

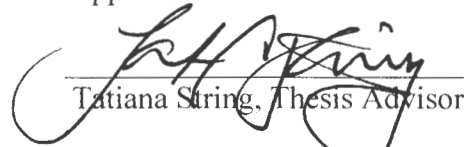
*Hercules and Antaeus: Authorship and Meaning
in a Print by Agostino Veneziano*

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Precursors	8
Chapter 2: The Print and the Workshop	20
Chapter 3: The Moralization of the Myth	38
Conclusion	54
Bibliography	59
Images	66

Introduction

This thesis centers on an analysis of a single engraving, *Hercules and Antaeus* (fig. 1) by Agostino Veneziano, and seeks to address the formal, iconographic, and historical problems that the work raises. The research occupying the following pages concerns a particular impression of the print in the Burton Emmett Collection of the Ackland Art Museum. Since the print entered the Ackland's collection in 1958, it has been given only cursory curatorial attention.¹ The work has never before received sustained study, even though its composition contains a series of puzzles waiting to be solved. The print presents a non-canonical vision of the classical topos by an important, but understudied, printmaker of the cinquecento. This paper will critically examine *Hercules and Antaeus* for the first time.

The print illustrates Hercules' destruction of the fearsome Libyan giant Antaeus, a myth whose basic narrative tenets are preserved in the writings of Pindar, Apollodorus, and other classical authors. Hercules, as part of his Labors to atone for murdering his wife and family, must vanquish Antaeus, the son of Gaia. Like a child umbilically tethered to his mother, Antaeus derives his unnatural strength from a physical connection with the earth, the domain of his mother. This is the requirement that Hercules exploits. After literally uprooting Antaeus, Hercules deals the mortal blow and is victorious. While no canonical record of the chronology of the Labors exists, the Hercules and Antaeus

¹ The Burton Emmett Collection, a bequest of approximately 3,000 graphic works, was the subject of a 1969 masters thesis by Gaillard Fitzsimons Ravenel II at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. We can assume Ravenel was fond of the print; in an accompanying exhibition at the Ackland he included it in a grouping of four works meant to represent the "Early Italian Graphics." Unfortunately, he misdated the print 1513, an error that has gone uncorrected until today; Gaillard Fitzsimons Ravenel II, "The Burton Emmett Collection: Six Centuries of Graphic Arts" (Masters thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1969): 48-49. Ravenel went on to a distinguished career at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

episode is considered one of the many minor labors belonging to the hero's *parerga*, and is generally placed during the latter half of the dodecathlon.²

Agostino Veneziano, the engraver of *Hercules and Antaeus*, as signified by the miniscule "A.V." incised within a small tablet at the bottom of the composition, is as woefully understudied as his print. Born in Venice in around 1490, he was active as a printmaker from approximately 1509 to 1536. He is thought to have traveled widely during his early career, copying prints by Albrecht Dürer and Giulio Campagnola along the way.³ But beyond these slight biographical details, what is known of Agostino's life is almost entirely dependent on the more famous artists with whom he worked. Upon arriving in Rome in around 1515, he quickly became an associate of perhaps the most influential printmaker of sixteenth-century Italy, Marcantonio Raimondi of Bologna.⁴ According to Giorgio Vasari, who devoted an entire chapter to "Marc' Antonio Bolognese and Others" in his 1568 edition of the *Lives*, Marcantonio had recently entered into an innovative artistic partnership with Raphael to print versions of the master's designs.⁵ In this endeavor Marcantonio recruited at least two other experienced engravers, Agostino and Marco Dente de Ravenna, to form what is widely regarded as one of the most important print workshops of the sixteenth century.⁶

² Karl Kerényi, *The Heroes of the Greeks*, trans. H.J. Rose. (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1960): 166

³ Christopher L.C.E. Whitcombe, *Print Publishing in Sixteenth Century Rome* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2008): 39.

⁴ For more on Marcantonio and his workshop's influence on the trajectory of printmaking, see Anthony Griffiths, *Prints and Printmaking* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996) 46-8. Marcantonio's prints were collected by connoisseurs as early as the 1530s. In the checklist of the print collection of Cardinal Scipione Gonzaga we find Marcantonio's name alongside Dürer, Lucas van Leyden and others; Michael Bury, *The Print in Italy, 1550-1620* (London: The British Museum Press, 2001) 10.

⁵ Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, trans. Gaston du C. de Vere, vol. 2 (New York: Knopf, 1996): 84

⁶ There was perhaps a third student, today only known as "Master B of the Die," although he receives no mention by Bartsch; Marcus Sopher, *Italian Prints of the Sixteenth Century*. (Berkeley: University Art Museum, 1975): 25. Ugo da Carpi, a chiaroscuro woodcut printmaker, lived and worked contemporaneously to the other printmakers but is not traditionally grouped with the Marcantonio

