Trees and Family Trees in the Aeneid

Tree-chopping in the *Aeneid* has long been seen as a disturbingly violent symbol of the Trojans’ colonization of Italy. The paper proposes a new reading of the poem which sees Aeneas as progressive extirpator not just of foreign rivals but also of his own Trojan relatives. Although the Romans had no family “trees” as such, their genealogical *stemmata* (“garlands”) had “branches” (*rami*) and “stock” (*stirps*), and their vocabulary of family relationships takes many of its metaphors from planting, adoption, and uprooting, while plant life is often described in human metaphors. Imperial historians use the growth and collapse of trees to mark the rise and fall of dynasties; natural historians like Columella and Pliny use metaphors of adoption, abortion, and adultery to characterize the perversions of agriculture and horticulture. It is thus no coincidence that Aeneas’ encounters with Hector, Priam, Deiphobus, and others often take place against a background of real or metaphorical trees (tree similes, headless or mutilated human trunks, ancient trees and woods). These encourage us to see an element of dynastic encroachment in scenes that look pious and peaceable but confirm Aeneas’ ascendancy and claim to Trojan succession. The Polydorus episode in particular can be read not just as a grotesque interlude but as a nightmare about endlessly reproducing heirs; one loose strand from Priam’s house is allowed to remain, while Virgil deals imperfectly with the problem of Aeneas’ own successors. The paper ends by re-examining Virgil’s account of grafting in *Georgics* 2 and arguing that it is viewed positively, perhaps in order to cast Augustus’ adoption of heirs as a miracle solution.

“It was no more than a piece of youthful bravado, but it was one of those acorns from which great oaks are destined to grow. Even then, I went so far as to examine the family tree and prune it to just the living members.”

*Kind Hearts and Coronets*

According to Rome’s historians, AD 68 was an *annus horribilis* in the life cycle of the city’s trees. In Nero’s last days, a fine laurel grove planted decades ago by
the empress Livia suddenly withered from the root up and died. A cypress tree in the precinct of Vulcan, “as old as the city itself,” fell down from neglect (*prolapsa atque neglecta*). Rare lotus-trees pointed out, “still evergreen and youthful,” to the young Pliny had had their end already “hastened” (*adcelerasset*) by the Great Fire. More remarkable still (“the most marvelous of all portents I have ever heard,” Pliny writes), outside Rome, in the territory of the Marrucini, an olive grove belonging to an equestrian called Vettius Marcellus was seen to march across the public highway, while a cornfield on the other side marched back to take its place. Meanwhile, an old prophecy was close to fruition. Around sixty years earlier, on the Flavian family’s *suburbanum*, each time T. Flavius Sabinus’ wife was delivered of a child, a tree put out strange new branches: the first was skinny and quick to wither (indeed, this daughter lived only a year), the second was strong and tall, while the third grew into “the image of a tree,” which portended that he would become a Caesar. He was the future emperor Vespasian.

This is unlikely to be an accurate record of the plant life of the city. Trees crowd the pages of imperial history and natural history for another reason: their more-than-human lifespan provides a long-standing metaphor for the beginnings and ends of dynasties. Livia’s trees last for the exact duration of the Julio-Claudian house; Nero finishes off that house by abusing the traditions of his ancestors; Vespasian’s mother’s dream portends the arrival of the Flavians in 69 after a year of false starts. Why did the olive trees and the cornfield cross the road? Because they were changing guard at Nero’s palace. Romulus’ Ruminal fig tree, inserted by Tacitus at the end of *Ann.* 13, a tree that perversely chose Nero’s decline as the moment to take on a new lease of life, has to be seen as an ironic exception, a riposte to an otherwise consistent depiction of the rise and fall of dynasties or political systems through the flourishing or withering of trees.

1. Dio 63.29.3; cf. 48.52.3–4; Suet. *Galba* 1: *ergo nouissimo Neronis anno et silua omnis exaruit radicitus.* The legend was that Livia had originally planted a twig carried by a white hen which fell into her lap, signifying that she would foster imperial power. It took root, grew into a grove (Suet. *Aug.* 43.1: *Caesarium nemus*; *Galba* 1: *tale uero lauretum*; Pliny *HN* 15.136–37: *mireque silua prouenit*) and was added to by subsequent Caesars from the laurels carried at their triumphs, but each emperor’s tree withered when he died. Flory 1989: 345: “Thus the grove formed a living genealogy of the *triumphatores* of the gens Iulia.”
2. Dio 63.29.2, Pliny *HN* 16.236, 17.5.
3. Pliny *HN* 17.245.
5. Tac. *Ann.* 13.58: *mortuis ramalibus et arescente trunco deminutam … donec in nouos fetus reuiesceret,* Segal 1973; for the tree’s associations, together with a Palatine cornel tree, with Romulus, see Briquel 1980: 301–19 and Flory 1989: 345n.8. For other examples of trees that sank or revived along with Rome’s fortunes, see Pliny *HN* 16.132–33 (fallen or headless trees revived after the Cimbrian Wars and Philippi); 17.243 (a tree at Cumae sank into the ground leaving only a few branches, before the civil wars of Pompey); 15.120 (two sacred myrtles near the shrine of Romulus, called *patricia* and *plebeia*, flourished and degenerated in time with the patrician and popular parties). Tac. *Ann.* 1.3 asks *quotus quisque reliquus qui rem publicam uidisset?* (after the
In English we have a ready parallel between trees and families in our metaphorical term “family tree,” and words like “scion” and “sprig.” The Romans had no family “trees” as such: they adopted a Greek word, stemma, for the linked family portraits that they set up in their houses. However, they often spoke of “branches” growing from these stemmata (Pers. 3.28: stemmate quod Tusco ramum millesime ducis) and of families growing from “stock” (stirps), and they used botanical terms as metaphors for authenticity and usurpation. Tacitus, for example, writes of Claudius’ son Britannicus being the ueram dignamque stirpem (“the true and genuine stock”) of the Julio-Claudians (Ann. 13.14) and suffering a “too-green” death (Ann. 13.17: acerca funera), while Nero was the graft adopted from outside (insitus et adoptius). As the jaded observer of a long defunct dynasty, Tacitus offers cautionary tales to contemporary emperors. But who would take the bolder step of advising an aspiring autocrat on how to concentrate his stock and eliminate his troublesome relatives? This was no easy subject to discuss in treatises and manuals on kingship. And for that reason, even if we had, for example, Philodemus On Kingship, we might find in it many definitions of the

dead of Augustus). The reign of Nero was the first point at which this was really no longer possible for human beings; the trees were the only living link. Tree rhythms are similarly exploited in Flavian narratives: Suet. Vesp. 5.4: a cypress on Vespasian’s grandfather’s estate was uprooted without any storm but revived the next day, greener and stronger than before, signifying his family’s future power; Suet. Dom. 15.2: the same tree fell down shortly before Domitian’s death, coinciding with the end of the dynasty. In Stat. Silv. 2.3, the bending tree trunk on Atedius Melior’s estate figures the resurgence of his house (2–4: quae robore ab imo / incuruata uadis redit inde cacumine recto / ardua; cf. 77: ardua magnanimi reurescit gloria Blaesii); cf. Hor. C. 1.12.45–46: crescit occulto uelut arbor aequo / fama Marcelli (the fame of the Marcelli growing underground like a tree’s roots).

6. Family portraits were connected by lineae: Plin. HN 35.6; Sen. Ben. 3.28.2. Family trees: Mart. 4.40, 5.35, Juv. 8 (with Courtney, Henderson 1997b), Suet. Nero 37.1, Vesp. 2; Flower 1996: 40, 211–12. Although (or because) unrelated to the Caesarian house, Galba displayed an impressive family tree in his atrium showing his descent from Jupiter and Pasiphae (Suet. Galba 2; cf. ibid. 3 on galbae as weevils who live in oak trees; ibid. 4 for the portent involving sacrificial exta and a fertile oak tree that predicted late but supreme power for Galba’s family).


8. For metaphorical ideas of planting and uprooting (of families, races, etc.) using πρόρριζος, ἐνζήτωσιν and ἔξειν, in Greek tragedy, history, and rhetoric, cf. e.g. Pind. Ol. 2.46, Pyth. 9.8, Hdt. 1.32 (ἐφριζοσε τὴν τυραννίδα), 1.64 (ὁ θεὸς προρρίζων ἀνέτρεψε), 3.40, 6.84, Aesch. Pers. 812 (Persians destroy Greek temples πρόρριζα), Ag. 966, Soph. El. 512, Aj. 1178 (γένους ἀπαντας ἐξημερεέσες), Eur. Hipp. 684, IT 610, And. 1.146. Henderson 1999: 125 cites Hdt. 6.37 (Croesus’ riddling threat to the people of Lampscus to “cut them down like a pine tree”—i.e., total extirpation: this riddle uniquely sends up no new shoots when felled).

