολακεύοντες ἀλλ' ὡς τιμῶντες ἐδώκατε, ἐπιθυμήσατε
καὶ ἄνδρες καὶ πατέρες γενέσθαι, ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ τῆς ἐπωνυμίας ταύτης
μεταλάβητε καὶ ἐμὲ φερώνυμον αὐτῆς ποιήσητε.

How could I rule you well if I am content to see you always growing fewer?
How could I still accurately be called your father if you don't also rear chil-
dren? So if you truly love me with respect to everything else, and if you have
given me this name not to flatter me but to honor me, then desire to become
both men and fathers, so that you yourselves may share this title and make me
deserving of it.

The anxieties about fatherhood and generational continuity in the *Aeneid* map rather well onto the Augustan age, where the future *pater patriae* was already by 19 B.C.E. concerned about the survival of the next generation, and of his new baby the empire as well (Hardie 1993a: 92–93). As Cassius Dio suggests, the new emperor saw his citizens as both his subjects and his children. But if Augustus collapses the distinction between the imperial and the paternal gaze, then what does it mean for Virgil to draw such attention to the motif of a father watching his son die? The tidy solution—that this is another way of calling into question the imperial project by drawing attention to its costs—will not suffice, for as David Lee Miller has shown so well, stories of sons dying in front of their fathers recur in most patriarchies, for the “rule of fathers requires such offerings” (D. L. Miller 2003: 1–2).⁸⁷ In patriarchal succession, the son is the father's mirror *and* substitute, his immortality *and* his ruin. The usual strategy is to call attention only to the first half of these pairs. Again, in the words of Cassius Dio's Augustus (56.3.4):

πῶς δ' οὐχ ἡδὺ ἀνελέσθαι τέκνον ἐξ ἀμφοῖν συμπεφυκὸς καὶ θρέψαι καὶ
παιδεῦσαι, εἰκόνα μὲν τοῦ σώματος εἰκόνα δὲ καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς, ὥστε ἐν ἐκείνῳ
αὐξηθέντι ἕτερον αὐτὸν γενέσθαι;

How is it not pleasing to accept a child that is the union of two, to nourish and educate it, an image of your body and an image of your soul, so that in it as it grows a second self comes into being?

⁸⁷ Cf. 59n6: “The pathos of filial sacrifice is integral . . . to the social structures of Roman patriarchy and the ideology that sustained them.” Still, as Miller himself notes (90), the *Aeneid*'s complexity argues against a simple advocacy of that ideology: “Virgil's poem, obsessed with the pathetic loveliness of its dying boys, seems unable to detach itself from this structure of emotion. Yet it manages to objectify and even to critique the structure, and in this way builds into itself a distance which *might* become the first step toward realizing an alternative.”

Pleasing indeed, and we have already seen in our discussion of the *lusus Troiae* the similarities of mimesis and genealogical likeness. Children, however, are artworks that eventually grow to replace the parents they represent; it may be pleasing to see a “second self” grow before your very eyes, but logic dictates there can only be one self. Casting dying warriors as dying sons, in other words, draws attention to the complexities of patriarchy itself, and thus may simply act as a poignant reminder of its necessary costs.

Confronting the paradoxes of patriarchy latent in the *ante ora parentum* motif also brings us face to face with another issue that has received short shrift in this paper: gender. If at times I have elided the difference between *parens* and *pater*, it is because the *Aeneid* is plainly more interested in fatherhood than parenthood.⁸⁸ *Parens* is a masculine word in Latin because mothers give birth, but fathers turn boys into replicas of themselves, through education and an introduction to public life.⁸⁹ The exclusion of the feminine is part of the claim to patriarchal control of all cultural production in antiquity, whether poetry or politics. It is also relevant to the Augustan moment, as A. M. Keith (2000: 81) has demonstrated: “The male conquest of the militant female in the *Aeneid* reflects a potent enabling fiction of the early Augustan regime, in which Roman Order is re-established externally through the defeat of Cleopatra and internally through the re-domestication of Roman women.” The turn to monarchy, and the concomitant creation of an imperial family, probably made a renewed emphasis on fatherhood inevitable, but there is of course the particular irony of Augustus’s personal situation: he may turn all his male citizens into his metaphorical sons, but he himself has no biological sons, as was surely obvious to Virgil as he wrote his poem. Servius’s breezy summary of Virgil’s aims in writing the *Aeneid* captures it nicely (*Praef.*):

intentio Vergilii haec est, Homerum imitari et Augustum laudare a parentibus;
namque est filius Atiae, quae nata est de Iulia, sorore Caesaris, Iulius autem

⁸⁸ Not entirely, of course: on the difference between male and female responses to a child’s death in the poem, see Nugent 1999: 254–60. Many scholars have noticed that Aeneas seems to pay more attention to Anchises than he does to Venus (see, e.g., Farrell 1999; Oliensis 2001). It is tempting to see in this “selective piety” an evocation of a similar move by Augustus, who largely ignores *both* his biological parents in favor of his metaphorical father, Caesar. Or indeed, a sly self-reference by Virgil himself, whose foregrounding of his two *patres* Homer and Ennius sometimes conceals the extent of his debts to Apollonius, Callimachus, Catullus, Lucretius, and so on (his “uncles”?).

