Herakles' *virtus* Between Etruscans and Romans[1]

Rivka Gersht

The legend of Herakles' arrival at the Tiber, his cult and his deeds on Italian soil preceded even the legend of Rome' foundation. He was recognized as a god in Italy, and the Palatine dwellers were the first to dedicate a tithe of their goods to him to ensure a happy and prosperous life. Much has been written about the distinct directions in which the legend and the cult of Herakles took root in Italy in contrast to the Greek mainland. Equally copious is the scholarly literature relating to the complexities of the literary and visual representations of the mortal hero who became a god by virtue of his own *virtus*. Recently Erika Simon has claimed that Herakles was not a hero in Etruria as he had been in Greece, but a god from the very beginning.[2] Yet, the evidence is not as clear-cut as it is made to appear. In many Etruscan representations Herakles, the hero, is shown in a variety of mythical contexts that can be regarded as significant landmarks along the pathway to his heavenly future life.[3]

In the late sixth century, the Greek myth of the hero's apotheosis was adopted for Etruscan temple ornamentation. Six fragmentary terracotta groups of *acroteria* representing Herakles/Hercle and Athena/Menrva have been identified. One group decorated a small temple found below the church of Sant'Omobono in the Forum Boarium in Rome. Two groups come from the Portonaccio sanctuary in Veii, and three others are from Cerveteri, Pyrgi and Satricum. The idea that the Sant'Omobono group, and possibly the others, served as a propaganda tool for late sixth-century Etruscan kings has appealed to many scholars, especially when associated with Tarquinius Superbus. As a descendant of the wealthy Corinthian family of the Bacchiads, Tarquinius would have been expected to honor Herakles, their ancestral Greek demigod who, in turn, would have bestowed legitimacy on his rule.[4] The six *acroteria* groups show the hero Herakles in company with Athena who is leading him to Olympus. By contrast, a bronze relief associated with a funerary context of the same period represents him shaking hands with Zeus, as though already accepted among the Olympians.[5] The juxtaposition between the *acroteria* groups and the bronze relief seems to suggest that

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2 Based on the sanctuaries associated with Hercle/Herecele (the Etruscan Herakles) in Etruria and Latium, and the liver from Piacenza (Simon 2006: 51, 58). The liver however is dated to 100.

3 For the variety of representations see Schwarz 1990.

4 Lulof 2000; Winter 2005; Sommella Mura 1977: 99-126; Sommella Mura 1981; Cornell 1995: 145, 147-149; Briquel 1999.

5 The relief is a fragment of a chariot (lady's carriage?) or a piece of furniture from a tomb in Castel San Mariano, Perugia: Sprenger and Bartoloni 1983: 109 cat. 108-109, fig. 109.

the theme of Herakles' apotheosis extended beyond the public realm into the private, where it acquired a different significance.

The first part of my study investigates the contribution of Herakles' apotheosis in the private domain through an analysis of several Etruscan mirrors. The reexamination of the mirrors raises various theoretical issues such as how far did Etruscan artists go in depicting and reworking specific Greek myths of Herakles the hero, and in personifying abstract qualities associated with his *virtus*. The second part of the study traces the growth of the Roman Herakles, from a newcomer informal guest to an emblem of the emperor's *virtus* and divine power. Finally, I juxtapose the Etruscan and Roman interpretations of Herakles' *virtus* by presenting the question about the ways Rome accepted or rejected Etruscan methods of visualizing myths and ideologies.

1. Observations on Hercle/Herecele, the Etruscan Herakles

Four scenes depicted on Etruscan mirrors, dating from the second decade of the fifth century to the last quarter of the third century, will serve to demonstrate the Etruscan formulation of Herakles' journey to Olympus: Hercle/Herecele carrying Mlacuch (Fig. 1); Hercle's presentation of Epiur/Epeur to Menrva/Athena (Figs. 2-4) and to Tinia/Zeus (Fig. 5); and Hercle's adoption by Uni/Hera (Figs. 7-8). Each scene raises questions that have baffled scholars for years.

The earliest among the scenes is that of Herecele and Mlacuch (Fig. 1, both figures are labeled). Many attempts have been made to identify Mlacuch. It has been suggested that the name could be that of a goddess or a feminine genius, or a heroine, a chthonic goddess or a water demon. Deianeira, Alcestis, Uni, Thetis, Turan and Menrva have all been considered. It has been even argued that Mlacuch is derived from the Phoenician word for queen, mlk.[6] Colonna suggested that Mlacuch should be identified with Bona Dea. He based his identification on the comparison made by Agostiniani between the Etruscan *mlaχ mlakas*, the Greek *kalos kalo* and the Faliscan *duenom duenas*, as well as on the myth of Hercules' seduction of Fauna, who was associated with Bona Dea. Colonna, however, gave no explanation for the ending *–uch* of Mlacuch.[7] Van der Meer, who doubted that the Italic-Roman myth of Hercules and Fauna could have been rendered as early as 480, objected to Colonna's interpretation, and argued, by analogy, that Mlacuch like *munth-uch* (meaning: beauty giving/making) is someone 'who makes beautiful' or 'a giving (one)'. Accordingly, he assumed that Mlacuch is Deianeira, one of Herakles' wives, who wished to gain back her husband's love by giving him a mixture of seed and blood from Nessos' wound.[8] Since not one of the suggested theories has won the day, Thomson de Grummond put forward the following question: 'Why can we not simply say that here, as with Cacu, Epiur, ... we have an Etruscan myth, the heroine of which story is a lady named Mlacuch?'[9]

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6 Pallottino 1936: 106; Delatte 1935; Ducati 1927: 328; Gerhard 1863: 147-150; Bayet 1926: 198-217; De Ruyt 1936.

7 Colonna 1987 and 1993: 14-25; Agostiniani 1981.

8 Van der Meer 1995: 43-46.

9 Thomson de Grummond 2006: 188.

The answer is quite simple. Unlike the local myth of Cacu, the Seer captured by the Vipinas/Vibenna brothers,[10] whose name might have well been Etruscan,[11] the Epiur (Figs. 3, 5) and Mlacuch (Fig. 1) episodes are affiliated with the Greek tradition of the Herakles' myth. The inscriptions identifying Epiur and Mlacuch on the mirrors stand for the figures, but they are definitely not their names.

In an article published in 1995, I argued that the word *Mlacuχ* is derived from *mul-*,[12] and that the female figure labeled *Mlacuχ* and carried by Herecele is Iole. In Etruscan inscriptions *mulu* is read as 'given'[13] and *Mulaχ* as 'and one should give'.[14] With *-uχ* as suffix, *Mulaχ* became *Mulaχ-uχ*. For reason of phonetic difficulties, the first vowel –u– was dropped and the consonantal sound *–χ–* was replaced by –c.[15] *Mlacuχ* is accordingly 'and the one that should have been given'.

The only female figure corresponding to the meaning put forward for *Mlacuχ* is Iole, Eurytos' daughter. Euyrtos, king of Oechalia, had promised to give Iole in marriage to the man who would be able to defeat him and his sons in an archery contest. Herakles won, but Eurytos did not keep his promise. Consequently Iole, the pledge of honor, was taken captive by Herakles.[16] That the Etruscans must have been familiar with the Oechalia myth might be deduced from the fact that some sixth-and fifth-century Greek vases depicting the myth were found on Etrurian soil, in Cerveteri, Vulci and Chiusi.[17] On one of these vases, Herakles meets Iole banqueting in Oechalia, the others depict the

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10 Van der Meer 1995: 31-32; Bonfante and Swaddling 2006: 52-53; Thomson de Grummond 2006a: 31. The myth is known only from representations on a late fourth-third century Etruscan mirror (Small 1982: 4, 113 cat. 1; Mavleev 1986a: 175 cat. 1) and on several second century urns (Small 1982: 113-123 cat. 2-9; Mavleev 1986a: 175 cat. 2-5). However, the Vibenna brothers are familiar from other Etruscan archaeological evidence and from ancient legends of Roman history: Cornell 1995: 134-145; Thomson de Grummond 2006: 174-179; The Claudian Table *CIL* XIII.1668 = *ILS* 212; Varro, *Ling.* 5.46; Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.65; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.36.2.