9. The two verbs insero, inseui, insitum “graft” and insero, inserui, insertum “implant” are often indistinguishable in use; see OLD s.vv.; Clément-Tarantino 2006: 7n.17. On ancient grafting, see Pease 1933, Pigeaud 1988, Lowe 2010. Whereas insitus is a metaphor adapted to humans from grafting, adoptitus was transferred to plants from the human sphere (OLD s.vv.: e.g., Ov. Med. Fac. 5). For inserolinsitium in figurative contexts, cf. e.g. Val. Max. 9.7.2, 9.15 ext. 1, Suet. Tib. 3.1, [Sen.] Oct. 249: Nero insitius. The word stirps “stem,” “stump,” “growing part of wood” was also used figuratively (OLD s.v. 4) of family stock (with metaphors of flourishing, degeneracy, uprooting, resurgence, etc.): e.g. Enn. Ann. 166 Sk; Cic. Phil. 1.13, Livy 4.48, 24.38, 26.41, 40.8, 42.11, [Sen.] Oct. 394–95, Gaius Inst. 3.8 (stirpes used of parallel branches in a family tree).
good king and the bad king, but, one suspects, no “do it yourself” instructions for the would-be dynast.10

There is, however, somewhere where we can find practical advice of an uninhibitedly ruthless kind: in any imperial manual of horticulture. Pliny, for example, lists all possible means of generating new shoots and writes without qualms about the best way to produce healthy tree stock: by concentrating all the growth into one stem and pruning away the rest of the outgrowing suckers (HN 17.20.95).11 The relatively uninitiated context of grafting and propagation makes it easy for him to disparage the decadent morality of the imperial age: standard metaphors for grafting, splicing, and pruning in the vegetable world draw on the vocabulary of human abortions, adoptions, adulteries, and child murders.12

There is another kind of work, too, that offers an oblique recipe for the concentration of one’s stock, this time through the lens of primeval kingship. This paper will suggest a new way of reading Virgil’s Aeneid that gives it a central place in the literature of dynasty building. The symbolic trees of the historians and natural historians’ accounts have their roots, so to speak, in the trees of epic. Now, it is well known that Virgil presses arboreal imagery especially hard throughout his poem, drawing links between men and trees through similes, symbolizing cities and people through lone trees which bend across household altars, stand outside temples or occupy sacred space in the middle of battlefields. We know about Mezentius the tree-trophy laden with his own armor, Troy the city uprooted like a mountain ash, Aeneas the oak unbending in the face of Dido’s appeals, the Golden Bough that seems to resist Aeneas’ tug, Latinus’ tree-sceptre which never sprouts new growth and the wild olive-tree destroyed by the Trojans to clear space for fighting. There is a burgeoning literature about Aeneas as a destroyer of

11. See also Cato Agr. 41.139–40; Var. RR 1.40, Col. Agr. 5.11.
12. E.g., Plin. HN 17.8: ob hoc insita et arborum quoque adulteria (“adoption and adultery even by trees”); 18.150: quodam abortu (“by a kind of abortion,” of barley); 16.1: ilae ultro siue ab homine didicere blandos sapores adoptione et conubio (“they learned to take on pleasant flavor by adoption and intermarriage”); 17.129: adoptioni; 15.41: peculiaris impudentia et nucibus insitorum quae faciem parentis sucumque adoptionis exhibent (“they show a peculiar effrontery, displaying the appearance of the parent tree and the juice of the adopted stock,” of plums grafted onto nut trees, nucipruna). Cf. Var. RR 1.40.2: semina … adulterina. See Lowe 2010: 481 on Palladius’ range of metaphors for grafting—marriage, hospitality, adoption, consecration. For positive figurative uses of grafting in a human context, cf. Cic. Brut. 213: o generosam, inquit, stirpem et tamquam in unam arborem plurra genera sic in istam domum multorum insitam atque <iniluminatam> sapientiam! (“O noble stock and wisdom grafted, shining, onto that house like multiple fruits onto a single tree!”); Plin. HN 15.49: talented grafters “propagate” (propagauerint) their own fame; Sen. Ep. 112.2 for a lengthy analogy between character reform and successful grafting; Quint. 6.3.88 for a cruel joke about grafting: when a man complained to Cicero that his wife had hanged herself from a fig tree, he replied, “Do get me a cutting from that tree so I can plant it” (rogo des mihi surculum ex illa arbore ut inseram).
trees; his role as desecrator of the Italian landscape and its indigenous population, whether literally or as agent of Virgil’s own incursions into poetic territory, is still a matter of urgent debate.13

It is a rather different set of environmental crimes that I investigate here: not so much the progressive elimination of Aeneas’ enemies—the Greeks, the Carthaginians, the Italians—which is the usual cause for post-imperialist concern.14 We are used to Aeneas the invader, the vindictive usurper of other nations’ territory. But we know him less well as the cuckoo in his own family nest. My subject will be Aeneas’ systematic extirpation of the House of Priam, no less pressing a task for him when, for the span of Virgil’s epic, most of its members are already dead. In the Aeneid, we have nothing less, I will argue, than a Virgilian “Kind Hearts and Coronets”: the Trojan royal house as the genuine D’Ascoyynes, bearers of the family face and name, who need eradicating, or re-eradicating, and Aeneas as an interloper, like the poor relation Louis Mazzini. The poem’s arboreal imagery takes on a new meaning when we consider that Aeneas is effectively “chopping down the family tree.”15

Like Nero—like Augustus, Tiberius, Gaius, and Claudius, for that matter—Aeneas had no direct blood right to represent the Trojan royal house. He was linked to his father-in-law Priam only through his wife, Priam’s daughter, Creusa. He could always play his trump card, the divine status of his mother Venus, and often did, but his father Anchises was just a minor royal, cousin to Priam, grandson through Themiste of Priam’s grandfather Ilus.16 E. L. Harrison 1981 argues that Virgil very firmly “corrected” Homer in the matter of relations between Aeneas and the house of Priam. A series of open family rifts in the Iliad culminates with Poseidon’s prophecy (II. 20.302–308): “It is fated that Aeneas shall escape, to prevent the stock of Dardanus from perishing without seed . . . for now the son of Cronos has come to hate Priam’s line and mighty Aeneas will rule over the

15. One of the original posters for the Ealing comedy (1949) shows a tree from which portraits of the D’Ascoyynes hang, while Louis contemplates it axe in hand. The other bears the legend “He chopped down the family tree . . .” with Louis holding a gun beside another tree, on whose branches the relatives are sketched and labelled, along with their manner of death (e.g. “pierces Aunt Agatha.” “explodes Uncle Henry”).
Trojans, and his sons over their sons, whosoever are born after.” 17 In the Aeneid, this rupture, according to Harrison, is transformed into a peaceful handover of power, with Virgil lining up no fewer than six of Priam’s descendents—Hector, Creusa, Polydorus, Cassandra, Helenus, and Deiphobus—to bless the usurper and send him on his way. 18 In Aeneid 3 it is Apollo (Augustus’ savior god) who replaces Poseidon as predictor of Aeneas’ success: Dardanidae duri, quae uos a stirpe parentum / prima tulit tellus, eadem uos ubere laeto / accipiet reduces. antiquam exquirite matrem. / hic domus Aeneae cunctis dominabitur oris, / et nati natorum et qui nascentur ab illis (“Rugged sons of Dardanus, the land that first bore you from ancestral stock will receive you when you return in her fruitful bosom. Seek out your ancient mother. Here the house of Aeneas will rule over all the other nations, both their children’s children and children born of them,” 94–98). When Aeneas arrives in Italy, he will not just be carrying the house of Troy on his shoulders: he will miraculously, according to this prophecy, be returning to the true origins of his race, the ancient mother (antiqua mater), the primeval stock (stirps parentum) —since Italy turns out to be his ancestor Dardanus’ original home. 19 This is an important passage in that it tells us how much Virgil is prepared to contort himself in order to have it both ways. As his Aeneas infiltrates his way into power, he draws on two different kinds of self-authorization, both familiar to Virgil’s contemporaries: one kind based on a fundamentalist view of “natural” descent—pedigrees (often bogus), divine prophecies, the idea of the family face—and the other consisting of more flexible expedients, those that had for centuries kept the Roman aristocracy afloat—alliance through marriage, the survival of the fittest (duri) or the most virtuous, and renewal of the stock through new blood and adoption. 20

And yet a minority of critics have labeled Aeneas a usurper and even a symbolic “cannibal” living off the flesh of the relatives who apparently bless his progress. 21 Two factors make such extreme readings of these succession scenes possible. One is the evidently controversial nature of the hero’s claim to Trojan power, as inherited from the Iliad. There, Aeneas’ Achillean resentment at being

17. Strabo 13.1.53 cites a Romanized version of Homer’s text altering Τρώεςιν “Trojans” to πάντεςιν “the world,” which, as Casali 2007b: 107 points out, is slyly redeployed by Virgil in Apollo’s prophecy at Aen. 3.97: hic domus Aeneae cunctis dominabitur.

18. Harrison 1981: 214: “[T]he Priamidae are the very ones who, whether dead or alive, confirm the transference of Trojan sovereignty to him, provide him with guidance and wish him well for the future.”


20. Corbier 1991. Cf. Suet. Claud. 39: Claudius repeatedly boasted, shortly before adopting his stepson Nero (as though this were not wrong enough, when he already possessed a grown-up son), that nobody had yet been adopted (insertum) into the Claudian family; Plin. HN 35.8: the orator Messalla protested against the grafting (inseri) of a bust of a member of the Laevini family among those of his ancestors; Tac. Ann. 2.43: Tiberius preferred Drusus to Germanicus because they shared the same blood (ut proprium et sui sanguinis Drusum fouebat); Tac. Hist. 1.15–16: Galba justifies the extra-familial adoption of Piso.

ignored by Priam is amply aired, once at Il. 13.459–61, where Deiphobus discovers him sulking “at the edge of battle,” and again at Il. 20.178–83, where Achilles himself knowingly taunts Aeneas with wanting “the honor belonging to Priam” (τιμ/εταπρισμον Πριάμου). Aeneas, of course, does inherit that honor after the sack of Troy, but it is clearly a matter of dispute, set out for us in the defensive Trojan genealogy Aeneas hurls at Achilles (Il. 20.215–40) and in Poseidon’s hurtful prediction of Priam’s downfall and Aeneas’ future success (Il. 20.300–8). Virgil may not be “correcting” Homer so much as carrying the Homeric “scandal” over into the Aeneid.

The other, more subjective factor is the Aeneid’s special tendency, despite its teleological directedness, to allow the repressed to swim up to the surface of the narrative. This is less an issue for pessimists and optimists (a ruthless, dynasty-building Aeneas could be adopted by either party) than, perhaps, for Freudians versus anti-Freudians. On the surface, Virgil’s Aeneas is irreproachable. His attitude to his Trojan relatives seems loyal, deferential, and responsible, but it might just as well be interpreted as surface pietas that smooths over justifiable guilt. Yet, as so often, Virgil enables a double reading of his hero’s actions. I say actions, as the motives remain murky when his Aeneas almost sleepwalks his way into power. One interpretation of the dreams or dream-like symbolic sequences that mask or reawaken his latent aggression is as a series of murderous memoirs. Acting on Aeneas’ behalf, Virgil eliminates each of his relatives in turn. Alibis abound; each rival is seemingly laid to rest through dutiful burial or benediction, but the repressed ghosts return in different, often mutilated forms.