⁸⁹ On the gender of *parens*, see Farrell 2001: 62: “In this usage, masculine achievements in the social sphere are implicitly equated with women’s ability to give birth.” Cf. Nugent 1992: 266 on the *lusus Troiae*: “as is typical of initiation rites, the males, independently of the females, in a sense ‘give birth to’ the next generation.”

Caesar ab Iulo Aeneae originem ducit, ut confirmat ipse Vergilius a “magno demissum nomen Iulo.”

Virgil's intention is to imitate Homer and to praise Augustus by his parents. For he is the son of Atia, who is the daughter of Julia, Caesar's sister, and Julius Caesar draws his descent from Aeneas's Iulus, as Virgil himself confirms (*A.* 1.288): “his name descended from great Iulus.”

Servius neatly captures how Virgil balances his poem between past, present, and future, between myth and history, between Homer and Augustus. But in the sentence immediately following we see that Augustus too has his own balancing act. For all the importance of patrilineal succession in Rome, and all the emphasis on fatherhood by the *pater patriae* himself, Augustus's connection to past and future is through women: he is descended from Aeneas through Atia and Julia, and his own heirs (potential or otherwise) are born from female relatives (the children of Octavia and Julia) and eventually from no relative at all (his wife Livia). In other words, the way in which patriarchy depends upon the role of women, while at the same time denying any room for rule by women, is clear enough by Augustus's own self-fashioning and by his own family history.⁹⁰ So too with Aeneas: we have already seen how his insistence on the importance of Anchises comes at the cost of his mother Venus; we might also note that the poem itself draws more attention to Ascanius (progenitor of the Iulii) even though Rome itself descends *not* from Iulus but from the forthcoming Silvius Aeneas, born from the very silent Lavinia.⁹¹ Whether one wants to see all this as a sly commentary on Augustus's patriarchal self-fashioning or an unacknowledged embrace of it probably depends upon one's own position in regard to the poem—and appropriately so.

As a way out of this impasse, we might appeal to the most salient connection between the metapoetic reading of death *ante ora parentum* and the *Aeneid*: the story that Virgil on his deathbed commanded the destruction of his child, his own *imperium sine fine*.⁹² The story itself occupies a paradoxical position in relation to the *Aeneid*. Without the poem, the story of

⁹⁰ On the role of women in the Julio-Claudian succession, see Corbier 1995. On the *Aeneid*'s deployment of “patriarchal strategies of containment” in the labyrinthine imagery of Books 5 and 6, see P. A. Miller 1995 (quote at 240).

⁹¹ On Virgil's careful handling of this issue, see O'Hara 1990: 144–47.

⁹² For the story, see Donat. *Vit. Verg.* 39. Hexter 1999: 64 aptly compares the poem's escape from the fire to Aeneas's rescue of his son and father from the flames of Troy. Another relevant detail from the biographers is Virgil's alleged comparison of his production of the *Aeneid* to a bear giving birth to bearcubs and licking them into shape (Donat. *Vit. Verg.* 22).

Virgil's dying wish cannot exist, for there is nothing to burn. Yet the story at the same time inserts itself as a "prequel" to our reading of the poem, as the necessary precondition of its publication. Much like the play of time both in the poem and in the Augustan age: Virgil's *Aeneid* asserts itself as the prequel of empire, while the first emperor figures all of Roman history as a prequel to his rule. This too is the logic of parenthood: parents beget children, yet parents are not parents without the existence of a child. And regardless of the historicity of the story, we may well wonder whether the poem itself would have engendered the creation of such a myth. What better way to testify to the power of poetry to survive, and the inability of parents to guide the fate of their children, than to promote such a tale? In the end poetry surpasses all attempts to control it, destroy it, or direct its reading. It even outlives man, that "dream of a shadow."⁹³ Even its attempt to remain ambiguous or to be misread is beyond the scope of its author.

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⁹³ Pindar *Pyth.* 8.95–96 (σκιᾶς ὄναρ ἄνθρωπος). Pindar is just one of many antecedents of the Virgilian contemplation of the relationship between poetic immortality and the life cycle of humans, and I do not think it a coincidence that *Aeneid* 6 ends with a meditation on dreams and *Aeneid* 12 with the word *umbras*. But whereas Pindar's "gleam from Zeus" (αἴγλα δίοσδοτος) leads the reader of *Pythian* 8 out of the darkness towards a stirring conclusion, Virgil offers no such obvious escape from the shadows.

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