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A Landscape of Control? Aeneid 8 and Environmental Agency

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Résumé :

Dans cet article, je m'inspire des travaux du champ de l'écocritique pour examiner comment *Énéide* 8 soulève des questions sur l'organisation de l'environnement. Trois groupes de passages mettent en évidence la relation des personnages avec le monde qu'ils habitent : la défaite d'Hercule contre Cacus ; deux présages naturels livrés à Énée ; et la visite de Pallantée par Évandre. Dans chacun de ces cas, l'engagement des humains dans leur environnement montre comment ils tentent de le contrôler à la fois physiquement et mentalement. Ici, je soutiens qu'Énéide 8 met simultanément en évidence ces aspirations de maîtrise tout en révélant la futilité de telles tentatives. Alors même que les personnages de l'Énéide prennent le contrôle du paysage et en tirent des avantages, les perspectives changeantes du récit et de la focalisation temporelle de l'épopée soulignent que ce contrôle n'est que temporaire et a souvent un prix.

1. Introduction

The beginning of *Aeneid* 8 Unds the epicly protagonist worried and restless. Aeneas has at last reached Î Italyly Üeeing shores (*Italiae fugientis* [...] oras, *Aen.* 661), but he Unds that war awaits him there¹. In a book where the poemly hero speaks with the god of the Tiber River, visits the future site of Rome, and sees the geographical reach of his descendants' empire emblazoned on a divinely-made shield, Vergil associates Aeneas Npreparations for battle with questions of environmental agency:

^{1.} The Latin text in this article is from MyNORS 1989, all translations are my own. *Vita Latina 201 (2021)*, *p. 142-163.*

talia per Latium. quae Laomedontius heros cuncta uidens magno curarum fluctuat aestu, atque animum nunc huc celerem nunc diuidit illuc in partisque rapit uarias perque omnia uersat, sicut aquae tremulum labris ubi lumen aenis sole repercussum aut radiantis imagine lunae omnia peruolitat late loca, iamque sub auras erigitur summique ferit laquearia tecti. (Verg, Aen. 8.18-25)

Such were the affairs in Latium Seeing all these things the Laomedontian hero wavers in a great surge of worries, and he moves his quick mind now here, now there, and he trains it on different matters and turns through everything just as when darting light from the sun or the image of the shining moon, reflected in the water of a bronze basin, futs all about and is raised up to the breezes and strikes the ceiling of a high house.

Emphasized by its position as the bookÑ Úrst simile², lines 22-5 illustrate the rapid nature of Aeneas' thoughts. By offering such an extensive description of the hero's mental processes, the comparison emphasizes Aeneas' efforts to control the situation in Latium even as it hints that such control might be impossible. The heroÑ thoughts are likened to the trembling reÚection of the light of the moon or sun in a bronze basin³, a comparison that blurs the boundaries between humans and nature⁴. This blurring effect is heightened by The combination of these effects associates AeneasÑmission with issues of environmental control and foregrounds humansÑrelationship with the natural world as a signiúcant theme in *Aeneid* 8.

Aeneid 8 sees Aeneas journeying through and engaging with territories that are as unfamiliar to him as they are central to his mission and RomeÑ empire. and here I examine how this book raises questions about human control and the environment. Beginning with the prophecy of the god of the Tiber River and ending with a description of the rivers emblazoned on the herols shield. Aeneid 8 foregrounds the role the environment plays in Aeneas' efforts to understand the land where he is fated to found a city. As R. Armstrong notes in a recent monograph on plants in Vergil, "the simultaneous rift and overlap between the mysterious wild and the structures of civilization [Å] become such a theme in this bookl⁶. Here, I explore these interactions between humans and the natural world with a particular focus on agency. Three groups of passages in Aeneid 8 highlight the charactersÑrelationship with the world they inhabit: Hercules Ndefeat of Cacus two natural omens delivered to Aeneas and Evander N tour of Pallanteum. In each of these instances, humans. Nengagement with their environment shows how they attempt to control it both physically and mentally. I argue that *Aeneid* 8 simultaneously highlights these aspirations of mastery while also revealing their futility. even as the Aeneid's characters gain control over and derive beneuts from the landscape, the shifting perspectives of its narrative and temporal focus show how this dominion is only temporary and often comes with a price.