In what follows, I explore the series of episodes where these acts of elimination take place. A few are plain variations on the idea of transferred power. The others—and this, I will argue, is no coincidence—contain trees or tree metaphors, together with ideas of uprooting, truncating, pruning, and grafting. Sometimes trees appear only in the background, as undergrowth or canopy, or in simile form. However, in one case that I will dwell on at length, the Polydorus episode, they are very clearly in the foreground. Virgil’s trees, I will argue, are not just venerable

22. Anderson 1997: 63–66 discusses the genealogy Aeneas gives at Il. 20.215–40. His helpful family tree (65) shows the split into three branches from the sons of Tros: “Aeneias delivers this account of his ancestry to illustrate to Achilles his own nobility, to set himself on a par with Hektor and to set his family on a par with that of Priam. At the same time, however, the tree highlights the genealogical divide between Hektor and Aeneias, while Poseidon’s prophecy stresses rivalry between the lines.” Cf. the story of how Anchises secretly bred from the horses bequeathed to Laomedon by Tros at Il. 5.259–73. Anderson 1997: 69 calls Aeneas “the archetypal other in the Trojan genealogy.”

23. Though Thomas 1988a and 2001 has made tree-violation a test case for pessimists and optimists.

24. See Oliensis 2001, Oliensis 2009: 8 on the Freudian approach that values “the energetic play of repression and circuitous expression that constitutes textuality.”

25. As, for example, with Aeneas’ eyewitness account of his escape from Troy in Book 2, which can be read as innocent or duplicitous. Cf. n.68 below.
watchmen over human events, but symbolic markers that measure the extent of the destruction involved in Aeneas’ steady process of dynastic entrenchment.

PRIAM AND HECTOR

sunt hodie ex adverso Iliensium urbis iuxta Hellespontum in Protosilai sepulchro arbores quae omnibus ex eo aeuis, cum in tantum adcreuerut Ilium aspicient, inarescent rursusque adolescunt; iuxta urbem autem quercus in Ili tumulo tunc satae dicuntur cum coeпит Ilium uocari. 

Pliny HN 16.238

Today there are trees growing on the tomb of Protesilaus on the shore of the Hellespont opposite the city of Ilium, which ever since they were planted have first grown big enough to afford a view of Ilium, then wither and revive again; oaks on the tomb of Ilus near the city are said to have been planted at the time when the city began to be called Ilium.

In Aeneid 2, when Priam is beheaded by Pyrrhus, he is given the most decisive epitaph in the whole of the Aeneid, one that characterizes his headless body with the word the Romans also used of a tree trunk: ingens truncus, 557.26 This trunk is part of a backdrop of symbolically threatened trees in the Trojan episode. When Priam is decapitated at his household altar, a tree stands guard there, an ancient laurel giving shade to the family gods: ingens ara fuit iuxtaque uterumta laurus / incbens area atque umbra complexa penatis, 513–14 (mimicked by the human stance of Hecuba and her daughters: condensae et diium amplexae simulacrse sedebant, 51727). An ancient cypress stands outside the temple of Ceres, revered by previous generations, preserved for centuries.28 When Priam’s son Polites is added to the slaughter and Aeneas reports the butchery he witnessed in Priam’s palace, he describes father and son as twin trees mown down: natum ante ora patris, patrem qui obtruncat ad aras, 2.663.29

Seemingly a greater threat to Aeneas is Hector, eldest son of Priam, and officially “best of the Trojans,” even though he too is already dead. Before Priam and Polites die, Hector appears to his cousin as a ghost, an apparition from a past age and an earlier epic. “What kept you so long?” (quae tantae tenuere...)

27. This may well go back to the metaphor of tree and clinging ivy that characterizes Hecuba and Polyxena at Eur. Hec. 398.
28. 714–15: iuxtaque antiqua cupressus / religione patrum multos seruata per annos (as Troy at 2.363 is described as multos dominata per annos). Dyson 2001: 172 notes the similarity with the sacred laurel, multos ... seruata per annos, standing in the heart of Latinus’ palace, the origin of his city’s name (Aen. 7.59–60). See Plin. HN 16.236–37 on trees in Rome as old as or older than the city.
29. See Power 2007 on Suetonius’ death of Galba, the decapitation of a helpless old man and the near-end of the principate (cf. Tac. Hist. 1.11.3), as a re-writing of Virgil’s death of Priam (and of Pollio’s death of Pompey).
morae? 2.282), Aeneas asks, marking metapoetically the lapse in time between the Aeneid and the Iliad. Here is the first apparent act of benediction, with the mantle of succession transferred from Hector to Aeneas, from Homer to Virgil, apparently with acceptance on both sides, on the lines of Ennius’ succession to Homer at the start of the Annales.\textsuperscript{30} Hector is shown at the nadir of his fortunes: an illogical, untimely ghost, for the Iliad tells us the gods gave him a makeover, made him sparkling clean, before he was returned to Priam for burial.\textsuperscript{31} This must be deliberate: Virgil needs Hector to be at his lowest ebb, in order that Aeneas may rise. And Hector gives up his claim without resistance, with the words sat patriae Priamoque datum, 2.291.

This scene asks to be linked with a tree simile later in Book 2. An ash tree on its last legs stands for the fall of Troy (ex imo uerti Neptunia Troia, 2.625), farmers hacking at it certatim. Given the trunk imagery to come and the equation between Troy and her king in the epitaph, it is a tree that is usually thought to symbolize Priam, justifiably so when metaphors of overturning and falling are used of the sack of Priam’s Troy in the résumé at the start of Book 3: Postquam res Asiae Priamique euertere gentem / immeritam uisum superis, ceciditque superbum / Ilium, 1–3.\textsuperscript{32} However, it could be argued that the tree is equally recognizable as Hector, whose death, too, stood for the destruction of his city (Iliad 22.410–11): it has foliage or hair (comam, 629; distinctive in Hector’s case: he pioneered the “mullet” style, short at the front, long at the back), it groans (congemuit, 631) like a tragic human being; but more particularly it nods (nutat, 629, which harks back to the bobbing helmet that frightens his baby son in Iliad 6).\textsuperscript{33} The farmers’ attacks revive the Homeric antagonism between the two Trojan cousins.\textsuperscript{34}

It takes until Book 11 for Aeneas finally to repress his faultless rival. The embassy to Diomedes in retirement might be thought incidental in that it fails to resuscitate the Iliad’s aborted showdown between himself and Aeneas. But as well as serving to mark Diomedes out as an equivalent survivor with a matching set of post-Iliadic adventures,\textsuperscript{35} it is also essential for staging a theoretical showdown between Aeneas and Hector, so that this wise old-timer can adjudicate between the two. Diomedes’ verdict is that Aeneas and Hector are joint equal among the Trojans in courage and in military prowess, but that Aeneas has the final edge for his pietas: ambo animis, ambo insignes praestantibus armis, / hic pietate prior, 11.291–92. This is perhaps what frees Aeneas up at last to mention to Ascanius

\textsuperscript{30} Hardie 1993: 102.
\textsuperscript{31} Iliad 24.418–23.
\textsuperscript{32} Thomas 2001: 84–89 compares the treatment of the wood felled at Georg. 2.208–10 (cum stirpibus imis) and the wild olive sacred to Faunus uprooted by the Trojans at Aen. 12.770–71 as evidence for Virgil’s sympathy for the victims of extirpation, on whatever side.
\textsuperscript{33} Iliad 6.470. Cf. Iliad 14.415 where Hector is temporarily felled like an uprooted oak tree.
\textsuperscript{34} And contrasts with the wavering but rooted Aeneas suggested by the oak simile at 4.441–46.
\textsuperscript{35} Papaioannou 2000.
the joint example of his father and “uncle Hector” on the training-ground of battle in *Aeneid* 12 (*sis memor et te animo repetentem exempla tuorum / et pater Aeneas et auunculus excitet Hector*, 439–40).

By the end of *Aeneid* 2, three important figures, Priam, Hector, and Polites, have been eliminated (I will come to Helen and Creusa later) and a powerful link set up between trees and the stock of a royal house. But the blood of Priam continues to flow and be staunched in expedient ways in *Aeneid* 3.

**POLYDORUS**

*natura et plantaria demonstrauit multarum arborum radicibus pullulante subole densa et pariente patre quas necet: eius quippe umbra turba indigesta premitur, ut in lauris, punicis, platanis, cerasis, prunis; paucarum in hoc genere rami parcunt suboli, ut ulmorum palmarumque.*

*Pliny HN* 17.65

Nature has also taught the art of making nurseries, as from the roots of many trees there shoots up a teeming cluster of progeny, and the mother [lit. father] tree bears offspring destined to be killed by herself, inasmuch as her shadow stifles the disorderly throng—as in the case of laurels, pomegranates, planes, cherries and plums; although with a few trees in this class, for instance elms and palms, the branches spare the young suckers.

No sooner does he set foot in Thrace than Aeneas has another encounter with a more active kind of tree, a cornel and myrtle thicket, to be precise, while hunting for firewood for his first sacrifice on dry land. As he tugs at the withies in a preview of his tussle with the Golden Bough, he is greeted by a horrifying portent: what looks like human blood spurts out and stains the earth in a coagulating pool of gore. Another and then another withy does the same, and while Aeneas trembles but goes on pulling, suddenly a human voice emerges from the thicket: Polydorus, youngest son of Priam, begs for mercy. This blood is human blood, that of a prince evacuated from Troy to the care of a Thracian king and then treacherously executed by him. Aeneas takes pity and proceeds to give Polydorus a decent burial (the problem of how one buries a tree-stump and the incongruity of having to chop firewood to do this are discreetly passed over, or salvaged by the notion that Polydorus’ *anima* is buried, rather than his body). As Dr Johnson among others pointed out, this Virgilian transformation scene is a preview of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. When he comes to write the Polydorus story, Ovid indirectly honors Virgil by turning back to the standard Euripidean tradition, that Polydorus died by being slaughtered and thrown into the sea—as if admitting that Virgil had left nothing to improve on. But as we will see, he drew inspiration from other aspects of the story.

It appears, then, that Virgil made up this version, but it is not enough to explain it simply as a self-indulgently grotesque Hellenistic *aetion* in imitation of Apollonius, or alternatively, as Servius did, as an adaptation of various Roman legends about portentous trees that spouted blood.\(^{37}\) If this is an *aetion* it must have a point to it, even if it is not an obvious one; Virgil seems to be indicating precisely that when he tells us that Aeneas poked further into the thicket in search of *causas latentis* (32), “underlying explanations.”