11 Small (1982: 6-10) suggests that Cacu is an Etruscan name and has nothing to do with the Greek κακός The Etruscan Cacu should not be confused with Cacus who stole part of Geryon's cattle which Herakles drove through Italy from Erythrea. See below section 2 and notes 65-66.

12 To offer, dedicate as an *ex-voto*: Bonfante and Bonfante 2002: 217.

13 Someone or something given in present or past tense; e.g. Bonfante and Bonfante 2002: 84; Wallace 2008: 73 (6.7a), 98 (8.8a), 98-99 (8.9), 112 (8.36),181 (10.67), 224 (12.11b).

14 Mula 'give', jussive + *-χ* 'and', enclitic conj.: Wallace 2008: 116 (8.45b).

15 See for example the different spellings of *θ*ana*χ*vil, *θ*ane*χ*vil, *θ*anucvil, *θ*an*χ*vil in Wallace 2008: 37 (3.19.7d, 3.19.8.d), and the spelling of the word beautiful when written in nom./acc. [mla*χ*] and in first gen. [mlakas] in Agostiniani 1981: 106,108 and Wallace 2008: 157 (10.31).

16 The myth is told by Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 2.6.1, 2.7.7). On the literary sources for the various versions of the myth see: Huxley 1969: 105-106,177-179; Matthews 1974: 24-25,48,77,129-130; Olmos Romera 1977: 142-147; Olmos 1988: 117 and 1990: 701.

17 The Greek vases depicting the Oechalia myth are dated to the sixth and fifth century: Olmos Romera 1977; Olmos 1988: 118 nos.1-7 and 1990: 701-702 nos.1-5.

archery contest and Herakles' vengeance.[18] I also propose to interpret the scene on the calyx-krater by the Aegisthus Painter in the Louvre as Herakles implementing Eurytos' promise by taking his prize by force in the presence of Apollo.[19] The written source for this scene and other early Greek and Etruscan representations of the myth of Herakles and Iole was probably the *Sack of Oechalia*, a lost epos attributed to Kreophylos of Samos, an epic poet contemporary of Homer.[20]

It is commonly accepted that the composition of Herecele and Mlacuch (Fig. 1) is based on Greek prototypes. The scenes of Peleus and Thetis by Peithinos, Theseus and Helen by Euthymides, and Tityos abducting Leto by Phintias, are possible sources of inspiration. All three vases were found in Vulci, and since a Vulcian origin has been suggested for the Etruscan mirror in the British Museum, each one of them, theoretically, could have inspired the mirror designer.[21] The closest resemblance is that between the mirror and Phintias' painting of Tityos carrying off Leto. In both, a bow and a quiver are seen in the background on the left. In both the women are lifted but, unlike Leto, Mlacuch is not struggling.[22]

The second episode in the sequence of events related to Herakles' apotheosis is that of Hercle/Herakles presenting Epiur/Epeur to Menrva/Athena (Figs. 2-4) and to Tinia/Zeus (Fig. 5) on late fifth- to late fourth-century mirrors. 'The etymology of the name Epiur', writes Van der Meer (1995: 97), 'is not explained. It may be a pure Etruscan first name, like Aranthur. Another possibility is that Epiur refers to his function of seer if the word is connected with Greek ἔπος (story) and Umbrian *vepur* (word)'. Based on Festus,[23] Cicero,[24] and the lower zone of the mirror from Vulci (Fig. 5)[25] Van der Meer prefers to associate Epiur in the upper zone with Tages, Herakles' son, and to identify the scene as the seer's apotheosis.[26] However, in Festus Herakles is not mentioned, and Tages is the son of Genius, a grandson of Jupiter (the Etruscan

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18 The identification of two other vases — Herakles shooting Eurytos and the match between Apollo and Eurytos — are doubtful; see Olmos 1988: 118 nos. 8-9.

19 Gersht 1995: 92-93, with references to former identifications of the scene as Apollo pursuing Tityos, who is clasping either Leto or Ge with his left arm.

20 Huxley 1969: 105-6; Nagy 2010: 328.

21 Pfister-Roesgen 1975: 89-92; Boardman 1975: Figs. 214.1 (Peithinos), 34.1 (Euthymides), 41.1 (Phintias); Haynes 1985: 272.

22 Gersht 1995: 94 and figs.1 and 4.

23 492L: *Tages nomine, Genii filius, nepos Iovis, puer dicitur discipulinam haruspicii dedisse duodecim populis Etruriae.* ('It is said that a boy named Tages, son of Genius, grandson of Jupiter gave the discipline of divination to the twelve peoples of Etruria').

24 *De div.* 2.23.50: *Is autem Tages, ut in libris est Etruscorum, puerili specie dicitur visus, sed senili fuisse prudentia.* ('Now this Tages, according to the Etruscan annals, is said to have had the appearance of a boy, but the wisdom of a seer'. Translated by W.A. Falconer for the Loeb Classical Library).

25 In the center Elinai is shown shaking hands with Achmemrun/Agamemnon as Menle/Menelaus stands by. To her right a winged Mean crowns Elchsentre/Paris, as Aevas/Ajax gazes at the scene from the far left of the mirror. On the far right a winged Lasa turns her back to the group (Brendel 1978: 369-370; Van der Meer 1995: 95; Thomson de Grummond 2006: 66).

26 Van der Meer 1995: 95-97.

Tinia). There is also no mention of Tages' apotheosis either in Festus or in any other source.[27]

Rebuffat-Emmanuel has noted that 'Epiur' on the third-century mirror in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Fig. 5) could be derived from Euphorion, the winged son born from the posthumous union of Achilles and Helen in the Elysian Fields.[28] This interpretation seems to agree with the depiction on the lower zone of the mirror.[29] But a presentation of Euphorion to Tinia by Hercle on the upper zone does not make sense. Herakles plays no part in Ptolemy Hephaestion's version of the myth (known only from Photius), while Zeus, we are told, caught Euphorion and knocked him down with a blow in the isle of Melos, where he continued the pursuit and changed the local nymphs into frogs because they had given Euphorion a proper burial. On other mirrors, Epiur is not depicted as winged.

> It has been suggested', argues Thomson de Grummond (2006: 62-63), 'that Hercle and Menrva are the divine protectors and foster parents of Epiur, and it is the task of Hercle to deliver the child to the appropriate place. Perhaps he first receives the child (rather than presenting him) at the throne of Tinia, then takes Epiur to be received by Menrva. The interaction with Tinia may relate to the role of the great god in promoting fertility, reproduction and rearing children. The scene of Hercle and Menrva with the older Epiur may refer to the conclusion of the rearing and education of the youth, and indicate that Hercle must return him to society.

However, none of these interpretations is really acceptable, nor can Epiur be an Etruscan god or daemon as argued by Mavleev.[30] The alleged Tages version on the mirrors does not agree with what we know about Tages from literary sources.[31] Even more bizarre is the scenario of Hercle and Menrva as foster parents, which eventually leaves the identity of Epiur as well as the appropriate place of his delivery unclear. Besides, in each mirror Epiur is depicted in a different fashion — he is shown as winged on one (Fig. 5), a baby on others (Hamburg[32] and Göttingen, Fig. 4), a youth on a mirror in Berlin (Fig. 3), and as a tiny elderly bald man on another mirror in Berlin (Fig. 2). Such inconsistency, unusual in Etruscan depictions of mythical figures, suggests an

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27 For the identification of Epiur as Hercle's son see also Bayet 1926: 154-159; De Ruyt 1936: 670.