To date, scholarship on cinquecento printmaking has focused on the more dominant career of Marcantonio Raimondi and has only tangentially interrogated the work of his assistant, Agostino. The first monograph exhibition of Marcantonio and his workshop was organized in 1981 by Innis H. Shoemaker at the Ackland Art Museum. Of the seventy prints assembled, only four were by Agostino (coupled with four by Marco Dente).⁷ David Landau and Peter Parshall's meticulously researched *The Renaissance Print: 1470 - 1550*, published in 1996, devotes a considerable number of pages to the work of Marcantonio and Raphael, but generally considers Agostino only a supporting actor within the workshop.⁸ Similarly, Lisa Pon's 2004 book, *Raphael, Dürer, and Marcantonio Raimondi: Copying the Renaissance Print* champions Marcantonio as a supremely gifted draftsman and entrepreneur (an estimation I do not doubt), but leaves Agostino's contributions unexplored.⁹

Despite these apparent lacunae, these studies and others like them provide helpful insight into the creative environment of early modern print culture that produced *Hercules and Antaeus*. The print belongs to a broad category of graphic works called reproductive prints, an inherently ambiguous term that blurs the distinctions between invention and copy, origination and duplication, and singular authorship and collaboration. Before progressing any further, it is necessary to define what is meant

workshop, as none of his designs are believed to be directly after Raphael but are instead copies of prints by Marcantonio, Agostino, or Marco Dente. For an overview of Ugo's career as a multi-block printmaker, see Vasari 88 and Evelyn Lincoln, *The Invention of the Italian Renaissance Printmaker* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000): 75-85.

⁷ Shoemaker chose not to include *Hercules and Antaeus*, opting instead to borrow perhaps more impressive examples of Agostino's work from other museums.

⁸ Despite inclusively titling their passage on the workshop "Marcantonio, Agostino, and Marco Dente," the authors give Marcantonio and his work primacy (although Agostino is later given some attention in conjunction with Rosso Fiorentino and Baccio Bandinelli); David Landau and Peter Parshall, *The Renaissance Print, 1470-1550* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994): 120-146.

⁹ Indeed, Pon invokes Agostino's name only a handful of times, and not until the third chapter; Lisa Pon, *Raphael, Dürer, and Marcantonio Raimondi: Copying and the Italian Renaissance Print* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004): 70, 82, 96, 148.

exactly by “reproductive printmaking” as it pertained to the output of Agostino and other printmakers of this era. After all, prints by their nature are inherently reproductive: multiple, virtually identical images can be pulled from the same inked copper plate. Their “reproductive” quality then, in this sense, refers not to a methodology of print production but to the specific artistic strategy invoked in the conception of these works as printed designs. They are reproductive in that they reproduce in print a pre-existing image, usually created by another artist.¹⁰ Marcantonio, Agostino, and Marco Dente are traditionally believed to have worked exclusively as reproductive printmakers, always engraving after another’s design.

It should be noted here also that *Hercules and Antaeus* belongs to a first wave of reproductive printmaking, beginning in the late fifteenth century, whose chief concern was translating drawings into graphic form.¹¹ (Prints after paintings, which would later become a major task of the medium, emerge only after 1530.)¹² Understandably, these preparative drawings, of the very few that survive, have become extraordinarily integral to the study of reproductive prints. They allow us to chart the creative process from initial

¹⁰ In this matter, I adhere to Rebecca Zorach and Elizabeth Rodini’s definition of reproductive prints: “a relatively neutral umbrella term for prints that are based closely on other images, including paintings, drawings, sculptures, and other prints;” Rebecca Zorach and Elizabeth Rodini, “On Imitation and Invention: An Introduction to the Reproductive Print” in *Paper Museums: The Reproductive Print in Europe, 1500-1800* (Chicago: Smart Museum of Art, 2005): 2.

¹¹ There is evidence that prints after drawings existed as early as 1481; Landau and Parshall 103-104. Even for those prints not explicitly based on an identified sculpture, designs were inspired by drawings, not paintings. For example, Marcantonio’s print *Apollo and the Muses on Parnassus* (c. 1514-1520) ostensibly reproduced Raphael’s mural of the same subject from the *stanza della segnatura* in the Vatican. However, comparison between the print and the mural reveals a series of small differences, suggesting the two works were derived from a common preparatory drawing. See also Pon, *Marcantonio, Dürer, and Raphael*: 86-94 and Paul F. Watson, “On a Window in Parnassus,” *Artibus et Historiae* 8.16 (1987): 130-134.

¹² Landau and Parshall 120-121, 162; This is perhaps because the drawings made available to Agostino and his peers during Raphael’s lifetime had not survived for the use of the following generations, forcing these younger printmakers to seek out other sources of inspiration.

ideation for a composition to final printing. To our detriment, no extant drawing is known for *Hercules and Antaeus*.