What could these explanations be? On one level, the scene’s meaning is generated by Virgil’s experiments with metaphor. It is especially proto-Ovidian in that the initial setting contains the seeds of the metamorphosis, clues, as it were, for us to predict the final outcome. Virgil plays here with some other examples of overlap in human-tree vocabulary, the kind that Alessandro Perutelli brings alive in his virtuoso survey of the word *bracchia*, normally a dead metaphor for the branches of a tree in Roman technical writers but revitalized when trees need arms in poetry, to flap and embrace with because they are humans in disguise.\(^{38}\)

Another central feature of Ovidian metamorphosis noted by Perutelli is economy, the “natural” or “easy” transition of body parts into their new state. For Virgil, the ingredients to play with are born from just such dead metaphors, ones that cross the vegetable and the military spheres: just as the sticks and withies shoot into grotesque life, so the buried metaphors come alive again too, and double meanings make normal categories fluid. Aeneas stumbles on a *tumulus*, a hillock (22), but hidden in the word is its other meaning, “grave”—and proper grave it later becomes. The hillock is clothed with *densis hastilibus*, a thicket of myrtle “spear” (23), a common metaphor from the military to the vegetable sphere, but revitalized as soon as we learn that Polydorus was executed by being pinned to the ground by real spears, which duly half-metamorphosed into vegetable ones—only half-, because they continue to spout human blood. In the *Georgics*, Virgil had recorded the potential of, specifically, myrtle and cornel for making spears: *Georg.* 2.447–48 *at myrtus ualidis hastilibus et bona bello / cornus*.\(^{39}\) Polydorus reports in reverse that he was skewered by a “harvest” of weapons, 46 *teilorum seges*, again a common military metaphor for a bristling mass of pointed spears, but now with extra point to it when the spears take root and become multiple trees.\(^{40}\) And the black myrtle, which Virgil had described in the *Georgics* as *cruenta myrta* (*Georg*. 1.306), receives its own bloodstained aetiology.\(^{41}\)

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41. Cf. the metamorphosis of Pyramus’ blood into mulberry juice at *Met.* 4.125–27.
Another meaning we could ascribe to the scene is an etymological one. Polydorus announces himself as follows: nam Polydorus ego. hic confluxum ferrea texit / telorum seges et iaculis increuit acutis (“For I am Polydorus. I am pinned to the ground here with a harvest of sharp spears,” 3.45–46). Virgil appears to be reinventing Greek etymology here. Polydorus is not a “man of many gifts” (πολύς + δόρυς - the meaning to which Ovid reverts: Met. 13.525 munera), but a “man of many spears,” from πολύς and δόρυ. This “true name” seems to be virtually staring out of the speech, prepared as it is by the densis hastilibus (23) that precede it.42 If Polydorus’ fate is preordained in his name, it should come as no surprise that the manner of his death is revealed as decapitation, the act that turns a man into a trunk, strangely enough, a trunk that still has a voice. Polydorus is rather unclear about how he was executed. First he says that Polymestor beheaded him, obtruncat, the word used of Priam’s death (and that of his son Polites and, thanks to Orestes, that of their murderer Pyrrhus43). But later the straight act of his truncation becomes the “harvest” of spears (telorum seges, 46) which then turn into offshoots of his maimed body, a “spears-harvest” metaphor to reverse the “harvest-spears” one at the beginning. This is usually considered a nod to divergences in the sources, Homer and Euripides, over the number of assassins and method of killing, but it is also, frankly, an excuse to play with different tree puns.44

But even this etymological twist is not reason enough to explain why Virgil invented this scene. We need to turn our attention to Aeneas. Polydorus’ metamorphosis from lifeless stump to bleeding, weeping figure of horror is so engrossing and so spine-chilling (a response cued by Aeneas’ stunned reaction: horrendum et dictu uideo mirabile monstrum, 25; eloquar an sileam? 39) that readers do not generally note what is happening to our hero at the same time, in line with the two-way osmosis of metaphors and metamorphosis. All the time

42. Paschalis 1997: 112–13 also notes this (see also Paschalis 2003, Coo 2007) and he too has seen the roots of Virgil’s idea in the cues given in Polydorus’ ghost’s speech at the opening of Eur. Hecuba, where the word δόρυ “spear” appears three times (Hec. 5, 9, 18; cf. 699, 1210, also in connection with Polydorus); the ghost claims that he was cut down in life after he grew up “like a young shoot” (Hec. 20: τροφάσιν ός τις πτόρθος ὥξισμην). Paschalis points out, moreover, that the original meaning of δόρυ is the piece of wood from which a spear is made, so there is an innate link anyway between the two interchangeable materials in this scene. Cf. Della Corte 1962: 12.

43. Pyrrhus: 3.332 patriasque obtruncat ad aras. See also 12.382, where Phegeus (“Oak-tree”) is truncated, Priam-style: abstulit ense caput truncumque reliquit harenae (with Paschalis 1997: 407–408).

44. Serv. ad 3.55: obtruncat: occidit intellege: nam obruncare proprie est capite caedere. See Williams 1962: 65; though Coo 2007: 197n.1 notes that Euripides’ Polydorus is not beheaded. On the inconsistency, see most recently Casali 2007a. Coo 2007 has an ingenious alternative interpretation of obtruncat, based on the sense “lop, inoculate” used in a grafting context at Col. 4.29.4, 4.29.13 (cf. Virgil Georg. 3.78 enodes trunci “trunks free from knots,” i.e., ready to receive a scion, in what Mynors calls “crown-grafting”); she also notes the further parallels Virgil forces here with his grafting instructions in the Georgics: Georg. 2.74: de cortice, Aen. 3.33: de cortice, Georg. 2.81: arbos, Aen. 3.27: arbos. This solution removes all ambiguity over the manner of death, which would have involved “grafting” spears into Polydorus’ flesh: Virgil’s “most fantastical graft yet, that of a plant onto a human truncus” (Coo 2007: 198).
that Polydorus is turning back from tree into man and breaking the spell cast on him long ago, Aeneas is turning into a tree. The germs, as before, are there from the beginning, in the quivering, bristling thicket (horrida myrtus, 23), which in turn provokes mental horror in Aeneas (horrendum monstrum, 26—Polydorus prefigures Polyphemus) and then a shivering physical reaction which freezes him in his tracks: frigidus horror / membra quatit. Aeneas’ effective transformation is confirmed by Ovid’s many descriptions of tree metamorphosis: the Heliades, Myrrha, Daphne, Dryope, Philemon and Baucis. All are different but there are common threads: the hardening off of the body’s surface, the uselessness of rooted limbs, the proliferation of foliage, the freezing of blood, and the vestiges of human sensation in the inner core, with the emotions and the voice often the last human features to be lost. With the Heliades, blood turns to amber drops (with an audible echo of Polydorus’ appeal: Met. 2.361–62: parce, precor ... parce, precor); with Dryope, milk turns to hard sap (Met. 9. 357–58). In the case of the passionate Myrrha, the outer skin hardens but the marrow goes on burning; blood becomes tree juice and tears drip out as gummy resin (Met. 10.492–502). And in due course the tree’s bark violently splits to eject her incestuous child.

Aeneas’ paralysis out of fear at the vision, horrible to see and horrible to tell, comes about, then, as a kind of contagion of horror. Initially he retains his powers of locomotion (accessi, 24), then his legs seem to collapse under him (he has to crawl on his knees), but all the time his mind is racing (multa mouens animo, 34). As the tree’s sap spurts out and becomes human blood, his own blood gels in his veins (gelidusque coit formidine sanguis, 30). When Polydorus protests his human identity (non ... cruor hic de stipite manat, 42–43), the emphasis is on stipes, “this blood doesn’t come from a stump.” Aeneas a few lines later becomes stump-like: obstipui, 48. It is hard not to imagine that Virgil is inventing a fanciful “tree” origin for this verb: “I was rooted to the spot,” perhaps, anticipating Polydorus’ death by truncation, obtruncat, 55. As Polydorus emerges, an audible human horribly trapped inside a thicket, the tree metamorphosis of Aeneas, limbs and fluids frozen, crawling on his knees, becomes complete: his hair stands on end so that it becomes foliage (comae, 48, another word transferable across human and tree spheres); and finally, last item to go in any Ovidian tree transformation, his voice is trapped in his throat: uox faucibus haesit, 48. The spell only lasts a moment. While Polydorus tells his story, the spell is lifted, the mourners’ hair becomes free (crinem de more solutae, 65), Aeneas’ powers of locomotion miraculously return, and the final act of Polydorus’ obsequies is to sing his praises in a loud voice (magna ... uoce ciemus, 68).46

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45. Met. 10.492–502. For medulla as tree-sap, cf. Cato Agr. 41, Var. RR 1.41, Col. 5.11, 14, 17.
46. Though the ancestors do not leave this scene either. Casali 2007a: 183n.7 suggests that 3.63: stant Manibus aree exploits the pseudo-etymology of manare “drip” from Manes (he is discussing Ovid’s allusion to Virgil’s cruor ... manat in his alternative story of a slain Polydorus: Met. 13.629:
Some scholars who have searched for the deeper meanings in this episode have concentrated on the potential dangers for Aeneas. Reckford argues that the trapped state of Polydorus emphasizes Aeneas’ own “uprooted state” as the drifter longing for stability that only other people find. But that is to ignore the horror of Aeneas’ palpably rooted state here. Darker readings incriminate Aeneas, or at least find his persistence troubling. Nethercut reads the scene as part of an *Aeneid* that makes the Trojans invaders and interlopers; Putnam sees Aeneas as a “sacrificer who pollutes” and a “symbolic cannibal” who persists in spilling family blood; the nightmarish consequences of his rootling for firewood are a warning against pursuing areas of knowledge that should remain off-limits.

Thomas notes with dismay that this is one of three occasions when Virgil allows Aeneas to ignore the *piaculum* for tree-damage required in all Roman religious observance. Harrison, whose pacific reading of the *Aeneid* is the inversion of theirs and mine, regards the scene simply as reinforcing the idea of the Priamids’ willing transfer of family power.