To explore such questions of environmental control, I draw on work in ecocriticism that elucidates how humans imagine, interact with, and attempt to control their environment. A main area of focus in this Úeld is how agency

Hercules' victory reify the Arcadians' hopes of environmental control. Next. I evaluate how these hopes play out when characters interpret omens from the natural world, Úrst when the river god Tiberinus visits Aeneas and later when celestial omens signify the Trojan S divine weapons are ready. Through bringing in ideas of how landscapes I represent [Å] not only our relationship with place, but also the problematic nature of that relationshipl⁹. I highlight how the Trojans view the world as something they can control, even as the narrative of *Aeneid* 8 underscores the costs of these aspirations. The article's Unal section analyzes how humans have interacted with the environment over time at the site of Rome. The idea of niche construction considers how a creature modiles its environment according to its beliefs and needs ¹⁰, and, as past, present, and future are joined in Evander's tour of Pallanteum, this concept elucidates the different sorts of relationships that occur between humans and the environment. I argue that these temporal interlacings bring together strong currents of both human and nonhuman agency. Lastly, in the article's conclusion, I explore what these characters Nengagements with the environment signify in regards to Jupiter N promise of Î empire without endl (*imperium sine* fine, Aen. 1.279) and to overall interpretations of the Aeneid.

2. Hercules' Conquest: Mythical Aspirations of Agency

When Aeneas arrives at Evander's city, the Arcadians are in the midst of a religious ritual that honors Hercules¹¹. Evander tells the Trojans "Since you have come here as friends, celebrate these annual rites which it is sinful to delay! (sacra haec, quando huc uenistis amici, / annua, quae differe nefas, celebrate, Aen. 8 172-3). With this invitation, the Trojans join the Arcadians in their commemoration of HerculesÑvictory over Cacus, a battle where the environment plays a signiúcant role and the line between human and nonhuman is blurred. In an article that considers the link between myths and environmental wisdom, E. Eidinow proposes that Î conscious narratives that are told and retold! are Î crucially interrelated with ecological wisdom!¹². Here I leverage this idea to consider the ecological wisdom embedded in the ArcadiansÑstory of HerculesÑ destruction of Cacus¹³. The tale that Evander tells is rich with themes of

^{9.} CASEY 2011: 21.

^{10.} See MARAN (2064) HEONNIG SQUERS AND ASSOCIATED AND A CONTRACT AND A CONTRACT

environmental control and disorder. It couples a fear of harm at the hand of nonhuman actors with a desire to celebrate human control over the natural world. Through inviting the Trojans to share in this ritual, Evander asks them to join in his society's aspirations of environmental mastery.

The early part of Evander's story highlights the fear that a nonhuman actor may harm the community and remain outside of its control. Prior to Hercules' arrival, Cacus terrorized the Arcadians:

'hic spelunca fuit uasto summota recessu, semihominis Caci facies quam dira tenebat solis inaccessam radiis; semperque recenti caede tepebat humus, foribusque adfixa superbis ora uirum tristi pendebant pallida tabo. huic monstro Volcanus erat pater'. (Verg., Aen. 8.193-8)

Defere there was a cave, extending far back in its depth, which, impervious to the rays of the sun, the dreadful appearance of the half-human Cacus used to occupy; the ground was always warm with fresh slaughter; and Úxed to his haughty door posts, the heads of men were hanging pallid with woeful gore. This monstering father was Vulcan'.

The nouns that frame CacusÑintroduction, Î half-humanï (*semihominis*) and Î monsterï (*monstro*), as well as the periphrasis Î the appearance of Cacusï (*Caci facies*)¹⁴, emphasize his nonhuman appearance, which seems all the more terrifying for its closeness to human form¹⁵. They envelop a grisly depiction of the violence he metes out on the Arcadians. The details of this brutality reveal Evanderisi perception of how CacusÑhonhuman characteristics threaten to dehumanize the Arcadians. While Cacus transforms his large and gloomy cave into a built environment with the addition of doors, here he displays the remains of those he has killed. By separating their heads from their bodies and leaving them to rot, Cacus Monhuman agency strips away the human characteristics of the dead

The question of who exerts environmental control stands at the center of HerculesÑbattle with Cacus At Úrst, Cacus seizes mental and physical dominion over the environment: stealing eight of Hercules' cattle, he drags the beasts backwards to his cave, so that their tracksÑdirection confuses their owner. This environmental trickery is undone when Î from under the great cave one of the captive cows responded and moced back and betrayed CacusÑopeï (*reddidit*

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⁽¹⁹⁷⁵ xXII) and GRANSDEN (1976 107-8). CASALI 2020 analyzes some of the changes in the Cacus/Hercules story from the perspective of Evander and his presentation of the history of this site.

^{14.} EDEN (1975: ad loc.).