28 Rebuffat-Emmanuel 1974: 521-524. The myth is known from Ptolemy Hephaestion in Phot. *Bibl.* cod.190 [149a,18-23]:
καὶ ὡς Ἑλένης καὶ Ἀχιλλέως ἐν μακάρων νήσοις παῖς πτερωτὸς γεγόνοι, ὃν διὰ τὸ τῆς χώρας εὔφρον Εὐφορίωνα ὠνόμασαν καὶ ὡς ἐρᾷ τούτου Ζεύς, καὶ ἀποτυχὼν κεραυνοῖ ἐν Μήλῳ τῇ νήσῳ καταλαβὼν διωκόμενον, καὶ τὰς νύμφας, ὅτι θάψειαν αὐτόν, εἰς βατράχους μετέβαλε.

29 See n. 25 above.

30 Mavleev 1986: 810.

31 On Tages see nn. 23 and 24 above and Wood 1980; Domenici 2007: 20-27; Thomson de Grummond 2006a: 27-30. Had Epiur been associated with divination, it should have been the one predicting Herakles' future after death, as told by Soph. *Trach.* 76-82, and by Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.4.12.

32 Van der Meer 1995: 94 fig. 40.

interpretation of Epiur as a personified abstract concept.[33] It alone explains the various guises of Epiur (or more precisely of the figure held by Hercle since that figure is not always labeled).

To understand Epiur/Epeur we need to investigate what the personified concept stands for. The key lies in the sequence of events following the sack of Oechalia and the abduction of Mlachuch/Iole. These occurred after Herakles had accomplished his deeds and was ready to be enrolled among the Olympians. The term Epiur/Epeur could have been derived from the Greek ἐπαύρεσις (meaning enjoyment of the fruit of a thing; enjoy the benefit of a thing, whether good or bad; reap the fruits; fruition).[34] In the Etruscan language, Greek and Italic diphthongs were usually preserved, except for certain cases in which one diphthong was replaced by another. There was also a general trend towards the simplification of two different vowels that form a diphthong into a single vowel. Around 500 words were heavily stressed or accented on the first syllable. The rest of the word was proportionately less stressed, and vowels dropped out (syncope), or were replaced by less strong vowels.[35] To form the concept Epiur/Epeur the Etruscans probably dropped the ending -εσις from ἐπαύρεσις, and replaced the -α- with -ε- (Fig. 5) or alternately with -ι- (Fig 3), which was initially part of the prefix in ἐπ(ι)αύρεσις. If indeed Epiur/Epeur stemmed from ἐπαύρεσις it should be considered a signifier of the choice Herakles/Hercle made at the cross-roads,[36] an emblem of his earthly life achievements and deeds, which he first presents to Menrva and then to his father Tinia.

Epiur/Epeur is perhaps the Etruscan interpretation of the cornucopia held by either Herakles or a bearded man in several fifth- and fourth-century vase paintings. Scholars tend to interpret the bearded man as Plouto/Hades or Palaimon-Melikertes,[37] and the cornucopia as an emblem of either land fertility (when it is full) or as life-giving water (when it is empty).[38] The identification of the bearded man as Palaimon-Melikertes is neither corroborated by inscriptions nor attested in literary sources,[39] hence it makes one

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33 ἐπίουρος (= guardian, watcher, ward) has been considered and rejected: Rebuffat-Emmanuel 1974: 523; Mavleev 1986: 810.

34 From ἐπ-αυρέω and -αυρίσκω (LSJ 1996: 612).

35 Bonfante and Bonfante 2002: 80-81; Wallace 2008: 32-40.

36 Prodicus' story as reflected in Xen. *Mem.* 2.1.21-34; Philostr. *VA* 6.10.5-6.

37 Schauenburg 1986; Vollkommer 1988: 43-45. Ino, the daughter of Kadmos king of Thebes, and her husband Athamas incurred the wrath of Hera when they fostered the infant Dionysos. Hera drove Athamas into a murderous rage and he slew his eldest son. Ino, fleeing from her husband, threw herself and her son Melikertes into the sea from a cliff. They were welcomed into the company of the marine gods and renamed Leukothea (the White Goddess) and Palaimon. On this and other versions of the legend see Pache 2004: Chap. 6.

38 Hartwig 1883; Michael Gais 1978: 367-368.

39 In all literary sources and in most works of art Palaimon-Melikertes is depicted as a boy: Pache 2004: Chap. 6; Vikela and Vollkommer 1992. Likewise, as a boy he is shown in Leukothea's arms in the fragmentary terracotta group at Sant'Omobono in Rome. The theme of Leukothea and Palaimon-Melikertes was chosen for the temple of Mater Matuta for a reason. Leukothea and Melikertes were the Greek counterparts of Mater Matuta and Portunus (Ov. *Fast.* 6.545-547), and were associated with the Bacchiads, the Corinthian

wonder why an allegedly lost story about Herakles and Palaimon-Melikertes is a better interpretation than the well-known story of his apotheosis.

In view of the multiple Greek and Roman depictions of Herakles holding a laden cornucopia,[40] I would like to argue that in certain cases the cornucopia should be interpreted as the symbolic outcome of Herakles' deeds (his *aretē*/*virtus*) which was presented to Zeus by the hero on the occasion of his apotheosis.[41] This is the scene that also appears on Greek-Italian and Attic vases, such as the Apulian column-krater by the Ariadne Painter in Naples,[42] and the Attic bell-krater in the Benevento Museum,[43] both dated to the fifth century, and the Campanian bell-krater in the Eton Collection, Windsor, dated to the fourth century (Fig. 6).[44] In the first Herakles holds the cornucopia in front of Zeus in the presence of Athena and Hermes; in the second, Herakles, after handing over the cornucopia to Zeus, shakes hands with his father in the presence of Athena; in the third, Herakles leans on his club and stretches his right hand toward the cornucopia which he has just delivered to Zeus in the presence of Hera.

Furthermore, other characters in the scenes of Hercle presenting Epiur/Epeur support the interpretation that the latter's presence relates to Hercle's death and apotheosis. The supporting cast includes Munthuch (here the cosmic order[45]) who is crowning Hercle

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ancestors of Tarquinius Superbus, who is believed to be responsible for the architectural decoration of the temple (Winter 2005: 246). When Leukothea-Ino and Palaimon-Melikertes arrived safely at the mouth of the Tiber Ino was attacked by maenads who tried to snatch her son. Ino cried for help and was rescued by Herakles (Ov. *Fast.* 6.499-526) whose image, accompanied by Athena, also decorates the temple of Mater Matuta (see the introduction above). The version told by Ovid, as the terracotta groups indicate, was already known in the sixth century.

40 Hartwig 1883: 45-73; Michael Gais 1978: 367 fig. 18; Palagia 1988: 756-758 cat. 555-579.

41 Other versions alluding to Herakles' apotheosis in works of art of the sixth to the fourth century show Herakles being served by Athena with oinochoe in the presence of other deities or joined with her in *dexiosis*: Shapiro 1989: 160 and Pl. 61c; Vollkommer 1988: 46 cat. 298, 304-307 and fig. 60 on p. 47.

42 Vollkommer 1988: 44-45, cat. 293; Boardman *et al.* 1990: 179 no. 3493; Trendall and Cambitoglou 1978: 25, no. 108. Cambitoglou and Trendall (1961: 17, no. 6 [57], Pl. 4, fig. 16) locate the scene at Olympus but leave the cornucopia unexplained: 'On the column-krater in Naples the hero is represented holding the horn of plenty and seated between Zeus, Athena and Hermes. The scene is no doubt taking place on Mount Olympus and is conceived as an incident in the story of the Apotheosis'.

43 Vollkommer 1988: 43-44, cat. 285, fig. 57 on p. 45; Boardman *et al.* 1990: 179 no. 3489; Vikela and Vollkommer 1992: 442 no. 56.