But there is something else exceptional about this scene that might help to explain its macabre mixture of ingredients. It contrives to combine the two central metaphors of genealogy: blood and trees. In Book 8, when Aeneas makes his genealogical defense to Evander, for example, he speaks in just these metaphors. He mentions the fact that Evander derives from the same “stem” as Aeneas’ enemies, the Greek kings (*quodque a stirpe fores geminis coniunctus Atridis, 8.130*), but adds that the two men are in fact cousins, through their common ancestor Atlas, from whom two branches of the same family or blood splay off: *sic genus amborum scindit se sanguine ab uno, 8.142.* And, as if it were a visual aid, the pretender to the Trojan throne makes this speech holding out an olive branch: *paciferaeque manu ramum praetendit oliuae, 8.116.*

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*Polydoreo manantem sanguine terram*. The presence of altars to the ancestors also recalls the site of Priam and Polites’ murders in *Aeneid* 2.

51. The same double metaphor appears at Aen. 5.297–99: *regius egregia Priami de stirpe Diores; ... et Patron ... ab Arcadio Tegeaeae sanguine gentis* (“Princely Diores from the noble stock of Priam ... and Patron ... of Arcadian blood and Tegean lineage”); cf. Livy 38.58 (P. Africanus): *non sanguine humano sed stirpe diuina satum* (“born not of human blood but of divine stock”); Ovid *Met.* 14.698–99: *uiderat a ueteris generosam sanguine Teucri / Iphis Anaxareten humili de stirpe creatus* (“Iphis, born of humble stock, had seen Anaxaret, a princess from the blood of ancient Teucer,” within the horticultural story of Vertumnus and Pomona). See Newman and Newman 2005: 37–42 for a survey of the 19 occurrences of the word *stirps* in the *Aeneid*; the future Roman race is sometimes described as being descended from Aeneas (12.165: *pater Aeneas, Romanae stirpis origo*), sometimes from Ascanius (8.628–29: *genus omne futurae / stirpis ab Ascanio*).
If we focus on these two metaphors, blood and trees, in the Polydorus episode, we can start to read it as a living nightmare for Aeneas about the family blood of Priam, a hydra-headed monster which rears more dripping heads the more he hacks away at it, each one spurring black outpourings of blood: *ater et alterius sequitur de cortice sanguis*, 33. Polydorus is Priam’s youngest child, the last offshoot of the royal stock of fifty sons, symbol of the ever-regenerating family that needs to be eradicated. The baby of the family, its youngest sprig, was planted in an inauspicious Thracian nursery (*alendum*, 50), but never lived to bear fruit. As Polydorus says in his appeal, *non me tibi Troia / externum tulit aut cruor hic de stipite manat* (“It isn’t from a stump that this blood drips but from a human being and one of your relatives,” 42–43). For one crucial moment, this looks not so much like a heart-rending juxtaposition of two pronouns, *me* and *tibi*, as a tussle between them, with “Troy” the prize at stake. The appeal to consanguinity is thus also a struggle for autonomy. This is Aeneas’ blood, too, but he is programmed to spill it for his own survival; indeed, his aborted city is called *Aeneadae* (3.18).

The primal fears contained in this seemingly fantastical and grotesque episode anticipate another drama where blood and trees are equally persistent metaphors in the context of dynasty-building: Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. Another upstart lies awake at night dreaming of the obstacles to his power: Duncan and his sons Malcolm and Donalbain, the revenge-killer Macduff and the favorite of the gods, Banquo, who the witches predict will father many kings. Tree metaphors signify not just the branches of a dynasty but also the normal biological cycles that are inappropriately accelerated. Macbeth’s development follows the life-cycle of a tree: planted and embraced in friendship with Duncan (“Welcome hither: / I have begun to plant thee, and will labour / To make thee full of growing,” III iv 31–33); later, autumnal and on the turn (V iii 25–6 “My way of life / Is fall’n into the sear, the yellow leaf”; “Macbeth / Is ripe for shaking,” IV iii 275–76); and finally, a decapitated trunk (as Malcolm signals the start of a new era: “planted newly with the time,” V viii 77). Dreams and portents are filled with images of walking, talking trees, tied in the imagination with the endless cycle of bloodletting murder. In the witches’ visions, trees are combined with the idea of children and succession: a severed head (Macbeth), a bloodied child (Caesarian-born Macduff), then a child holding a tree (the marching forest of Birnam Wood, which will eventually defeat the tyrant, despite his disbelief: “That will never be. / Who can impress the forest, bid the tree / Unfix his earth-bound root?” IV i 94). Finally comes a fourth apparition: “A show of eight kings, the last with a glass in his hand, Banquo following.” This procession of Banquo’s regal descendants suggests a parallel with Birnam Wood. That marching throng of camouflaged trees is not just a portent of Macbeth’s downfall, in classical terms an *adynaton* or *monstrum*:

52. *Macbeth* III iv 146–50: “It will have blood; they say, blood will have blood: / Stones have been known to move and trees to speak; / Augurs and understood relations have / By magot-pies and choughs and rooks brought forth / The secret’st man of blood.”
it also signifies the limitless proliferation of fertile and onward-marching heirs, the ultimate dread of the aspiring dynast.

**ANDROMACHE AND HELENUS**

facillime coalescent quibus eadem cortices natura quaeque pariter florentia eiusdem horae cognitionem sucorumque societatem habent.

Pliny *HN* 17.104

Grafts and trunk grow together most easily when they have the same kind of bark and when they flower at the same time, so that they have the affinity of the same season and a partnership of juices.

(plums grafted onto nut trees [*nucipruna*]): peculiariis impudentia est nucibus insitorum quae faciem parentis sucumque adoptionis exhibent.

Pliny *HN* 15.41

They show a peculiar effrontery, displaying the appearance of the parent tree and the juice of the adopted stock.

After the retreat from inhospitable Thrace, Aeneas’ next stop is at Buthrotum, where he is reunited with other lost members of his Trojan family: his sister-in-law, Hector’s widow Andromache, and her new husband, his cousin and brother-in-law Helenus (3.294–505). The relationships are tangled indeed, and Maurizio Bettini has analyzed this episode beautifully in kinship terms. But a much more ruthless interpretation could be put on the scene, gentle and compassionate though it seems. We have it, after all, filtered to us through the dynast’s own account. Aeneas first tells Dido that the news of Andromache’s levirate remarriage to her dead husband’s brother (295) came to him as a surprise (*obstipui*, 298, again)—or perhaps even a shock. At first, it is Aeneas who is the strange apparition. Andromache greets him as though he were a ghost from her Trojan past (*magnis exterrita monstris*, 307): a band of Trojans with a preeminent leader (306–307).

Aeneas is, as it were, superimposed on the dead Hector, and Andromache appears for a moment to confuse the two: *uiuisne? aut . . . Hector ubi est?* 311–12. She then transfers her attention to his son Ascanius, asking if he is still alive too and reminding us of Ascanius’ lost relatives, his love for his mother Creusa, and the *antiqua uirtus* shared by his father Aeneas and his uncle Hector. In other words this throwback reasserts the ancient pedigree of the Trojan royal house by inserting Aeneas’ son into a more central position.

Bettini diagnoses in Andromache’s wistful response a case of extreme and debilitating nostalgia. Both she and Helenus shed gratifying tears on recognizing

their kin, and Aeneas is taken on a tour of the city, a lifeless replica of Troy, complete with citadel, Scaean gate, and landmark river Xanthus. Nothing could be more threatening to Aeneas, it might seem, than to see this pre-built version of his destined \textit{tanta moles}. Virgil makes him belittle it in his account. This is only a \textit{little} Troy (\textit{paruam Troiam}, 349), a \textit{copy} of the great Pergamene citadel (\textit{simulataque magnis / Pergama}, 349–50), and a \textit{dried-up} stream posing as the Xanthus (\textit{arentem Xanti cognomine riuum}, 350).\footnote{See Hexter 1999; Biraschi 1981–1982 on Buthrotum’s claims to be Troy in Epirus.} But the deadness of the city disguises a much greater fear, to which there is a clue in the word \textit{arentem}, more than just melancholy description. One reason for Aeneas’ visit might be to determine whether the unexpected union of Andromache and Helenus has borne fruit, a child who would trump his and his Ascanius’ claims to be the heirs to Troy. The fears are well placed: according to Pausanias at least, Helenus and Andromache did have a child together, a son called Cestrinus.\footnote{Pausanias 1.11.1.} Virgil cannot afford to give him any presence here, and through that trickle of a river he tastefully but firmly intimates to us, if we were to suspect anything ourselves, that his Andromache is now sterile.\footnote{Cf. the emphasis on the empty tomb of Hector.} By contrast, Helenus’ subsequent prophecy of the Alban sow surrounded by her litter of thirty suckling piglets symbolizing the thirty cities of Alba and Aeneas’ descendants is the picture of rude and exuberant fertility (389–92).