^{15.} *Cf.* also the use of *semiferi* to describe Cacus at 8.267, which, as FRATANTUONO & SMITH (2018 *ad* 194) note, creates a ring composition. PUTNAM (1965: 131) remarks how Î Cacus seems neither wholly man nor wholly beast!

una boum uocem uastoque sub antro / mugiit et Caci spem custodita fefellit, Aen. 8217-8). Correctly reading this natural sign, Hercules realizes that his cattle have been stolen. With his mental control of the environment reestablished, Hercules moves toward regaining physical agency¹⁶. After Cacus bars the door to his cave, Hercules shoves aside the stone that forms the roof of this abode. The result is felt throughout the surroundings: Î Highest heaven thunders with its blow the riverÑ banks spring back, and its terriUed water Ûows backwardsl (*impulsu quo maximus intonat aether, / dissultant ripae refluitque exterritus amnis, Aen.* 8239-40)¹⁷. Facing a foe who threatens his control over his cattle and hides himself within an environment fashioned to his own purposes. Hercules shatters the natural worldÑ boundaries Not only does the Tiber Ûow backward, but sunlight streams into the darkest depths of CacusÑcave, seeming to reach the underworld itself. HerculesÑtransgression of these limits paradoxically allows him to regain control over the environment ¹⁸. After Hercules kills Cacus and departs, the nonhuman threat to Evander and his city is no more.

Considered from the perspective E. Eidinow proposes, the ArcadiansÑ story of HerculesÑvictory reveals their ecological beliefs. In doing so, it shows a fear of the loss of human agency in the face of powerful nonhuman actors Coupled with his dismemberment of human bodies, CacusÑtattle rustling strips humans of their control over the environment. In order to kill Cacus, Hercules enacts his own environmental transgressions when he removes the caveÑ boundaries and causes the Tiber to Ûow backward, but these violations are only

the din, and the hills echo back^Ï (*consonat omne nemus strepitu collesque resultant, Aen.* 8305). P. Hardie notes how this verse shows ^Ĩ a sympathetic reaction on the part of nature itself^I and ^Ĩ a harmonious counterpart^I to the earlier transgression of natural boundaries ²⁰, and this harmony re^Cects the Arcadians and Trojans' beliefs about human control over nature embodied by this mythical story.

3. Controlling the Landscape: Omens and Interpretations

EvanderÑrendition of this myth establishes howhumans aspire to mental and physical mastery of the environment, and when the Arcadian king shares this story with the Trojans he invites them to subscribe to these same beliefs. Here, I consider two passages where the environment seems to offer Aeneas control over both itself and the situation at hand. Since these passages concern omens that appear to Aeneas in the environment, it is productive to turn to work in ecccriticism that explores howhumans conceive of the world surrounding them In an essay on landscape, E. Casey argues that humansÑperception of the world is as much about their relationship with place as it is about the challenges of that relationship: "The problem of landscape im



While a comparison of TiberinusÑpromises with the epiclid depiction of JunoÑ anger illustrates how the landscape simultaneously misleads and cheers Aeneas, the TrojansÑrip up the Tiber showcases their control over nature even as it calls into question the cost of that control. With Tiberinus having promised aid, the Trojans voyage to Pallanteum:

Thybris ea fluuium, quam longa est, nocte tumentem

sacriÚced for many³⁵. These two allusions to PalinurusÑdeath hint that AeneasÑ purportedly painless trip up the Tiber will also result in suffering³⁸. With only the poemÑ audience aware of these verbal echoes, it highlights how incomplete the characters' interpretation of the landscape may be.

The omen announcing the delivery of Aeneas Nnew arms further proble matizes how humans interpret the landscape. While the undercurrents of the passages involving the Tiber were visible only to the epicly audience, this celestial augury prompts the poem's characters to experience different emotional reactions. As the Trojans prepare to leave Pallanteum, although Evander promises martial assistance, Aeneas' response is not enthusiastic:

uix ea fatus erat, defixique ora tenebant Aeneas Anchisiades et fidus Achates, multaque dura suo tristi cum corde putabant, ni signum caelo Cytherea dedisset aperto. (Verg, Aen. 8520-3)

Scarcely had Evander spoken these things and Aeneas, Anchises' son, and faithful Achates were holding their faces downcast, and they were thinking over many harsh things with their gloomy heart, if Venus had not given a sign in a cloudless sky.