Traditionally, the design of *Hercules and Antaeus* is believed to be *invenit*, or invented, by Raphael, meaning that Agostino incised the scene using a drawing by Raphael as his guide. It is unclear exactly how this attribution was established, and its legitimacy is one of the central concerns of this thesis. It perhaps arose more due to historical precedent rather than deliberate scrutiny of the print itself. Because Agostino has never received great scholarly attention, his work is most often lumped in with collective oeuvre of the Marcantonio workshop by convenience, and many of his prints thus attributed to Raphael by default. Adam Bartsch, in his indispensable catalogue raisonné of old master prints, *Le peintre-graveur*, indiscriminately grouped all the prints by Marcantonio, Agostino, and Marco Dente into a common volume, including those, like *Hercules and Antaeus*, that are dated well after the workshop broke up in 1524. Yet other, more recent sources have repeated this claim. An extensive 1985 catalogue of prints by the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica in Rome also lists *Hercules and Antaeus* as after Raphael's design.¹³ A noticeable exception to this trend is Christopher Witcombe who, in the only scholarly, albeit brief, mention of the print up to this point, suggests the design is perhaps attributable to Giulio Romano based on its stylistic similarities to another 1533 print also thought to be after the painter.¹⁴

The attribution of *Hercules and Antaeus*, as well as many other issues concerning the origin, dating, and meaning of its design, will be given substantial consideration in

¹³ Grazia Bernini Pezzini, Stefania Massari, and Simonetta Prosperi Valenti Rodinò, *Raphael Invenit* (Rome: Edizioni Quasar, 1985): 248; 815.

¹⁴ Witcombe 59. This attribution will be discussed at the end of chapter two.

the following three chapters. In the first chapter, I provide a formal analysis of the print and a comparison to a broad survey of Hercules and Antaeus visualizations from the first appearances of the theme in antiquity to 1533, when Agostino's print was engraved.

While I do not make claim to offering a comprehensive listing of the theme's appearance in the history of art, the works I have chosen may have helped in the establishment of the topos as a whole. The design presented in *Hercules and Antaeus* is, with a few exceptions noted here for the first time, dissimilar to the representational tradition of the topos in art.

In an effort to explain this dissimilarity, the second chapter investigates *Hercules and Antaeus*'s supposed connection to the Marcantonio Raimondi workshop in Rome and to Raphael. As we will see, there is considerable reason to doubt the print was *invenit* by Raphael or has any material relation to the workshop proper. Consequently, I offer a new attribution of the print's design based on its idiosyncratic stylistic properties and dating.

The third chapter deals primarily with the social implications of the print's design. By the cinquecento, the Hercules character was an incredibly multifaceted construction of physical strength and admirable virtue, but also lurking fallibility. Both he and his Labors, including the bout with Antaeus, had been imbued with special moralized meaning. In an effort to understand the print's reception in Renaissance visual culture, I will offer possible interpretations of the print's design for period audiences, taking evidence in particular from the unusual arrangement of the fighter's bodies and the appearance of the third figure in the composition. This chapter will also grapple with the most recent examination of the Hercules and Antaeus topos, "Hercules in Italian Renaissance Art: Masculine Labour and Homoerotic Libido" by Patricia Simons, and seek to qualify her arguments in light of the design presented in Agostino's print.

The emergence of prints and printmaking in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries was profoundly consequential for the visual culture, and society in general, of early modern Europe.¹⁵ These works, by virtue of their portability and mutability, allowed for the dispersal of imagery on a scale never before possible. Through illustrating Classical myth, prints like *Hercules and Antaeus* pictorially “rescued” the visual narratives of ancient mythology for the collecting pleasure of contemporary audiences. In these pages it is similarly my intention to “rescue” this highly unusual and intriguing print from relative obscurity and shed new light on its maker’s significance to the history of the Renaissance print.

¹⁵ Zorach and Rodini 2-3. The authors go so far as to claim that “prints made the Renaissance - as much as the printing press made the Reformation.”

Chapter 1: Precursors

From antiquity to the early modern period, the Hercules and Antaeus myth was a subject that artists repeatedly turned to as a particularly dramatic episode in the long marathon of the hero's Labors. Their depictions, wrought in a range of media and contexts, were shaped by the corpus of visual and literary descriptions that came before. This confluence of source material has produced both a diversity of visualizations, with each occurrence slightly different from the next, but also, paradoxically, a noticeable degree of homogeneity. Because new representations of the myth were continuously drawn from a common stock of ever-expanding source material, the resultant works can be, with a certain amount of accuracy, classified into distinct groups based on their formal qualities. This chapter will endeavor to provide a survey of these representations up until 1533 when *Hercules and Antaeus* was created. In the broadest sense, *Hercules and Antaeus* was heir to all these works, and Agostino was surely aware of the most influential among them when he engraved this version. However, as we will see, the print's design is formally unique. It rejects the canonical modes that had governed illustrations of the story for centuries prior. An exploration of these antecedent depictions will illuminate how *Hercules and Antaeus* provides an almost entirely novel manner of picturing the topos.

In Agostino's *Hercules and Antaeus*, three figures dominate the composition. On the left, two male nudes are engaged in a physical altercation. One bears only his side to the viewer, and his face is turned so to stare directly into the eyes of his opponent. We assume this figure to be Hercules: a lion's pelt, a trophy from an earlier victory over the Nemean lion and one of the hero's canonical accoutrements, drapes around his body. His

left foot, with heel arched, indicates an impending movement forward, as if he has just swung Antaeus over his knee in a sudden burst of agility. Propping one leg up on a cut boulder, he takes the giant around the waist. Antaeus rests precariously on the hero's right thigh while his legs dangle unsupported in front of him. He uncomfortably curls his right arm around this head, slightly shield his grimacing face and upturned eyes.