The child that must now be superimposed on the dead Astyanax is not Cestrinus but Ascanius, and it is on his spitting image of the family face that Andromache next emphatically and conveniently fixates: \textit{o mihi sola mei super Astyanactis imago, / sic oculos, sic ille manus, sic ora ferebat; / et nunc aequali tecum pubesceret aeuo}, 489–91. In effect, she and Helenus are embracing an heir, their sister’s son, to carry on the \textit{gens Hectorea}.\footnote{I am anticipated here by Edgeworth 2001: 248–49, who stresses the ancient validity of inheritance through the maternal uncle, as well as its contemporary resonances, given Augustus’ choice of his sister’s son Marcellus as heir. Thanks to Laila Tims for alerting me to this.} There are no trees in this barren landscape,\footnote{Lucan furnishes the landscape of his Caesar’s visit to the genuine but obsolete Troy at BC 9.966 with rotting tree trunks (\textit{siluae steriles et putres robore trunci}), their sterility transferred from the dusty trickle of the real Xanthus at 974: \textit{in sicco serpentem puluere riuim}.} but what Andromache is doing, on her terms, is in line with the orthodoxies of both tree-grafting and its human equivalent, adoption. Ascanius is a graft more likely to “take” because he is visibly of the same stock.\footnote{Varro stipulates that grafting can occur \textit{si eiusdem generis est} (RR 1.40.6) so long as the graft improves the old stock.} But who is really in control of the merger? Initially, it is Aeneas whom Helenus endorses as heir to Troy (3.374–76).\footnote{Cf. 462 \textit{uade age et ingentem fer ad aethera Troiam}. Harrison 1981: 218–19.}

Aeneas’ parting speech to Andromache and Helenus, diplomatic and consoling as it seems, is open to a more ruthless interpretation. It starts with a gesture.
of envy: *uiuite felices*, 493. But what flourishing is there for the infertile, what life for the living dead?\(^\text{62}\) The only thing that has been born to them is peace: *uobis parta quies*, 495.\(^\text{63}\) With his cozy promise that their Troy and his Rome will be twin towns one day (kinship terms feature at 502: *cognatas urbes . . . populosque propinquos*), Aeneas responds by damning Priam’s descendants as secondary imitation (*effigiem Xanthi*, 497) or minor branch. His plans, if ever he reaches his destined city (*si quando*, 500: fate tactfully represented as contingency), to make the two cities into one superimposes Rome onto Buthrotum as Ascanius’ face blots out Astyanax’s: *unam faciemus utramque / Troiam animis*, 504–505. That, he says vaguely, will be the responsibility of “our children’s children” (505 *nostros . . . nepotes*). His *nostros* is ambiguous: it will only be the children’s children of *Aeneas*, because Helenus and Andromache will not have any themselves. Aeneas and Hector can afford to share *antiqua uirtus*; they cannot afford to share the future sovereignty of Rome.

**DEIPHOBUS**

*trunca dicimus certe [arborum] corpora et oculos germinum exustos ac multa simili sorte.*

*Pliny HN 17.218*

We speak of trees being mutilated and having the eyes of their buds burnt out and many misfortunes of a kind resembling our own.

Who is now left from the original family of Priam? In a convenient aside, Andromache has disposed of her sister-in-law Polyxena, who died at Troy, unfledged and untouched by any man: *Priameia uirgo* (3.321). Ilione, Priam’s eldest daughter, was dealt with in the ceremonial gift-giving at Dido’s court: the sceptre which she once bore (*quod gesserat olim*, 1.653) is handed over to the doomed queen, along with the ill-omened cloak and veil of Helen. There is no mention of her death, but we know that she married Polyestor, Polydorus’ murderer, thereby offering a potential drama of post-Iliadic strife and *nefas* among the Priamids that Virgil refuses to visit. Instead, Ilione receives safe and immediate reincarnation here in the form of the gift-giver, *Ilioneus*, devoted follower of Aeneas and champion of his superiority to all other Trojans. Paris, who has suffered relentless *damnatio memoriae* in unflattering asides and comparisons (*culpatus Paris*, 2.602; *ille Paris cum semiuiro comitatu*, 4.215; *Paris alter*, 7.321), is almost needlessly pronounced dead at 10.702–3: *Paris urbe paterna / occubat*. Cassandra is removed in a few lines in Book 2, but also, as Harrison 1981 points out, Anchises (3.182–83) conveniently recalls that she was behind

\(^{62}\) Grimm 1967.

\(^{63}\) Antenor, Aeneas’ rival as first bringer of Troy to Italy, is similarly “laid to rest” at 1.249: *nunc placida compostus pace quiescit*. See Leigh 1998 on variants of the Antenor legend.
the prediction that the Trojans would move to Italy. As for Creusa, another of Priam’s daughters and therefore a liability in her own right, Aeneas has already said goodbye to her in the ruins of Troy. It is essential, if she survives, that she not go on to breed again and dilute Ascanius’ claim. To ensure this, she appears in ghost-form; even her possible reincarnation, into a virtual nun, priestess of the Magna Mater, will not permit further issue. Dido, too, will not be allowed to bear any illegitimate paruulus Aeneas, no secondary replica like parua Troia.

We wait till Book 6 for another encounter with the Trojan past. In the Underworld, Aeneas has a series of strange meetings with the victims of his conscience: Palinurus, Dido, his father Anchises—and Priam’s son Deiphobus. As Princess Ilione was reincarnated as Ilioneus in Book 1, so Deiphobus finds a spurious sister in the Cumaean Sibyl, Deiphobe (a name that appears to be Virgil’s invention). Aeneas conspicuously fails to meet either Hector or Priam in the Underworld: Hector was signed off in Troy in Book 2; and if the rule is that the unburied continue to display their wounds (cf. Eriphyle at 446: crudelis nati monstrantem uulnera), Priam would presumably remain a headless trunk, neither recognizable nor capable of conversation. Deiphobus is their stand-in, hideously mutilated (laniatum, 494; trunca ... naris, 497), a nightmare simulation of the ravaged landscape of Troy itself (populata, raptis, 496). As with Polydorus, the encounter is a kind of exorcism, whose overt purpose is to exonerate and praise Aeneas for building a cenotaph to Deiphobus’ lost body. Deiphobus discharges him from guilt, telling him omnia Deiphobo soluisti (510); he claims kin with a family face whose distinguishing features—nose (inhonesto uulnere naris, 497—the only time the nose is mentioned in the Aeneid), ears, hands—have been obliterated, unlike the features stamped all over Ascanius’ face at Buthrotum: omni sola mei super Astyanactis imago. / sic oculos, sic ille manus, sic ora ferebat, 3.489–90. Indeed, the mutilation makes Deiphobus almost unrecognizable (ux ... agnuit, 498); in covering his shame, he exposes his all too visible stumps of hands (tegentem, 498); he and Aeneas only know each other through their voices (notis ... uocibus, 499). The vision of a man with ears and nose stripped off goes back partly to Homeric and tragic practices of maschalismos, partly to the most brutal moment in Odysseus’ punishment of the suitors, which must mean that castration, too, is an unmentionable undercurrent.

Deiphobus died when Helen, his new wife after Paris’ disappearance, opened the door of their bedchamber and admitted her old husband Menelaus to wreak a horrible revenge. Why should Aeneas feel so much guilt here? We need to go back to his encounter with Helen in Aeneid 2, the famous scene which may or may not be

64. Hubaux 1939.
66. Bleisch 1999: 212: “Aeneas attempts the Homeric rites of remembrance—heroic tumulus and epic fama—but in the Deiphobus episode these prove to be empty gestures.”
spurious but which either way represents an unmissable artistic opportunity, to unite the pious Trojan hero with the logical “other”—Greek, female, wicked—who is also his irrational double. Aeneas himself makes the connection: “I was the only one left,” he says (super unus eram, 567), before he spies Helen lurking in the shadows, guarding the threshold of Vesta. The impetus to kill her comes, it seems, from displaced rage against himself: she is the only one left on her side, free to escape Troy and return to her Greek family (“scilicet haec Spartam incolum patriasque Mycenas / aspiciet partoque ibit regina triumpho?” 577–78). Guarding the threshold of Vesta means “making sure you get home,” just like Aeneas bearing his Penates. Aeneas resents Helen for the reason he apparently resents himself: her gift for self-preservation. In Book 6 Helen opens another door, the one into her new husband’s bedchamber, the way Aeneas was rumored to have opened the gates of Troy to the Greeks, accessory to someone else’s dirty work.68 The body of his lost cousin reminds him of the homeland he has allowed to be devastated (populata) and ravaged (raptis), and another Priamid stem he has unconsciously allowed to be truncated. Deiphobus parts company with Aeneas, announcing at 545 explebo numerum (“I go to fill up the number”). There has been much speculation about these words,69 but one new possibility is that he recognizes that he is the last son of Priam to need extirpation. From this point on, Aeneas is largely free to leave behind his Trojan relatives. He will be confronted by a different set of dynastic problems in the second half of the poem.

ASCANIUS

omnia uero celerius adolescent stolonibus ablatis unamque in stirpem redactis alimentis.

Pliny HN 17.95

But all trees mature more quickly if the suckers are removed and the nourishing juices brought back into a single stem.

With Priam’s descendants gone, there is still one sticking point. Aeneas’ son Ascanius is his key to inheriting the line of Troy. If all other descendants of Priam are eliminated, Ascanius at least, Priam’s surviving grandson through Creusa, exists to mollify those genealogists who would label Aeneas a usurper.70 The corresponding danger, of course, is that Ascanius has a better claim than

69. Austin 1977 ad loc.
70. Edgeworth 2001 argues that Virgil chose Creusa to be Ascanius’ mother over the tradition, preferred by Livy (1.3.1), that he was Lavinia’s son, in order to make Ascanius and the Julian house heirs to Hector as well as to Aeneas. See also n.58 above.
Aeneas, and thus Virgil is often ambivalent about who the real founder of Rome will be.\(^71\) Aeneas’ job in his own epic is partly as regent to his son, who needs to be kept in a holding pattern of discreet management (cf. 9.173: Mnestheus and Serestus as *rectores et magistri iuuenum*), confined at a safe distance and position of inferiority until the end of the poem, which is all that is needed.\(^72\)

There is some indication that Virgil had a further difficulty with his sources, which is signaled in Ascanius’ very first appearance in Book 1, where Jupiter plays antiquarian and offers us a learned footnote about his various names: *at puer Ascanius, cui nunc cognomen Iulus / additur (Ilus erat, dum res stetit Ilia regno),* 267–68. Casali has called the passive *nunc ... additur* a “wonderfully ironic, meta-propagandistic touch.”\(^73\) Ennius had required no such link: his Trojan family tree went straight from Aeneas through Ilia to Romulus. Virgil needs actively to add the extra name Iulus to give his epic its teleological thrust towards the *gens Iulia*, who bolstered their dynastic claims with alleged descent from the royal house of Troy (as the finale of Jupiter’s speech reveals: *Iulius, a magno demissum nomen Iulo*, 288). But it comes at a significant cost. Virgil’s repair kit, blending two names into one and concentrating the stock, covers up a leaky tradition that Aeneas had two sons, Ascanius and Iulus, a tradition found in Livy and presumably current and disputed in Virgil’s time.\(^74\) These vestiges of a contemporary debate enable us to read the Buthrotum episode, for example, as a surrogate act of superimposition—Ascanius on top of Astyanax, Ascanius on top of Cestrinus—standing in for Virgil’s own necessary merger, the blending of Ascanius and Iulus. Yet concentrating a whole Priamid generation in Ascanius only has the effect of making him more dangerous.