44 Vollkommer 1988: 44-45, cat. 292; Boardman *et al.* 1990: 179 no. 3494; Vikela and Vollkommer 1992: 442 no. 60; Trendall 1967: 262, no. 237. Trendall takes Beazley and Schauenburg's side in interpreting the scene: 'The subject has been variously interpreted. A.B. Cook (1964, Vol.I: 501-502, Pl. XXXI) takes it to represent Herakles in Olympus feasting on the dainties in the cornucopia of Zeus, but Beazley and Schauenburg (1953: 44, No.13) more rightly see it as Herakles in the underworld'.

45 It has been suggested that Munthuch is etymologically related to the Latin word *mundus* thus referring to both the cosmos and cosmetics: Pfiffig 1975: 282; de Grummond 2000-2001: 19; Thomson de Grummond 2006: 160.

for his success on the mirror in Berlin (Fig. 2);[46] Leinth (Death) and Ganymedes on the fragmentary mirror in Hamburg,[47] and Thalna and Turan[48] (if the female figure on the left is indeed Turan), who are seated on both sides of the upper frieze of the Bibliothèque Nationale mirror (Fig. 5). Leinth does not indicate that Epiur will die as Van der Meer suggests.[49] Rather Leinth indicates that the act of representing Epiur to Menrva followed Hercle's death, and that the hero, like Ganymedes (on the lower exergue), will from now on dwell with the gods.[50] Thalna and Turan refer to Herakles' adoption by Hera and to his forthcoming union with Hebe.

On the adoption ceremony of Herakles we learn from Diodorus Siculus (4. 39.2) who writes that after Herakles' apotheosis

> Zeus persuaded Hera to adopt him as her son and henceforth for all time to cherish him with a mother's love, and this adoption ... took place in the following manner. Hera lay upon a bed, and drawing Herakles close to her body then let him fall through her garments to the ground, imitating in this way the actual birth.[51]

The only known visual example that can likely be associated with Herakles' adoption ceremony as told by Diodorus Siculus is the Etruscan mirror in the Bibliothèque Nationale (unlabeled). It shows a woman lying in bed and holding a male figure wrapped in her dress (Fig. 9).[52] In the more common examples the goddess is suckling Hercle while sitting on her throne.[53] The suckling imageries (Figs. 7-8) prove that the adoption version of the myth was known to the Etruscans as early as the fifth century.[54] 'The goddess's milk', notes Bonfante (1997: 187), 'has a special power. Because it can bestow divinity or protection, the act of breast feeding is an important ritual, and its representation a powerful religious image'.

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46 Thomson de Grummond 2006: 62, fig. IV.15 on p. 67.

47 Van der Meer 1995: 95, fig. 40 on p. 94; Camporeale 1992: 249 no. 1. On Leinth as death-carrier see Pfiffig 1975: 281-282.

48 Thalna is the goddess associated with childbirth, childcare and fecundity (Pfiffig 1975: 303-304; Bonfante 2006: 20; Camporeale 1994). Turan is the Etruscan goddess of Love and Beauty associated with the Greek Aphrodite (Pfiffig 1975: 260-263; Simon 2006: 46, 60).

49 1995: 49 and fig. 40.

50 Supporting this interpretation is the depiction of Hercle accompanied by Kerberos, and crowned by Mean (the goddess associated with victory) in the presence of Leinth on a fourth-century mirror in Perugia: Thomson de Grummond 2006: 157 fig. VII.12; Camporeale 1992: 249 no. 3.

51 Translated by C.H. Oldfather for the Loeb Classical Library. ... τὴν Ἥραν ἀναβᾶσαν ἐπὶ κλίνην καὶ τὸν Ἡρακλέα προσλαβομένην πρὸς τὸ σῶμα διὰ τῶν ἐνδυμάτων ἀφεῖναι πρὸς τὴν γῆν, μιμουμένην τὴν ἀληθινὴν γένεσιν.

52 Renard 1964: 617 and Pl. 31:4. Rebuffat-Emmanuel (1974: 39-43 no. 1284, 541-543 Pls.2, 91) denies the identification of Alkmene giving birth to Hercle, offered by Babelon and Blanchet (1895: 499-500, no. 1284), and identifies the scene as the birth of Ermania (=Hermione) based on a similar, yet not identical, depiction on a mid-fifth-century labeled mirror from Praeneste, now in Villa Giulia, Rome. It may well be that she is right.

53 Renard 1964: Pls. 30:1-2, 31:3.

54 Schwarz 1990: 253.

The suckling of Herakles as a little boy[55] and as a full-grown hero is believed to be a novelty of both Greek art created in central and southern Italy, and Etruscan art.[56] In all representations the adoption occurs in front of an audience of deities that renders the event a theatrical landscape. In one adoption scene (Fig. 7), the Etruscan mirror from Volterra in Florence, the bearded Hercle leans over towards Uni/Hera to suckle in front of Tinia/Zeus who stands behind the throne of his wife along with Hebe, an unknown female figure, and Apollo on his right. Tinia holds a tablet inscribed with seven words: '*Eca: sren: tva: iχnac: hercle: unial: clan: θra sce*', meaning: 'this scene (?) shows (?) how/that Hercle became the son of Uni'.[57]

The Silenus in the lunette has, according to Beazely, no obvious connection with the main scene.[58] Other scholars think otherwise. Sestieri interprets the lunette as a mirror-prophesy (κατοπτρομαντεία) connected with Herakles' initiation into the Eleusian mysteries,[59] an interpretation acknowledged as plausible by Thomson de Grumond.[60] If indeed a mirror prophesy is depicted, it should rather be interpreted as simultaneously pointing to the hero's past (deeds), present (accepted at Olympus) and future (taking Hebe in marriage). The mirror-prophesy is, however, questioned by Van der Meer (1995: 129), who notes that:

> sileni or satyrs on Etruscan and Praenestine mirrors and *cistas* usually make mimicking gestures. It may be supposed that the satyr is imitating Herakles' drinking. With this visual duplication of a motif, the engraver intended to compare the fortune-bringing wine with Hera's milk. In late antiquity her milk was compared even with ambrosia (Nonnus, *Dion.*35.326).

Brendel (1978: 368), on the other hand, pointed to the contrast between wine and milk:

> Milk and wine were opposites in ancient cult — the active side of religion; and Hera and the Sileni were enemies of old. Surely the onlooker was counted upon to notice this secondary contrast.

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55 After Herakles vanquished the snakes sent by Hera he was abandoned by his mother Alkmene. It was either Athena or Hermes or Zeus who put Herakles on Hera's breast (Eratosth. [*Cat.*] 44 [Condos 1997: 109]; Diod. Sic. 4.9.6; Paus. 9.25.2). A statue of Hera suckling Herakles is mentioned in a Greek epigram (*Anth. Pal.* 9.589), but we have no knowledge as to the context of its display or the sculptor's origin. Paus. 9.25.2, tells about a place where, according to the Thebans, Hera was deceived by Zeus into giving breast to the infant Herakles.

56 Renard 1964; Trendall and Cambitoglou 1978: 395 no. 1, Pl. 137/1; Vollkommer 1988: 31, no. 212, fig. 40 on p. 33; Schwarz 1990: 238-239, nos.400-404; Van der Meer 1995: 124-130.

57 Wallace 2008: 116 (8.47). Or Fiesel (1936: 136): 'here is shown how the mortal Hercules became the legitimate son of Juno'; or Thomson de Grummond (2006: 83): 'This shows how Hercle, the son of Uni, was adopted'; or Bonfante and Bonfante (2002: 155): 'This image shows how Hercle, the son of Uni, suckled [milk]'.