Hercules and Antaeus, the principle characters of the myth's narrative, share the composition with a third figure. Despite the clash taking place above her, she remains physically uninvolved and apart from the other two figures. Her positioning just next to and below the fighters indicates what seems to be her primary role as spectator. A sheath wraps loosely around her crossed legs, leaving her unclothed from the waist up and revealing a frighteningly gaunt anatomy. Swollen breasts droop from a disturbingly haggard chest. Deeply incised lines down the center of her abdomen and around her shoulders hint at the skeletal structure just underneath her pallid skin. Waves of dark, shaggy hair frame a ghastly face striated by folds of skin.

It is readily apparent that Agostino was fascinated by the physical reaction of human anatomy when forced into a position of extreme anguish. In this print we see three figures, all in different ways, pushed to their physiological limits. In general, the rendering of the musculature implies lithe agility rather than hulking strength, with incised parallel strokes enhanced by curvilinear cross-hatching. Hercules' arched back and right bicep ripple with rows of protracted, ovoid muscles. His left leg features a long tendon that stretches uninterrupted from the inside of his knee to his ankle. Antaeus' thighs and legs too exhibit layers of narrow muscle; at least three can be discerned in his right calf. This emphasis on the anatomical verges on caricature in the woman's body.

While her right forearm is clad in sinewy tissue, the skin on her shoulders and clavicle seems pulled taut enough to reveal the ligaments underneath, and the bones of her rib cage can be counted in the space between her breasts. This confounding depiction simultaneously suggests a tremendous amount of physical potency and a sort of degenerative frailty, perhaps caused by advanced age or malnourishment.

Behind the figures rise a series of ruinous structures. The buildings' rectilinear shapes, rendered with precise line and razor-like hatching, provide an abrupt transition to the organic forms struggling in the foreground. Unlike other mythological prints that tend to place an unfolding narrative in front of an empty backdrop, the scenery here seems to evoke a definite locale. A surprising diversity of architectural elements, many of them drawn from antiquity, can be identified: cornices on the left, the faint outline of a column by Hercules' shoulder, and a series of arches on the right. Half of an arch stretches out unfinished near Antaeus' head, an architectural echoing of the giant's own unbalanced mid-air suspension. Behind the woman, a domed silo rises in front of a smaller A-frame building. Out of the corners of many of these structures grow small trees or shrubs. Weeds spout from crevices and vines drape off cantilevers to evoke an atmosphere of ominous abandonment.¹⁶ We can only guess where this hillside was intended to be, as none of the classical literature specifies the story's location any more exactly than as Antaeus' domain in Libya. The silo, perhaps meant as a granary, and the hills stretching into the distance suggest a vaguely rural and agrarian setting.

¹⁶ The ruinous aspect of the buildings was probably a Renaissance addition, intended to reinforce the transience of the antique theme and characters at hand, "restored" here in printed form; Madeleine Clair Viljoen. "Raphael into Print: The Movement of Ideas about the Antique in Engravings by Marcantonio Raimondi and His Shop." (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 2000): 110.

Hercules and Antaeus offers one possible imagining of how, and where, this scene unfolded. Yet comparison to both antique and contemporary representations of the topos indicates that the print's design is uncommon. The oldest visual appearance of the story survives on an Attic black-figure vase by Euphronios from the sixth century B.C. (fig. 2). Known today as the *Krater of Antaeus*, it shows Hercules and Antaeus in an intimate wrestle, an arrangement drawn from the writings of Pindar and identified as a regular hold of the *prankration*.¹⁷ The hero is signified by his usual paraphernalia, the club and lion's skin, which lay discarded to his left. Hercules wraps his arms around Antaeus' torso, bracing his legs against his foe's enormous weight. The giant grinds his teeth in agony and his left hand, entangled in Hercules' grasp, dangles limply. His eyes roll upward in delirious agony.

Euphronios' configuration establishes a number of conventions that will be repeated in virtually all subsequent renderings of the myth: it pictures the brawl at its penultimate moment, when Antaeus' strength is just failing; it stresses the tremendous physicality of the two figures locked in battle; and it deploys the lion's skin and club to visually identify the scene as belonging to the hero's Labors. Yet the scene's horizontal organization, which places the fighters on more or less equal footing, would be supplanted by representations that more clearly emphasize the elevation of Antaeus' body requisite for his destruction.

A Roman sculpture from the second century (fig. 3), today installed in the courtyard of the Palazzo Pitti in Florence, exemplifies this new representational aspect. In

¹⁷ Pindar, *The Isthmian Odes of Pindar*, ed. P.G. Goold (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 4.52-60; Ursula Hoff, "The Sources of 'Hercules and Antaeus' by Rubens," in *In Honor of Daryl Lindsay*, ed. Franz Philipp, June Stewart (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1964), 67. Hoff provides an indispensable catalogue of Hercules and Antaeus images.