What signs are there of the rivalry between genuine son and interloper father? The table-eating scene in *Aeneid* 7 allows the two to share centre stage. At the Trojans’ first picnic in Italy, as father and son lie, perhaps not incidentally, *sub ramis ... arboris altae* (7.108), there comes out of the mouth of babes and sucklings the solution to an old prophecy Aeneas attributes to Anchises. As little Ascanius points out, the wafers (*mesa*; compare Umbrian *mefa*, sacrificial cake) on which they have spread their food are the tables (*mensae*) they were destined improbably, back in Book 3, one day to eat.\(^75\) Except that Aeneas has notoriously

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71. See n.51 above.
74. Livy 1.3.2: *haud ambigam—quis enim rem tam ueterem pro certo affirmet—hicine fuerit Ascanius an maior quam hic, Creusa matre Ilio incolumi natus comesque inde paternae fugae, quem Iulus eundem Iulia gens auctorem nominis sui nuncupat*. Livy’s doubts are also alluded to by Servius ad *Aen.* 1.7: *Albani patres: Albam ab Ascanio conditam constat, sed a quo incertum est, utrum a Creusaean a Launiae filio: de qua re etiam Liius dubitat.*
75. Horsfall 1991: 97 discusses the presence in Greek foundation myths of both hunger and riddling oracular decrees.
misremembered who gave him the prophecy. As we know, it was the Harpy Celaeno, leader of a flock of bird-women banished from the house of Phineus, who vengefully ransack and foul other people’s feasts, as the Trojans learn to their cost in Aeneid 3 when they rustle the Harpies’ cattle and Celaeno descends with her sisters, spitting out a vicious curse: *uos dira fames nostraeque iniuria caedis / ambesas subigat malis absumere mensas* (“Dread hunger and the wrong of violent threats to us will force you to gnaw at your tables and chew them in your jaws,” 256–57).

At the moment of the prophecy’s fulfillment, it has often been noticed how violently the Trojans behave, tearing the rounds of bread (and perhaps by implication the *orbis terrarum*) with barbaric hands, jaws and teeth: *uiolare manu malisque audacibus orbem / fatalis crusti patulis nec parcer quadrīs* , 7.114–15. What is less remarked on is the rivalry the episode reveals between father and son. Ascanius—or rather, Iulus, as he is in this scene—utters words that are reduced by the narrator to a joke or a pun: *nec plura adludens* (“that was as far as his joke went,” 117). Is this a transitional moment in his adolescence, as speech and native wit bring him nearer to maturity? It seems not. The language Virgil uses to describe Aeneas’ ritual silencing of his son (to prevent a good omen from being cancelled out by a bad one) is suspiciously close to how one might describe a father seizing on a toddler’s words as he hears him speak for the first time.

Etymological history, early Italic to current Latin, is mapped onto a primal family scene: *primamque [uocem] loquentis ab ore / eripuit pater ac stupefactus numine pressit* (“As he spoke, the father seized on his first words and checked them, dumbstruck by their supernatural power,” 7.118–19). And over and above his voracious table manners, Aeneas’ hand movements here are suspiciously close to a Harpy’s grasp. *eripuit* (119) is in the same position in the line as *diripiunt*, used of the Harpies at 3.227; both words gloss the etymology of their name, from Greek ἁρπάζω “snatch.” What does it mean that we are reminded subliminally of the Harpies and genuine origins of the prophecy at this point? It is surely not just that the Trojans as a group are unflatteringly characterized as imperialist marauders (which was already obvious from their hungry raid in Book 3). Aeneas and his son are fighting not just for words but, when it comes to the crunch, for food itself; in the guise of ritual correctness, Aeneas is snatching something out of his own son’s mouth.

76. See O’Hara 2007: 82 for discussion, arguing that Virgil’s inconsistencies are always meaningful.
77. Though Horsfall 2000 ad loc. will not permit any hint of global colonization in *orbem* and *crusti* here: “‘crust’ does not enter into it.” Mack 1999: 141 speaks of the “language of profanation.”
78. Ascanius has of course already spoken at 5.670–73.
80. Rogerson 2005 and Oliensis 2009: 69 see Ascanius, through echoes of Euripides, transformed into a vulnerable Pentheus at the hands of the Trojan women at 5.672–73. In Book 7, it is Ascanius’ own father who almost risks fulfilling Dido’s prophecy at 4.602: *Ascanium patriisque*
Aeneid 7 in general marks a new start in the epic, an ambiguous ascent (maior rerum mihi nascitur ordo / maius opus moueo, 44–45) into military epic (witness the acrostic MARS at 600–604) under the sign of the Muse of love poetry, Erato.\textsuperscript{81} Marriage, homesteads, civilized life, even cooking are all swept away by the breach of peace initiated by human catalysts (Turnus, Amata and Ascanius) infected by the furor of Allecto. In a book that teems with children and childish things—the spinning top, the household pet, the old nanny Caieta, the teenager who insults a crone, Ascanius’ early speech and thoughtless joke (adludens)—one child is conspicuously missing and remains unborn. Virgil’s maior nascitur ordo is transferred directly from Eclogue 4, the Messianic prediction of an awaited but unidentified child and, with him, a restored Golden Age: magnus ab integro saeclorum nascitur ordo / iam redivit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna / iam nova progenies caelo demittitur alto. / tu modo nascenti puero, 4–7. But there is no such birth in Aeneid 7; Aeneas and Lavinia do not meet, let alone breed, and that event waits until Aeneas’ old age, beyond the scope of this epic.

Virgil has his greatest problem with the traditions here. He cannot afford to include competition for the burgeoning Ascanius/Iulus, the essential link between Aeneas and the Julian house. At the same time, he must justify the predicted alliance with Lavinia and give intimations of the future, healthy version of Trojan-Italian “mixed blood,” not the kind about to be spilled on the battlefield. Aeneas’ late-born or posthumous son by Lavinia, Silvius, had made the briefest appearance at 6.760–76, only to be buried in the woods by his fearful mother, presumably for his preservation in the face of hostility.\textsuperscript{82} Book 7 is full not just of children but of walking woods—the hundred spokesmen of Aeneas camouflaged with olive branches; Aeneas himself garlanded with a leafy branch (frondenti tempora ramo / implicat, 135–36, like the priest Umbro at 751: fronde super galeam et felici comptus oliua); bees hanging from one (ramo frondente, 67).\textsuperscript{83} In this sylvan setting, the names Silvius and Silvia take on a special significance.\textsuperscript{84} Perhaps Aeneas’s future son Silvius is to be found, after all, in disguise as Silvia’s stag, the

epulandum ponere mensis? The possibility of Aeneas’ invidia towards Ascanius has already been sketched by Jupiter at 4.234: Ascanione pater Romanas inuidet arces?\textsuperscript{81} Mack 1999 is perceptive on the derailment of reproductive and other norms in this book.\textsuperscript{82} 6.761–66: primus ad auras / aetherias Italo commixtus sanguine surget, / Siluius, Albanum nomen, tua postuma proles, / quem tibi longaeuo serum Lauinia coniunx / educet siluis regem / unde genus Longa nostrum dominabitur Alba (“He will be the first to rise to the upper air, blended with Italian blood, Silvius of Alban name, your late-born son, whom Lavinia in your old age will rear in the woods, a king and sire of kings from whom our race will rule in Alba Longa”). See Horsfall 2000: 320 on the myth of exposure/woodland hiding in the childhoods of future kings, comparing Aen. 9.673, 10.417 (cf. Camilla at 11.570, noted by Mack 1999: 139). See also Bremmer and Horsfall 1987: 32. According to Lucan, Aeneas was himself conceived in a wood: BC 9.970–71: siluaque latentis / Anchisae thalamos. See O’Hara 2007: 88–90 for a convenient discussion of Virgil’s “elegant inconsistency” (Horsfall 2000: ad 7.76) in the matter of Lavinia’s descendants.\textsuperscript{83} Horsfall 2000: 328 notes further woodland elements at 82, 172, 387.\textsuperscript{84} Horsfall 2000: 328 on Silvia as “a name of high resonances.”
woodland creature (errabat siluis, 491) adopted by the king’s herdsman Tyrrhus, “unwittingly” wounded, if not killed, by Ascanius, his rival half-brother, and endowed with human features in his suffering (gemens ... questu, 501; imploranti similis, 502). Yet Livy identifies Silvius as Ascanius’ son (casu quodam in siluis natus, 1.3.6), which neatly solves the tension, so why does Virgil invent this complication for himself? We might suspect that he positively wills some hint of a clash between future heirs, allowing Ascanius to rehearse wished-for dynastic bloodshed in, as usual, a desultory sporting imitation of his father’s more systematic enterprise. When Latinus in Aeneid 12 swears that peace in Italy will be everlasting after the final duel, he ratifies his oath with a Homeric adynaton (cf. Il. 1.234–39) But his sceptre, once a leafy woodland branch, now wrenched from its mother stock (cum semel in siluis imo de stirpe recisum / matre caret, 208–209), its foliage and stems (comes et bracchia “hair and arms,” 209) encased in gold, never to sprout again, is a deliberate hostage to fortune. Not only does this wasted graft remind us of the Golden Bough, glittering parasitic growth on the wrong tree: it also presages the conflict between wild and cultivated scions in the next generation. This conflict will guarantee the regrowth of Latinus’ stock but involve further bloodshed of the kind that has already been foreshadowed in the forest hunt.

It makes strange sense, I have argued, to read the Aeneid on arboricultural lines. Virgil involves himself in repeated acts of extirpation and splicing: performing a backwards act of grafting for Aeneas and Evander, for example, divided now, but once derived from the same stemma; merging Aeneas’ two sons; removing the last suckers of the House of Priam; limiting the threat posed to Aeneas by his own offspring. We have foreseen problems for him over the more substantial claim of his son Ascanius, and complications to come with the barely predicted emergence of a wild offshoot, Silvius, his posthumous Italian son by Lavinia (Italo commixtus sanguine, 6.760–66). One episode in particular, the story of Polydorus, where blood and trees play both an actual and a metaphorical role, is the key to understanding the genealogical tensions in the other scenes of succession.