Aeneas and Achates' reaction to Evander's speech is one of gloom. While the cause of their dismay is opaque ³⁷, the striking syntax of line 523 utterly erases this mood. ³⁸ The shift from the imperfect indicative in 520 and 522 to the pluperfect subjunctive in 523 moves the narrative's focus from the hero's worry to Venusi power to shift reality. Soon, all focus on the clear sky, where lightning ûshes, thunder sounds, horns blare, and weapons appear. After this omen, the narrative returns to the characters: "The others fell silent in their hearts, but the Trojan hero recognized the sound and the promises of his divine parenti (*obstipuere animis aetipuer(in their hea IIfOtearm[an their hea IIfoi (p) un* AARON M. SEIDER

landscape represents both humans $\rm \tilde{N}$ relationship with place as well as $\rm \hat{I}$ the problematic nature of that relationship $\rm ^{45},$ and Aeneas ignores the implications

4. Natural Time at The Site of Rome

While Aeneas' shield pushes the epic's geographic limits, the hero's tour of Pallanteum extends the *Aeneid*'s temporal explorations ⁵⁰. In this section of the article, I consider the depiction of the site of Rome from the perspective of niche construction. This ecocritical term focuses on how human beings in Luence and are in Luenced by the environments in which they live⁵¹. J. D. Hughes writes that the human species is part of a community of life in which it has evolved \hat{I} by competing against, cooperating with, imitating using and being used by other species \hat{I}^{52} . Chr. Schliephake builds on this concept by emphasizing how \hat{I} the human niche within the ecosystem [Å] was an integral part of a material network withn \hat{I} o mm

Roman power adumbrated in the epicit opening verses As L. M Fratantuono & K. A. Smith remark, lines 98-9 recall the *Aeneid*'s early emphasis both on "the walls of high Romel" (*altae moenia Romae, Aen.* 1.7) and on \hat{I} what a great task

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tum siluam saxumque tremebant, Aen. 8349-50). Here the narrator recognizes the force of the natural world, which does not leave its human inhabitants entirely comfortable.

Evanderíší next speech to Aeneas elaborates on this religious ave and

A last passage that interlaces these different times conUrms these questions As Evander and Aeneas end their conversation, Î they were watching herds of cattle mooing here and there both in the Roman Forum and in the chic Carinael (passimque armenta uidebant / Romanoque foro et lautis mugire Carinis, Aen. 83601). Here the temporal distance between Rome and Pallanteum is collapsed; no temporal adverbs occur, such as are seen with Înowl (*nunc*, Aen. 8347) and Îoncel (*olim*, Aen. 8.348) in the description of the CapitolineÑ different states No longer do EvanderÑ modest huts give way to Romeñ golden houses, but Pallanteumñ cattle inhabit contemporary Roman spaces As P. T. Eden (ad 361) points out, this is the sole time the adjective I chicl (*lautus*) appears in Vergilly works, and this word draws attention to the differences between Evander N and Vergil N times, even as these verses place the Arcadian king's cattle in the midst of Augustus' city. Indeed, S. Mack notes that Î Vergil has blended EvanderÑi present and the Roman present to create a sense image which, by its very incongruity, encourages his audience to apprehend how intricately the Roman past is contained in the Roman present and vice versa. The experience of Dimeñas been incorporated in a landscapel⁶⁶. This collapse of time hints at how even Rome is subject to nonhuman forces and nonhuman agency, and that this civilization too may one day have cattle grazing at its center.

5. Conclusion: Imperium Sine Fine?

Using ideas and perspectives from the Úeld of ecocriticism, this article argues that humans Nelationship with the environment is a central theme of *Aeneid* 8. SpeciÚcally, I claim that this book emphasizes its charactersÑefforts to control the environment, only to show that while humans may sometimes succeed in their aspirations for mental and physical dominance, these achievements are neither permanent nor without loss First, the article builds on E. Eidinow N work on mythology and nature to elucidate how the Arcadians Nstory of Hercules and Cacus invites the Trojans to share their hopes for environmental mastery. Against this backdrop, I then investigate two clusters of scenes; TiberinusÑ prophecy and VenusÑomens; and AeneasÑvisit to the future site of Rome. In my analysis of the two natural portents, I use E. S. Casey/Ñideas of landscape to explore how the Aeneid S characters imagine their relationship with the environment: Aeneas believes in his interpretation of these signs in the landscape, even as the poem's narrator undermines this assumption and opens up other perspectives on the costs of his actions. Lastly, my reading of this book N treatment of the future site of Rome turns to the idea of niche construction to study the infuences that exist between humans and the environments they inhabit. Here, I Und that agency is shared by humans and nonhumans alike, and neither achieves lasting dominance.

^{66.} Mack 1978 54

In conclusion, I would like to brie^①y explore the repercussions of these arguments in regards both to a speci^①c prophecy in *Aeneid* 1 and to overall interpretations of the epic First, it is worthwhile to ponder how this view of human aspirations for environmental control engages with Jupiter[®] promise in *Aeneid*

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