the statue, Hercules hoists Antaeus from behind, a positioning that echoes a description written slightly earlier by Apollodorus: “Hercules hugged him, lifted him aloft, broke and killed him.”¹⁸ The work, itself a copy of an even older Hellenistic bronze, was considerably influential on subsequent representations of the myth. The front-to-back arrangement, which I will refer to as the Classical type, stands as one of the main two types employed by artists to represent Hercules’ attack. Its appearance in antiquity was not confined to the Palazzo Pitti sculpture, although that may have been its most monumental manifestation. It appears also in a fourth century B.C. silver coin from Tarentum, and in a third-century bas-relief sculpture (fig. 4) on a basilica structure in Leptis Magna, a Roman colony in what is today Libya.¹⁹

Although the Palazzo Pitti sculpture was only a fragment during Agostino’s time, it inspired a number of Renaissance depictions, probably because of its clear status as an artifact of, and therefore direct link to, antiquity. A bronze statuette by Antico (fig. 5) brought the Palazzo Pitti grouping into the home of Isabella d’Este, who deemed it worthy enough to be placed in her *grotta*, one of the most private rooms in the ducal palace in Mantua and one specifically reserved for classical-inspired art.²⁰ Antico’s mastery of lost-wax casting facilitated the creation of multiple copies of this small sculpture, further proliferating the back-to-front figural arrangement.²¹

¹⁸ Apollodorus, of Athens, *Apollodorus, The Library*, trans. James George Frazer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956): 223.

¹⁹ Hoff refers to the whole tradition of front-to-back hold as the “Tarentine” type. For the coin and other appearances of the type in miniature, see Hoff 67.

²⁰ The statue, expressly cast for Isabella, is listed in a 1524 inventory for the *grotta*; Eleonora Luciano, “Antico: Pier Jacopo Alari Bonacolsi (c. 1455-1528),” in *Antico: The Golden Age of Renaissance Bronzes* (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2011): 11. For the interplay between Antico’s statue and the *studiolo*’s extensive mythological decorations, see Stephen Campbell, *The Cabinet of Eros* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004): 91.

²¹ Richard E. Stone, “Antico and the Development of Bronze Casting in Italy at the End of the Quattrocento,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 16 (1981): 97.

The Classical type was also resonant in prints, the most notable of which is an engraving by Marcantonio Raimondi (fig. 6) that plainly quotes Hercules' squared torso and frontal stance in the sculpture. Antaeus, however, has been slightly rotated and is now clutched to the side of Hercules' torso. The print's design, thought to be after a drawing by Giulio Romano, was undoubtedly popular, as it spawned a second version by Agostino (fig. 7) and even a third by Ugo da Carpi (fig. 8), a chiaroscuro woodblock printmaker sometimes associated with the workshop.²² This alternative printed representation of the topos provides a fascinating comparison to Agostino's later *Hercules and Antaeus*, which was only ever engraved by Agostino. Representing distinctly separate but contemporary conceptions of the myth, both designs follow equivalent rules of size and proportion in their compositions; one can almost imagine the characters of the first print walking into the pane of the second. The landscapes also appear related, with almost identical leafy foliage and uneven, eroded ground, as if these are opposite sides of the same hilltop. Both have prominent boulders in the bottom third of the canvas. Both show classically inspired structures in the background, although Marcantonio's version seems to include a clearer reference to Poseidon's temple, which, according to Pindar, Antaeus lined with the "skulls of strangers" who dared to challenge him.²³ The architecture in both prints appears derelict and crumbling, re-enforcing the perception of the scene as historicized depiction of ancient mythology.

The Classical figural type would continue to manifest itself throughout the sixteenth century in prints. Bartsch links a third unique Hercules and Antaeus print to the Marcantonio workshop (fig. 9), although its simplistic hatching and vacant background

²² The practice of purposeful replication among the Marcantonio workshop printmakers will be discussed at length in the following chapter.

²³ Pindar 4.52-60

seems at odds with the more sophisticated executions we have seen from the workshop. In actuality it more closely recalls an earlier print by Giovanni Antonio da Brescia (fig. 10), itself believed to be after a design by Andrea Mantegna.

While the Classical type may have been in place since antiquity, it would not have been the only available model of the Hercules and Antaeus topos in 1533. A competing, if not equally prominent, style was the Florentine type, so-called by Leopold Ettliger due to its appearance on the façade of the Florentine Cathedral (fig. 11) at the end of the fourteenth century.²⁴ Nestled into the swirling vines and flowers of the right jamb of the *porta della mandorla*, the small sculpture presents Hercules and Antaeus in a front-to-front configuration.²⁵ This frontal hold emerged in Rome no later than 1432, when Hercules was painted hugging Antaeus to his chest in a mural program for the palace of Cardinal Giordano Orsini. It appeared also in one of several small Hercules vignettes on Filarete's bronze doors for St. Peter's Basilica, surely a sign of its legitimacy as an accepted representation of the myth.²⁶

The Florentine type lived on in, and perhaps because of, one of the most influential presentations of the Hercules and Antaeus topos created up to this point: a larger than life-sized painting by Antonio Pollaiuolo (fig. 12) from the late fifteenth

²⁴ Leopold D. Ettliger, "Hercules Florentinus," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz, Max-Planck-Institute*, 16 Bd., H2 (1972): 124-125.