58 Beazely 1949: 14.

59 Sestieri 1939.

60 Thomson de Grumond 2006: 84.

Apparently, the contrast is not at all secondary. Hera's hostility towards the Sileni does not seem to be the main issue here, nor is the comparison between wine and milk as Van der Meer puts it. The Silenus (Fig. 7), seemingly drunk, is shown as if trying to hold on, but without success. His lower body is losing grip and left behind the lunette's register. The drunken Silenus, no matter what he sees within the *patera*, symbolizes Hercle's former weakness, his human fault, forsaken in favor of Uni's milk which indicates the goddess' acceptance of the hero followed by his becoming immortal. The depiction in the exergue, of the winged child holding eggs and adorned with a *bulla,* sums up the narrative. Eggs were a common motive in Etruscan art and considered, as in the Near East, a symbol of fertility, life giving power and immortality.[61]

The four mythic narratives of Hercle carrying Mlacuch, of the presentation of Epiur/Epeur to Menrva/Athena and to Tinia/Zeus, and of the adoption by Uni/Hera were all derived from Greek mythic traditions. However, of the four, only the scene depicting Hercle and Mlacuch was visually inspired by art products of mainland Greek. The Etruscan interpretation of the other three scenes was altogether alien to Greek artists outside Italy. In Athenian vase-painting (sixth to fourth century) Herakles makes his way to Olympus in a chariot (or in flight over a pyre) accompanied by Nike or Athena,[62] and is presented to the Olympian gods by Athena and Hermes.[63] If the above interpretation of the Apulian, Campanian and Attic kraters is correct, Herakles is also seen to present a cornucopia of his achievements to Zeus. The fruits of his deeds, to my knowledge, are not personified in Greek art.

2. The Roman Herakles[64]

Like the Etruscans, the Romans too added very little to the hero's legend; yet the penalty of Cacus and the foundation of the Ara Maxima[65] are fundamental events which

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61 Eggs made out of stone, terracotta and alabaster also decorated Etruscan tombs. On the symbolism of the egg in Etruscan art see Carpino 1996: 40-41 and 2003: 47-48.

62 E.g. Vollkommer 1988: cat. 224-225, 230, 239-249, 477.

63 Shapiro 1983: 12; 1989: 158 (and Pls.25b-c, 47b-d, 61a-63e) notes that the depictions of Herakles' apotheosis on black-figure vases along with the Introduction Pediment from the Akropolis, make it clear that the legend was known in Athens from at least the second quarter of the sixth century and lend support to the literary tradition that the Athenians were the first to honor Herakles with sacrifices and induced the Greeks and others throughout the inhabited world to honor him as a god (Isok. 5.33, Diod. Sic. 4.39.1, Paus. 1.15.3 and 1.32.4).

64 A full account and interpretation of the sources on Herakles in Rome (such as Liv.1.7; Verg. *Aen.* 8.102, 184-275; Prop. 4.9; Ov. *Fast.* 1.543-86, 5.643-52; Diod. Sic. 4.21.1-4, and Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.39-44), as well as a brief account of previous studies, is given by Winter 1967 [1910] and Galinsky 1972.

65 The myth is Roman, although it could have been inspired by Greek mythology (Sutton 1977). It is told (with slight variations) as follows: Cacus the shepherd, an antithesis of the virtuous Herakles, stole part of Geryon's cattle which Herakles drove through Italy from Erythrea to Mycenae. Herakles traced the cattle and killed the thief. The rumor reached king Evander, who had emigrated from Arcadia to Italy where he founded Pallantium, the site of the future Rome. When Evander realized that the stranger was Herakles, he informed him of

elucidate how Herakles/Hercules' *virtus* and deification became focal elements in Roman life and thought. A great deal has been written on the etymology of the name Cacus and its resemblance to that of the Etruscan sear Cacu,[66] but no consensus has been reached, other than that the legend is etiological — an explanation of the foundation of Hercules' cult at the Ara Maxima,[67] and of the custom of offering the god a tithe.

According to Diodorus Siculus (4.21.3), after Herakles had killed Cacus for stealing his cattle and was recognized by Evander, he made a promise to his hosts on the Palatine (who were the first to regard him as a god) that after he would pass on to dwell with the gods, whoever made a vow to dedicate a tithe of their goods to him would benefit from a happy and prosperous life. The custom was still in practice in Diodorus Siculus' own days (first century) as he writes:

> many Romans, and not only those of moderate fortunes but some even of great wealth, who have taken a vow to dedicate a tenth to Herakles and have thereafter become happy and prosperous, have presented him with a tenth of their possessions, which came to four thousand talents. Lucullus, [Licinius, 63] for instance, who was perhaps the wealthiest Roman of his day, had his estate appraised and then offered a full tenth of it to the god, thus providing continuous feastings and expensive ones withal. Furthermore, the Romans have built to this god a notable temple on the bank of the Tiber, with the purpose of performing in it the sacrifices from the proceeds of the tithe.[68]

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a prophesy made by his mother about Herakles' future as a god and the establishment of the *Ara Maxima*. Herakles grasped Evander's right hand and made a promise to fulfill the prophecy by building and consecrating the altar. According to another version of the myth, which Dionysius of Halicarnassus (1.39.41-42) considered to be truer, Herakles was the greatest commander of his age. He 'marched at the head of a large force through all the country that lies on this side of the Ocean destroying any despotisms that were grievous and oppressive to their subjects, or commonwealths that outraged and injured the neighbouring states, or organized bands of men who lived in the manner of savages and lawlessly put strangers to death, and in their stead establishing lawful monarchies, well-order governments and humane and sociable modes of life ... And he came into Italy not alone nor yet bringing a herd of cattle ..., but at the head of a great army, after he had already conquered Spain, in order to subjugate and rule the people in this region;....' (translated by E. Cary for the Loeb Classical Library,1937). After Herakles won a victory over Cacus and had settled everything in Italy according to his desire, he sacrificed a tithe to the gods, built a small town named after himself [Herculaneum], and set sail for Sicily. On Cacus, the *Ara Maxima* and the foundation of the cult of Hercules Invictus (with references to ancient sources) see Winter 1967; Galinsky 1966, and 1972: 126-130, 142-146, 153-155; Richardson 1992: 186-187 and Palagia 1990. Dionysius of Halicarnassos (1.32.1) records that other writers, among them Polybius of Megalopolis, wrote that Herakles was the husband of Lavinia, Evander's daughter, and that the Pallantium (Palatine) was named for their son Pallas.

66 E.g. Small 1982: 3-36

67 Miller (1982: 388-389) argues that in Propertius' elegy on the founding of the *Ara Maxima* (4.9) the explanation focuses on its rites which are never open to women, rather than on its foundation which was the main *aition* in Virgil's and Livy's accounts.

68 Diod. Sic. 4.21.4 (translated by C.H. Oldfather for the Loeb Classical Library, 1961).

Other literary sources refer to names of other prominent political figures, like Sulla (Plut. *Sull.* 35) and Crassus (Plut. *Crass.* 2.2, 12.2), who sacrificed to Hercules and set tables in banquets for the Roman people,[69] either as a token of gratitude or in the hope of becoming wealthier. Sulla's name is also mentioned (Ov. *Fast.* 6.209-12) among those linked with dedicating, building or restoring temples or shrines of Hercules at Rome.[70]

More relevant to our discussion, however, is how Hercules' *virtus* and deification served to anticipate the apotheosis of mythical heroes like Romulus and Aeneas,[71] and of historical individuals.[72] Although the deified mythical heroes themselves became emblems of *virtus* and apotheosis, they did not take Hercules' place and the defied hero continued to be a model of virtue (*exemplum virtutis*) for centuries.[73]

Examples of how the Romans linked themselves to Hercules either directly or implicitly are numerous. The *Fabii*, who claimed to be descended from Hercules, are of the earliest examples (Plut. *Fab.* 1).[74] Another early example, cited by Silius Italicus (*Pun.* 13.623-649), refers to P. Cornelius Scipio Africanus (the first) who is informed by his dead mother Pomponia that he is a son of Jupiter and will rise to heaven by his achievements. Silius, following Prodicus' version of Herakles at the cross roads, also makes Scipio choose, like Hercules, between *Virtus* and *Voluptas*, virtue and pleasure (15.8-128),[75] relating that while celebrating his triumph over Hannibal, Scipio looked like Hercules after he had slain the huge Giants and marched along the plains of Phlegra

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69 The banquet in honor of Hercules is dealt with by Marzano (2009) who argues for a connection between Hercules' cult at the *Ara Maxima* and the triumphal feast. She suggests that the practice, inspired by Greek influence, was first introduced by Aemilius Paulus when celebrating a triumph over Macedonia in 167 BCE.