One of Virgil’s earliest, most perceptive, and critical readers was, it seems, attentive to this metaphorical scheme. Ovid makes heavy use of grafting imagery

85. Jenkyns 1998: 512–13 makes the link, but reads the episode as an ultimately hopeful prediction of the union of the half-families. Mack 1999: 139 is more pessimistic: “[I]t does seem suggestive, in a poem that is full of dysfunctional families ... that Lavinia should rear Aeneas’ child in the woods.” Serv. ad Aen. 4.760 states that Silvius (like Silvia) was born “in the house of the shepherd Tyrrhus” (= Cato fr. 11 Peter); Bremmer 1989: 32. Schwengler 1853: 337ff. identifies the story of Silvius as a relatively late tradition, its elements based on the Romulus-Remus foundation myth. Ovid takes up imploranti similis to describe Actaeon, a human in deer’s form: Met. 3.240: similis ... roganti (cf. Mart. Spect. 30.3).

86. Vance 1973: 120 sees an analogy between the rootless sceptre and the exiled Trojan race (whose fall was compared to that of a tree), which is to be transformed into the Roman empire, “that supreme artifice of all.” It is more likely that the sceptre refers to Latinus’ stock.
in his little *Iliad* and *Aeneid* (*Met.* 13–14), starting with Ajax’s sneer at the interloper Ulysses in his appeal for his cousin Achilles’ arms at *Met.* 13.3: *qui ... inseres Aeacidis alienae nominis?* Explicit endorsement or criticism of Aeneas’ claim is absent, but it is tempting to read the story of the pruner Vertumnus and the graftress Pomona (*Met.* 14.623–771) as an allegory of his implantation. Vertumnus’ courtship speech uses aptly horticultural analogies of mutual support (elm and vine: 663–68) and the training and ripening of fruit (*flecti ... mitescere*, 697) to persuade Pomona to avoid wasting her fruit-bearing potential (*sic tibi nec uernum nascentia frigus adurat / poma nec excutiant rapidi florentia venti*, 763–64) and accept his graft (*mutua uulnera sensit*, 771). This orchard romance follows hot on the heels of Ovid’s account of Aeneas’ apotheosis, represented as the “ripe” conclusion to Virgil’s prematurely aborted epic: Aeneas is now *tempestiuus ... caelo* (584), Jupiter correspondingly *mitissimus* (587) and the sapling Ascanius already well established (*bene fundatis opibus crescentis Iuli*, 583). But, despite the uncontroversial line of descendants (Ascanius firmly spliced with Iulus: *Ascanii ... binominis*, 609; Silvius as his son, not rival: *succeedit Siluius illi*, 610; Silvius peacefully succeeded by Latinus, *cum sceptro*, 612; Remulus’ murder suppressed), Pomona’s innocent activity among her trees (*fisso modo cortice lignum / inserit et sucos alieno praestat alumno*, 14.630–31) does not quite allow us to forget the *primum alumnus*, Aeneas himself, whose forced but successful grafting established these uneventful generations of hardy fruit.
PRIAMUS

idem tamen sarmentum quod in materiam summittimus ab imo usque in tres pedes et semissem pampinabimus, et omnes eius intra id spatium nepotes enatos saepius decerpemus.

Columella 4.6.4

However, we will lop the leaves off this same stem which we allow to become hard wood, up to three and a half feet from the bottom, and regularly pull off all the baby shoots sprouting from it within this space.

But there is one more Priamid descendant I have conveniently forgotten. He makes his presence known in Aeneid 5, when we least expect it, but when the destiny and the destination of the Trojans are still very much in doubt. He takes part in the lusus Troiae, the military tattoo staged by the younger generation of Trojans in their parents’ sight (ante ora parentum). From a contemporary perspective, the Trojans’ descendants are looking at the faces of their own parents, their ancestors.90 Virgil explains that there are three formations, each with its leader—a kind of Trinacria appropriate for the Sicilian setting (cf. Trinacriae, 555). Atys and Ascanius are two of the leaders. But the first to be mentioned is a little “Priamus” —paruus Priamus—son of murdered Polites. A missing link so bold that he bears his grandfather’s name (nomen aui referens Priami) and is celebrated as clara progenies.91 Why did we never hear that Aeneas bundled him up and led him out of Troy along with Priam’s other grandson? Book 2 is filled with premonitions of scurrying little children: the priest Panthus leading away his little grandson; Astyanax led by Andromache to visit his grandparents; Ascanius toddling behind his father.92 Is it significant here that the threat young Priamus poses is diluted by the words auctura Italos; a rival scion is relegated to the backwoods, while the third cavalier Atys is destined to father the Latin Atii, ancestors of Augustus’ mother, and Iulus, primus inter pares, is tactfully given no destiny at all?93 The tattoo is a kind of frozen moment, like the witches’ visions in Macbeth: children and destiny intertwined. What it tells us is that there is always

90. Casali 2007b: 120.
91. Jenkyns 1998: 579: “No other name would have had quite the same force.” Serv. ad 5.564 cites Cato (Origines fr. 54 Peter) for the tradition, suppressed by Virgil, that Polites survived the fall of Troy to found Politorium in Latium.
92. Aen. 2.318–21 (Pantheus and grandson); 2.453–57 (Astyanax and Andromache); 2.723–24 (Iulus).
93. Peter Agrell points out to me that this must be deliberate while being curiously at odds with the general impression elsewhere that the Romans and no one else are the bearers of the Trojan heritage. He also reminds me that Diores is described as regius egregia Priami de stirpite Diores at 5.297 and killed with Amycus his brother at 12.509 (stirpite would seem to indicate direct descent). Unlike Polites, who is known from Homer, Diores seems to have been casually invented to finish third in a race and then to be killed.
the odd outcrop, the stray tendril that will one day need clipping, a reminder of the repressed past.94

Virgil’s Grafting Fantasy

I end by returning to real arboriculture and another kind of missing link, Virgil’s own teaching on trees in Georgic 2, and in particular the famous passage on grafting (69–82). As Richard Thomas points out (in his commentary and his paper “Tree Violation and Ambivalence in Virgil”), there is much that is strange here: first, Virgil’s promise in his mini-preface to avoid indirection and allegory (puzzling in itself: non hic te carmine ficto / atque per ambages et longa exorsa tenebo, 45–46); then his subsequent move, giving examples not just of plausible grafts but some that are biologically impossible, between trees of different species. Four out of six of his potential grafts are frankly unviable.95 Thomas finds especially “chilling” (1988a: 271) the extraordinary finale where the grafting process reveals its results: a tree still conscious of its separation from its new limbs ascends to the sky and marvels (miratur) at non sua poma, “its alien fruit.”96 “Successful arboriculture,” he writes, “is carried out at the price of transforming a natural, heavily personified tree, which fails in the end to recognize itself because of that transformation” (1988a: 272). Yet other readers have refused to find the account chilling.97 Virgil’s account of grafting can indeed be seen more positively: despite the minor agonies of the transition, his vision is of a new kind
of fertility in a world where “natural” trees run the risk of being sterile, infelices; the new ones rise swiftly and triumphantly to the sky, providing shade for future generations, whereas degeneracy is a hazard among those that self-fertilize.

Virgil’s injunction not to allegorize tempts us to try precisely that. It may well be, for a start, that the passage has a metapoetic aspect: the Roman poet looks favorably on his novel adaptation of Greek models. But it is also possible to translate it into dynastic terms. On that level, it can be seen to be wrestling with a contemporary dilemma, an ideological clash between the virtues of nature and new technology, which reflects a further clash in the human sphere between the ideal of natural succession and the pragmatics of adoption. Virgil is actually more positive about artificial measures than, say, Pliny, because he is thinking how best to package the survival strategy of the Julian house. Adoption, common enough among the Roman aristocracy but still dubious according to certain fundamentalist moralities, was now a crucial alternative to genetic reproduction, both to justify Augustus’ succession and to maximize his potential heirs. However violent it was, however incompatible with “nature” and with Virgil’s own sympathies with uprooted ancient trees and jettisoned dead wood, was this the moment for grafting to be presented somehow as a miracle solution?

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98. This is how Clément-Tarantino 2006 interprets it, drawing on Pucci 1998: 99–108 (who discusses grafting metaphors, e.g. trahere, inserere, subtrahere, transferre, used of the conflation of texts and perception of literary allusions). See also Deremetz 2009. For grafting/entwining in an intratextual context, see Gowers 2000: 134 on Columella’s terms subnectere, subtexere, and implicare for the gardening poem tacked onto his De Agricultura.

99. Stat. Silu. 2.1.84–88 (on Atedius Melior’s dead urna Glaucias) puts a positive slant on fostering/adoption: non omnia sanguis / proximus aut serie generis demissa propago / alligat; interius nova saepe ascitaque serpunt / pigmenta conexis. natos genuisse esse, / elegisse iuuet (“Proximity of blood and linear descent are not the only forms of bond. New, adopted children often find a deeper place in one’s affection than one’s own kin. Birth children are a duty, chosen ones a joy”). A grafting image reinforces this, 101–102: uidi ego transertos alieno in robore ramos / altius ire suis (“I have seen branches grafted on another tree grow higher than its own”). Cf. Silu. 5.5.10–11 (on the death of a favourite boy): non de stirpe quidem nec qui mea nomina ferret / oraque (“not indeed of my stock, bearing my name and face”), 72: inserui uitae (“I implanted him in my life”). See Henderson 2007: 277n.59 on Statius’ self-insertion into a social and cultural nexus.

100. See Edgeworth 2001 on the Aeneid’s inheritance strategies (Ascanius made heir to his uncle Hector) as complementary to Augustus’ adoption of his nephew Marcellus. Ovid Fasti 4.22 refers to Augustus’ own adoption into a great house: adoptiua nobilitate. Sue. Aug. 92 tells how he carefully transplanted to his conservatory a palm tree he found growing in a crevice in front of his house and how he was flattered enough that an ancient oak tree on Capri revived on his arrival there that he made it his business to acquire the island; Dio 53.16.4 tells how he was granted the right to plant two laurel trees or bushes in front of his house (Flory 1989: 348 and n.15). Dion. Hal. 1.64.5 observed a plantation of trees (“well worth seeing”) surrounding the tomb of Aeneas at Lavinium.

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