²⁵ There is some debate over the reasons for including the likenesses of a pagan deity on a the decorations of a cathedral: whether their appearances were a Renaissance "intrusion" in overwhelmingly gothic, religious setting or, as Irwin Panofsky argued in *Renaissances and Renascences in Western Art* (Stockholm, 1960) which Ettliger quotes, an "*interpretation Christiana* in classical guise;" Ettliger 126.

²⁶ Patricia Simons, "Hercules in Italian Renaissance Art: Masculine Labour and Homoerotic Libido," *Art History* 31.5. (2008): 643. The mural designs survived in contemporary illustrations collected in what's now called the Crespi Chronicle, in Milan. For identifications of the Hercules episodes on Filarete's bronze doors, which are believed to have been inspired by Ovid and Lucan's *Pharsalia*, see Helen Roeder, "The Borders of Filarete's Bronze Doors to St. Peter's," *Journal of the Courtauld and Warburg Institutes* 10 (1947): 151-152.

century.²⁷ Originally part of a trio of Labor-themed panels commissioned for the *salle grande* of the Medici Palace in Florence, the work emphasizes the carnal physicality that the miniscule and undetailed carved reliefs from the Florentine Cathedral and the doors of St. Peter's could only hint at.²⁸ Antaeus screams and claws at Hercules' head as he is fatally stifled by the hero's brutal embrace. Hercules' knotted back inhumanly buckles from the weight of the giant. The painting, one of Pollaiuolo's best known works during the quattrocento, would prove equally instrumental for ensuing portrayals of the myth. It was recreated in a small bronze statue again by Pollaiuolo (fig. 13), in a copper plaquette by Moderno (fig. 14), and in prints, like those by the Mantegna school (fig. 15) and the French engraver Gabriel Salmon (fig. 16).²⁹

As has been shown, a robust tradition of visualizations existed when Agostino engraved *Hercules and Antaeus* in 1533. The myth materialized in paintings and sculptures in expressly private dwellings (the *grotta* of Isabella d'Este, the apartments of Cardinal Orsini, the Medici palace) and in highly public spaces (the Florentine Cathedral, St. Peter's Cathedral). Both the Classical and Florentine types were also transmitted by prints, which could considerably magnify their propagation through Renaissance visual

²⁷ The image that survives to us is not the original painting, which was larger than life, but a much smaller and presumably later study after the original. For a more comprehensive investigation of the *salle grande* panels and their significance to the brothers' establishment in the Medici court, see Alison Wright, *The Pollaiuolo Brothers: The Arts of Florence and Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005) 59, 75-91. Wright argues for a c. 1470 dating. Kenneth Clark writes further on the formal properties of the painting in *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956), 261. See also Hoff 69. Hoff suggests a number of iconographic inspirations for the work beyond the Florentine Cathedral relief, even positing that, "the vigorous naturalism of the pose suggests that Pollaiuolo had watched wrestlers in action."

²⁸ Of the original three panels, only designs for *Hercules and Antaeus* and *Hercules killing the Hydra* survive. It is assumed that the missing panel illustrated Hercules defeating the Nemean Lion, thereby exactly quoting the three episodes inscribed also in the *porta della mandorla* jamb.

²⁹ A drawing by Michelangelo from the Ashmolean Museum also shows two male, nude figures intertwined in an especially intimate take on the Florentine type. Although the artist did not identify them, they are thought to be Hercules and Antaeus, and perhaps preliminary plans for the pendant sculpture to his *David* in the Palazzo Vecchio; Hoff 70.

culture. Yet despite the multiplicity of interpretations for the myth available in 1533, *Hercules and Antaeus* is formally distinctive. The most glaring divergence concerns the female figure. She is unfound in any of the preceding visualizations of the topos that we have examined. However, her inclusion in the scene and characterization as a hag is consequential to the possible interpretations of the print's design as a whole, and this discussion is a central subject of the third chapter. Here, I would like to comment only on the Hercules and Antaeus figures.

The manner of the fighters' arrangement in Agostino's print fully rejects the Classical and the Florentine type, models that emphasized the duel's intense physicality and vertical movement necessary to rob Antaeus of his strength. Instead, in *Hercules and Antaeus* the conflict between hero and foe seems unusually one-sided. Agostino has engraved not a duel of two fighters of tremendous vitality, but an altercation much more ambivalent in character. Hercules does not violent crush or asphyxiate his opponent. Rather, he hugs him around waist and awkwardly rests him on his thigh. Antaeus, his body contorted by fear, seems almost submissive to Hercules' aggression. Only his left hand actively engages with Hercules' body, and it is unclear whether he is pushing back against the hero or bracing himself to avoid falling from his perch on Hercules' leg. His right arm, stretching back behind his head, signifies resignation to his impending defeat.