70 E.g.: M. Fulvius Nobilior and L. Marcius Philippus (Hercules Musarum Aedes: Richardson 1992: 187), M. Octavius Hersennus (Hercules Victor Aedes [1]: Richardson 1992: 188-189), L. Mummius (Ziolkowski 1988; Hercules Victor Aedes [3]: Richardson 1992: 189), Scipio Aemilianus (Plut. *Mor.* 816b-c), Pompey (Hercules Pompeianus Aedes housing a bronze statue of Herakles by Myron: Vitr. 3.3.5; Plin. *NH* 34.57; Richardson 1992: 187-188; Palagia 1990: 58-59), Domitian (Mart. 9.64), and Septimius Severus (The temple on the Quirinal was dedicated to Liber/Bacchus and Hercules, the ancestral gods of the emperor at Leptis Magna: Cass. Dio 77.16.3; Beard, North and Price 1998 vol.1: 255).

71 Galinsky 1972: 140-149,157-158. On Romulus' apotheosis see Liv. 1.16; Plut. *Rom.* 27.5-28.3; Ov. *Met.* 14.805-828; Verg. *Aen.* 1.292. On Aeneas' apotheosis see Ov. *Met.* 14.581-608; Verg. *Aen.* 1.256-259.

72 Like Julius Caesar (Verg. *Aen.* 1.286-290; Ov. *Met.* 15.816-818, 839-842) and Augustus (Ov. *Met.* 15.861-870).

73 A good, although not a full idea on the subject is obtained from Galinsky's survey (1972: Chaps. 6 and 7) of the Roman elegiac and epic outlook on Hercules, and from Palagia's survey (1986) of the imitation of Herakles in ruler portraiture from Alexander to Maximinus Daza. See also Stafford 2012: 121-124; Hekster 2005 and Rees 2005.

74 Briquell 1999: 114-120.

75 A place was kept for Scipio's mother in Elysium, together with Alcides/Hercules' mother and Leda.

(17.649-650).[76] It was believed that Cato's *virtus* even surpassed that of Hercules, as his struggle was less physical and more spiritual (Sen. *Constant.* 2.1-2).

Other names are linked with Hercules in various ways. Mark Antony proclaimed himself a descendant of Hercules (Plut. *Ant.* 4.1-2, 36.4, 60.3). Augustus is not only compared to Hercules (Hor. *Carm.* 3.14.1-4; *Epist.* 2.1.10-12; Verg. *Aen.* 6.801-803), but he is also imagined reclining on mount Olympus, drinking nectar in the company of Hercules and Pollux (Hor. *Carm.* 3.3.9-12). Caligula appeared in the theater wearing a lion skin and holding a club (Philo *Leg.* 78-79), and there was a rumor about a lion trained so that he could be killed by Nero at the arena — with a club or by the clasp of arms — as a token of Herucles' Nemean labour (Suet. *Ner.* 53). Nero the child, as related by both Suetonius (*Ner.* 6) and Tacitus (*Ann.* 11.11), was likened to Hercules in a rumor of a snake placed in his bed. When Nero returned to Rome from Greece as a victor in the athletic games, he was honored with a triumphal procession and hailed as Hercules by the senators and the people of Rome (Cass. Dio 62.20). Domitian was acclaimed for the accomplishments of his gladiators in the arena, and declared deserving of apotheosis like the demigod Hercules (Mart. *Epig.* 5.65). In the temple that Domitian had erected in honor of Hercules on the Appian Way, he placed a statue of the god fashioned with his own features (Mart. *Epig.* 9.64-65).[77]

It was probably Dio Chrysostom's version of Herakles at the crossroads (*Or.* 66-84) that affected the change of Hercules' role in imperial propaganda under Trajan. According to Chrysostom, Zeus challenged Herakles by making him choose between royalty (associated with law, justice, civic order and peace) and tyranny (associated with cruelty, insolence, lawlessness and faction). When Zeus realized that Herakles chose royalty over tyranny, he:

> entrusted him with the kingship over all mankind as he considered him equal to the trust. And so wherever Herakles discovered a tyranny and a tyrant, he chastised and destroyed them, among Greeks and barbarians alike; but wherever he found a kingdom and a king, he would give honour and protection. This ... was what made him Deliverer of the earth and of the human race, not the fact that he defended them from the savage beasts — for how little damage could a lion or a wild bear inflict? — nay, it was the fact that he chastised savage and wicked men, and crushed and destroyed the power of overweening tyrants. And even to this day Herakles continues this work and you have in him a helper and protector of your government as long as it is vouchsafed you to reign.[78]

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76 On Hercules between Carthaginians and Romans see Rawlings 2005.

77 On Domitian-Hercules see Scott 1975: 141-146; Palagia 1986: 145; Tuck 2005: 231-232. Palagia noted (1986: 145) that 'Domitian may also have lent his features to an adaptation of the Albertini Herakles found at his palace in Rome and now in Parma'.

78 Dio Chrys. *Or.* 1.83-84 (translated by J.W. Cohoon for the Loeb Classical Library, 1949). Dio, a moral philosopher himself, was inspired by both Cynic and Stoic ideas. His Vice and Virtue version — a rework of the Prodican Choice of Herakles — was likely inspired by Antisthenes' 'double *paideia*'. On Cynic elements in Dio's discourses see Höistad 1948; Moles 2005.

Chrysostom's praise of Trajan put the emperor in position of a 'good ruler' equal to Herakles. Pliny (*Pan.* 14.5, 82.7), comparing Trajan to the unnamed Hercules, hints that the emperor, too, will earn deification.[79]

From Trajan's reign onwards, Hercules is adopted as an emblem of imperial propaganda to signify the emperor's duty as savior of mankind and as worthy of apotheosis by his virtues.[80] Hadrian, for example, is shown as Hercules on a coin and a medallion minted in Rome.[81] He is also depicted paying homage to the god in one of the carved medallions decorating the Arch of Constantine. On two other medallions — depicting hunting scenes of a lion and a boar — the association with Hercule's *virtus* (hence with that of the emperor) is inevitable.[82]

Of all the emperors, Commodus was the most obsessed by Hercules (Fig. 10). He had himself portrayed as the god on coins and in statuary (Cass. Dio 73.15.6), and on the ground that he had killed wild beasts in the amphitheater at Lanuvium and on his own estate (*SHA Comm.* 8.5), he bestowed upon himself, in addition to other great names, that of *Romanus Hercules* (Cass. Dio 73.15.2.5). He had the lion skin and club carried before him in the street, and in the theater they were placed on a golden seat, whether he was present or not (Cass. Dio 73.17.4). When he drove in his chariot he had the club lying beside him and the lion's skin spread beneath him (Athen. 12, 537F).[83]

Septimius Severus, like Commodus, depicted himself with the lion skin of Hercules over his head on coins,[84] and with Hercules — one of his tutelary deities — in the *concordia augustorum* panel of his Arch at Leptis Magna.[85] He also erected a statue of his son Caracalla in the guise of the infant Hercules killing the snakes (now in the Capitoline Museum, Rome).[86]

Maximian assimilated himself to Hercules to indicate that like the god he was invincible and most sacred. He enjoyed the patronage of Hercules by proclaiming himself Herculius and he honored his divine model with the dedication VIRTUS or VIRTUTI AUGG on his coins[87] and with mosaics in his villa in Sicily.[88]

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79 Innes 2011: 82.

80 Marcus Aurelius was an exception: Hekster 2005: 208.

81 Palagia 1986: 146-147.

82 On the Hadrianic tondi of the Constantinian Arch see Kleiner 1992: 251-253; Tuck 2005: 237-240.

83 On these see Palagia 1986: 147-149; Hekster 2001 and 2002.

84 Hekster 2001: 74-75.

85 Kleiner 1992: 342-343, fig. 310 on p. 341. Herakles is also shown on the chariot in the triumph panel (ibid. fig. 308) and his labors are carved on one of the pilasters of the Severan Basilica at Leptis Magna: Kleiner 1992: 343, fig. 311.

86 Kleiner 1992: 322-323, fig. 285. As for Caracalla Kleiner (338-339, figs.305-306) claims that the images of Herakles (free standing copies of the Lysipian Weary Herakles, and an image of the kind carved on a composite capital) that decorated his bath indicate 'that he was important not just as a god with therapeutic powers but as a god of the state and the personal protector of Caracalla'. On the association of the Lysipian type with Commodus see: Hekster 2002: 126-128 (with additional bibliography).

87 On Maximian's association with Hercules see Rees 2005, and the *Panegyric of Maximian* and *Genethliacus of Maximian Augustus* in Nixon and Sailor Rodgers 1994.

Epilogue

The popularity of Herakles among Etruscans and Romans in Italy[89] exceeded that of any other Greek hero, even that of Aeneas, the ancestor of Rome's founders. Unlike other heroes, who were honored as gods by men, Hercle/Hercules was acknowledged a god by Tinia/Jupiter on the Olympus. He not only freed the world of monsters and brought peace and prosperity to the people, he also safeguarded Tinia/Jupiter's rule over the world.

Although both Etruscans and Romans admired Herakles chiefly for his *virtus*, as the above discussion briefly shows, their admiration was differently expressed. There is no knowing, for lack of literary evidence, whether the Etruscans acknowledged Herakles as a founder and an ideal ruler,[90] or whether certain members of their aristocracies claimed themselves to be descendants of Herakles as the Tarquinii did.[91] It is also impossible to establish the ideological significance bestowed on the Sant'Omobono group of Athena and Herakles as an echo of the political propaganda of the Athenian tyrant Peisistratos.[92] Even so, the terracotta images are an especially instructive example of how historical framework (patronage of an Etruscan king of Greek origin[93]) and topographical context (Forum Boarium) can influence the development of established Greek myths into a Roman narrative. The Sant'Omobono sanctuary of Mater Matuta in the Forum Boarium stood 350m from the Ara Maxima, the oldest cultic site of Herakles in Rome. By rescuing Leukothea-Ino from the Maenads in Evander's kingdom, Herakles became directly involved in the process of her deification as Matuta (Ov. *Fast.* 6.499-550).[94] Hence the roof-images of Herakles and Leukothea can be considered primarily as a token of the annexation of the two Greek protagonists to the Italic milieu of deities. Herakles demonstrated his *virtus* in Evander's territory twice — by killing Cacus and by rescuing Leukothea — and for these he is led by Athena to Olympus. The archaic Sant'Omobono group is therefore an eclectic representation of a Greek theme endowed with Roman religious significance presented in an Etruscan style.

Like the Etruscans, the Romans too considered Herakles a moral model for gaining the worthiest afterlife, but they did not follow any of the Etruscan formulas of visualizing his apotheosis. In their works of art the hero is not introduced to the company of the gods on Mount Olympus by Minerva, nor is he suckling from Juno's breast, or presenting his personified deeds (Epiur) to Jupiter and Minerva. The Romans

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88 Gentili 1970: 48-50, figs. 32-35; assuming that Maxentius was indeed the owner of the villa and that he was responsible for its decoration.

89 On aspects of the cult of Hercules in central Italy see Bradley 2005.

90 On these aspects of Herakles among the Greeks and the Romans see Stafford 2012: 137-160, 194-196.

91 See the introduction above.

92 Zevi 1995: 311-312. On the interpretation of the group as a symbol of regal power see: Cornell 1995: 148-150, 232; Lulof 2000: 208, 215-217.

93 Tarqinius Superbus was the grandson of Demaratus, who immigrated to Italy from Corinth in the middle of the seventh century BCE (Liv. 1.34.2-3, Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 3.46.3-5, Plin. *NH* 35.43.152; Zevi 1995).

94 See also nn. 37 and 39 above.

did make use of the concept of 'Epiur' to symbolize achievements worthy of apotheosis by honoring Hercules with temples, altars, and tithe of their goods, and by providing feasts to the Roman people as part of Hercules' cultic ceremonies. In doing so they fulfilled their duty of *pietas* toward the god and the Roman people.

Visually the Romans preferred the Greek emblem of the laden cornucopia over the personified emblem of the Etruscan 'Epiur' to exhibit achievements worthy of apotheosis, whether performed by Hercules[95] or by other characters. On the altar of the deified Augustus (Fig. 11), for example, the emperor's bust is flanked by two cornucopiae which 'proclaim him founder of the general prosperity',[96] and on the Gemma Claudia in Vienna (Fig. 12) the busts of Claudius, the Younger Agrippina, Germanicus and Agripinna the Elder emerge each from a distinct cornucopia. The two couples on the gem are defied: Claudius wears Jupiter's *aegis* and is crowned with a laurel wreath; the Younger Agrippina, like Cybele and Ceres, has a mural crown and a wreath of poppies and ears of corn; Agrippina the Elder, like Minerva, Roma or *Virtus* is wearing a helmet with a laurel wreath and Germanicus as *Honos* is crowned with the *corona civica*. Jupiter's approval is expressed by the presence of his eagle turning his head toward Claudius.[97] Other examples can be found among cuirassed statues of emperors and of other military officials that bear a cornucopia fastened to their right or left leg.[98] In all such instances the cornucopia stands as symbol of the fruits of their deeds.

The most convincing example, however, of employing cornucopiae as an emblem of *virtus* is the Capitoline bust of Commodus-Hercules.[99] In this image (Fig. 10) Commodus displays four prominent features of the god: the lion skin, the club, the Hesperides' apples and the cornucopia. The long beard and the philosopher's gaze accord with Herakles as a role-model for Stoic and Cynic philosophers.[100] The bust rests on a *pelta*, on a globe and on a pair of cornucopiae held by two Amazonian figures (only one is preserved, apart from the head and arms; of the other only the left arm remained). According to Hannah (1986) the three zodiacal signs — Bull, Capricorn and Scorpion — on the globe, signify October, a month with significant political events in Commodus' life, which the emperor renamed *Herakleios* after himself (Cass. Dio 73.15.3). The *pelta* decorated with *aegis* and eagles (both symbols of Zeus/Jupiter) and the Amazonian figures are explained as token of another month — *Amazonios* — that Commodus renamed after himself (Cass. Dio 73.15.3), as well as 'of the barbarism which both Hercules and the emperor conquered'.[101] The cornucopiae are considered an

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95 For Greek and Roman representations of Herakles/Hercules holding a cornucopia see Hartwig 1883: 45-73; Schauenburg 1986; Palagia 1988: 756-757. In these studies, however, the cornucopia, empty or laden, is differently interpreted.