In actuality, Agostino's depiction of the fighters matches most faithfully not a visual antecedent, but a literary one. In the third century A.D., Philostratus the Elder wrote the *Imagines*, today considered one of the earliest works of art analysis and criticism. In them the Athenian sophist provides an ekphrastic description of a painting that seems to correspond closely to the idiosyncratic design that appears in *Hercules and*

Antaeus: "Hercules...caught Antaeus by the middle just above the waist where the ribs are, and set him upright on his thigh still gripping his arms about him; then pressing his own fore-arm against the pit of Antaeus' stomach, now flabby and panting, he squeezes out his breath...."³⁰ This description offers a far more precise account of Hercules' method of attack than can be found in the earlier writings of Pindar or Apollodorus. It has previously been incorrectly categorized as another expression of the Classical type, an overly simplified reading that ignores Philostratus' mention of the placement of Antaeus on Hercules' thigh.³¹ In truth, the *Imagines*, which were published and began circulating by the sixteenth century, contain the only clear textual reference to the peculiar manner in which Hercules grapples with his opponent seen in Agostino's print.³² I mean not to posit conclusively that the print's designer worked directly from the text of the *Imagines* as he formulated the scene. However, judging from the sheer incompatibility of the Classical or Florentine types and the figural arrangement shown in *Hercules and Antaeus*, the preceding evidence strongly implies that the designer had some sort of version of Philostratus' version of the myth at the forefront of his mind.

There is another major difference between *Hercules and Antaeus* and its antecedents that is unresolved by Philostratus or any other literary or visual example of the myth: the viewer is denied the opportunity to see Hercules' face. This is completely antithetical to both classical and contemporary depictions of the Labors that endeavored

³⁰ Philostratus the Elder. *Imagines* 2.21, trans. Arthur Fairbanks (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1931) 227. It is not known whether the paintings described by Philostratus in the *Imagines* were real or imaginary, constructed by the sophist as a purely rhetorical exercise. In his introduction, Fairbanks writes that "there is little or nothing to indicate any inconsistency between the paintings existing in [Philostratus'] day and the paintings he describes. The student of late Greek paintings is fully justified in treating these examples as data for his study, whether or not they were actual paintings;" xxvi.

³¹ Hoff 68

³² Malcolm Bull, *The Mirror of the Gods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 14. See also Campbell, *The Cabinet of Eros*, 208.

to underscore the hero's internal psychomachia as he warded off the seemingly endless supply of adversaries that confronted him. We are permitted to notice Antaeus' grimacing face, but the physiognomy of Hercules, the hero of the story, is left mysterious. Further, Hercules' anatomy is de-emphasized in the print. We see him only from the side. Recall again the Palazzo Pitti sculpture (fig. 3), which proudly displayed both Hercules' and Antaeus' impressively muscled torsos. The exhibition of Hercules as an idealized specimen of physical vigor was integral to his construction as an exemplar of morality and civic virtue in Renaissance visual culture, an aspect that will be dealt with more fully in chapter three. The Ackland print contradicts this tendency. Fascinatingly, the print does recall an anecdote recorded by Pliny that describes a similar work by the Roman painter Apelles: "The Herakles with averted face, in the temple of Diana, is also attributed to Apelles; by a triumph of art the picture seems not only to suggest, but actually to give the face."³³ Whether this reference was intentional or not, our print's "averted face," coupled with the general obscuration of Hercules' anatomy, only calls attention more to the nude forms of Antaeus and the seated woman, both of which are presented frontally.

The preceding examination of representations of the Hercules and Antaeus topos proves that the Ackland print stands apart from the myth's canonical depictions. The arrangement of Hercules and Antaeus' bodies and the inclusion of a third figure are highly unusual for visual representations of the story. The description given in the *Imagines*, which so closely corresponds to the configuration of the fighters' bodies in *Hercules and Antaeus*, implies that the design was conceived after a classical model.

³³ Pliny the Elder, *Chapters on the History of Art*, trans. K. Jex-Blake (Ares Publishing Inc.: Chicago, 1976) 131.

However, no such model survives today, leading us to only speculate from where inspiration for the design was drawn, and why.

Chapter 2: The Print and the Workshop

Despite the apparent uniqueness of its design outlined in the previous chapter, it should not be forgotten that *Hercules and Antaeus* was quite normative in other respects. Firstly, the engraving is representative of reproductive printmaking, an emerging form of graphic production that, at least in the early sixteenth century, sought to translate drawings into prints. While an intimate relationship between prints and drawings was already established by the beginning of the sixteenth century, Agostino and the members of the Marcantonio Raimondi workshop would come to capitalize on this artistic strategy more than any artist before them.³⁴ As we will see, *Hercules and Antaeus*' status as a reproductive print, a term that implies some level of derivation from an antecedent moment of image making, is vital to our understanding of the genesis of its distinctive design.

Secondly, *Hercules and Antaeus* belongs to a large number of early modern prints depicting mythological themes culled from antiquity. Prints played an important role in the transmission of the artistic output of ancient Greece and Rome within Renaissance culture. Cheaper and more abundant than paintings, these works served as two-dimensional facsimiles of antique sculpture and architectural detail, readily available to a buying public enamored by the classical period.³⁵ Inherently portable, they were envoys of classical design to the masses. Sixteenth-century Italy, and Rome especially, where the Marcantonio workshop was centered, hosted a trove of newly discovered statues ripe for

³⁴ Landau and Parshall 104.