96 Zanker 1988: 308 fig. 240.

97 Simon 1986: 82-83, fig. 106.

98 E.g. Niemeyer 1968: 98 cat. 60 (Marcus Aurelius); 99 cat. 61 (Lucius Verus); 100 cat. 64 (Maximianus or Maxentius).

99 Fittschen and Zanker 1994: 85-90 cat. 78; Hekster 2002: 121-122.

100 On Herakles as a role-model for the philosopher see Höistad 1948; Galinsky 1972: Chap. 5; Stafford 2012: 124-130.

101 Hekster 2002: 122 n. 170.

emblem of the *saeculum aureum Commodianum*.[102] With the addition of the tritons holding the παραπέτασμα over Commodus' head, an interpretation of apotheosis is inescapable.

Vermeule and Alföldi's observation that the Amazonian figure is *Virtus*[103] is reinforced by the large number of depictions of *Virtus* on Commodus' coins.[104] Since on the coins Roma is seen holding the cornucopia,[105] we may assume that the missing Amazonian figure was meant to depict Roma.[106] With Roma's presence, the bust visually embraced the HERCULI ROMANO AUGUSTO legend that appeared on Commodus' coins from the end of AD 191 onwards.[107]

On Greek vases a single cornucopia presented by Herakles to his father Zeus represents the summation of the former's actions. Centuries later Commodus makes use of two cornucopiae to deliver the same message in his Capitoline bust. One may argue that Commodus' two cornucopiae are required to balance the composition, as is the case of the altar of the deified Augustus (Fig. 11). However, is it not possible that one cornucopia was aimed at symbolizing Commodus' *virtus* while the other stood for that of Hercules? Or that the two laden cornucopiae were meant to signify that the *virtus* of Commodus-Hercules exceeded that of the hero?

The above interpretation of works of art makes us wonder why the Romans, who possessed so many personified abstractions did not adopt an image (like the Etruscan 'Epiur') to signify the fruits of Hercules' deeds. It was, perhaps, because they had already embraced a personified image for *virtus*, so that *fructus* could simply be visualized as a cluster of fruits. The Greeks and Romans found the cornucopia a suitable container for the symbolized achievements of the hero because it had been already associated with his excellence ever since he overcame the river god Achelous in the competition for the hand of Deianeira, the wife who eventually put an end to Herakles' earthly life.

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102 Fittschen and Zanker 1994: 87; Hekster 2002: 121.

103 Vermeule 1977: 293; Alföldi 1999: 55-56.

104 Milhous 1992: 153.

105 Milhous 1992: 154; Hekster 2002: 94.

106 The identification has been already proposed by Vermeule 1977: 293 without elaboration.

107 On the legend on coins see Hekster 2002: 106.

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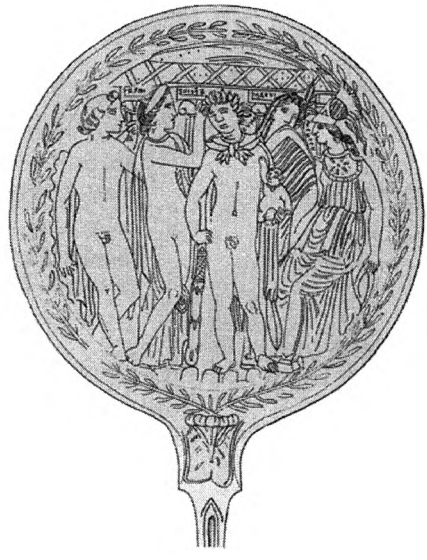

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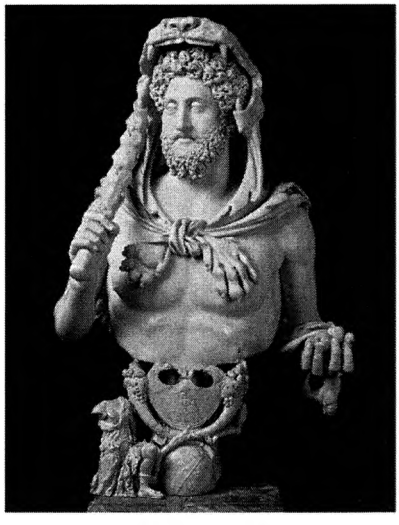

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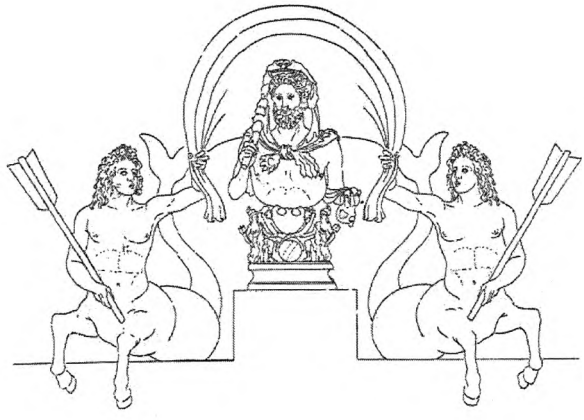

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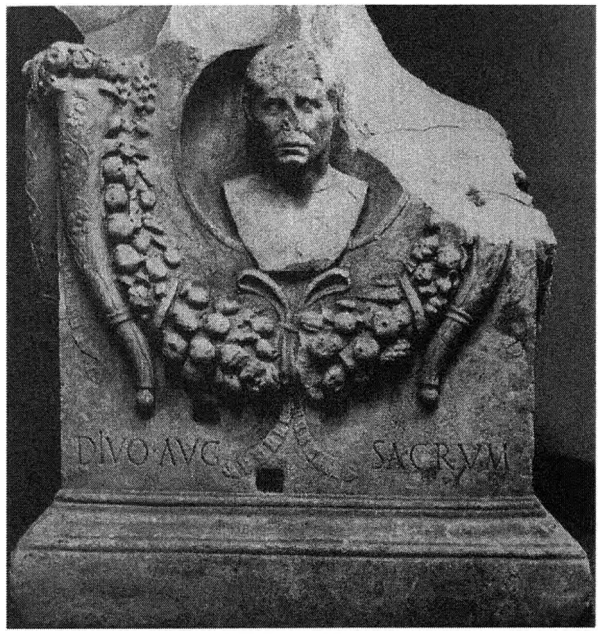

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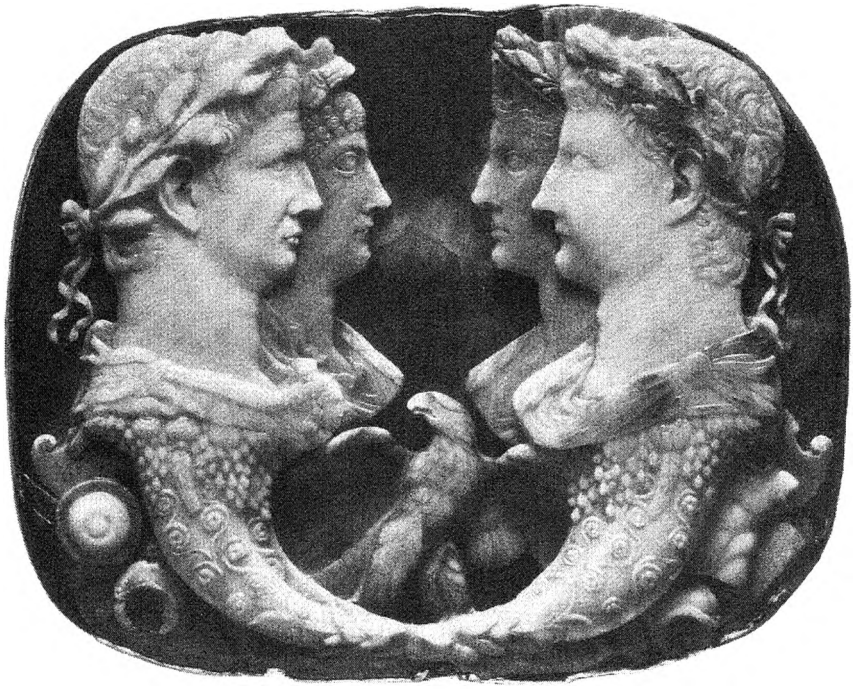

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