³⁵ Viljoen 63-115. For the effects of printmaking on architecture *all'antica*, see Michael J. Waters, "A Renaissance without Order: Ornament, Single-sheet Engravings, and the Mutability of Architectural Prints," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 71.4 (2012): 488-500.

study and appreciation.³⁶ Prints re-animated these artifacts, many of which were excavated in only fragmentary form, and helped codify Renaissance understandings of Greek and Roman mythology. While the reproductive prints of Agostino and his peers are thought to have been based on drawings of these sculptures rather than directly on the sculptures themselves, their references were still exceedingly specific, and the Hercules and Antaeus theme was no exception.³⁷ Recall from the previous chapter that prints showing the fighters arranged in the Classical or Florentine types effectively recreated in two dimensions particular sculptures that a tourist could physically visit and experience in Florence or Rome. Reproductive printmaking ensured that these conceptions of the topos would reach a broader audience, thereby transcending the physical limitations that sculpture posed.

In this way, prints both recorded and propagated the myths – and the dominant ways of illustrating those myths – that they sought to illustrate, setting in motion what Pon has characterized as “a vertiginous proliferation of related images, from antiquity and back again...”³⁸ This adds yet another layer of confusion to our understanding of *Hercules and Antaeus*. Besides standing counter to the established representational modes of the theme it sought to represent, the uniqueness of its design also contradicts a prevailing function of printmaking during this era, which was one of documentation and

³⁶ Bull 7-14. The Laocoön group was discovered in 1506, the Farnese Hercules in 1546, and the Apollo Belvedere sometime in the late fifteenth century. All would have second lives in prints. For a more detailed discussion of Rome’s significance for Italian print culture, see Bury 121-131.

³⁷ As Sarah Cree discusses in “Translating Stone into Paper: Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Prints after Antique Sculpture” in *Paper Museums*, 77, these depictions could either be verbatim illustrations of statuary or more creative evocations. She points to two prints both by Marco Dente that depict the Laocoön sculpture, but in very different ways. One is a straightforward illustration, while the other shows the figures fantastically mobilized to literally writhe off of their plinth. See also Viljoen 130-134.

³⁸ Pon, *Raphael, Dürer, and Marcantonio Raimondi*: 2. Pon was specifically discussing Marcantonio’s *Judgment of Paris* and its many copies, but her statement can be easily applied to a vast number of reproductive prints during this era. For further discussion of the legacy of printed designs, see Elizabeth Broun, “The Portable Raphael” in *The Engravings of Marcantonio Raimondi*, ed. Elizabeth Broun (Lawrence: Spencer Museum of Art; Chapel Hill: Ackland Museum of Art, 1981): 30-36.

amplification. By presenting an almost completely new composition, the print challenges its affiliation to the “vertiginous proliferation of related images” that existed for Hercules and Antaeus topos, examples of which we have seen in the previous chapter. Without a clear visual antecedent to point to, it is natural to wonder: who designed *Hercules and Antaeus*?

Such a question is not answered as easily as might be expected, for the processes of artistic invention within the graphic arts at this time were anything but straightforward. The production of prints, and especially of those that are today classified as reproductive, is obscured by a web of incessant duplication that clouds our understanding of these artists’ respective bodies of work and contradicts modern notions of creative property. A miniscule “A.V.” monogram inscribed at the base of the boulder in *Hercules and Antaeus* would suggest that the image’s design is attributable to Agostino. But unlike the graphic works of Antonio Pollaiuolo, Andrea Mantegna, and Albrecht Dürer, none of the prints made by the members of the Marcantonio workshop are believed to have been actually designed by their makers. Instead, these printmakers relied exclusively on the compositional planning of other artists, chief among them Raphael. To understand from where these designs arose, and therefore to elucidate how - and by whom - the design of Agostino’s *Hercules and Antaeus* was formulated, it is necessary to explore the creative environment in which Agostino worked and the particulars of his relationship to Raphael.

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, prints were still a relatively new artistic medium, suitable for experimentation by artists who quickly realized their duplicative possibilities. Unencumbered by the rules of traditional guild structures that restricted other artisans, printmakers were free to endlessly quote or completely copy pictorial

elements from their competitors, thereby sometimes doubly magnifying motifs that were first informed by antiquity. Such replication was, in some instances, truly intended as plagiarism for economic gain. According to one episode from the early history of copyright law, a young Marcantonio was effectively sued by Albrecht Dürer for inserting the German artists' distinctive monogram into his own engravings to increase their desirability.³⁹ At other times, the duplication was less nefarious in intent. Marcantonio's *The Climbers* (fig. 17), for example, seamlessly fuses a landscape from Lucas van Leyden and figures from Michelangelo into one unified scene.⁴⁰

These combinatory prints were not unique to the Marcantonio workshop, but it appears that the workshop's members did institutionalize a pattern of duplication that was novel for the time.⁴¹ They would engrave verbatim copies of their peer's copperplates, mimicking entire compositions stroke for stroke. We have already seen evidence of this practice in the aforementioned series of Hercules and Antaeus prints engraved by Marcantonio (fig. 6), and then Agostino (fig. 7) and Ugo da Carpi (fig. 8), all of which are virtually indistinguishable from each other. Prints of this type, which Landau and Parshall call "replicas," are thought to have been created to replace worn out plates, to correct a mistake in the plate's incising, or to capitalize on an especially popular design by engraving a second plate available for printing.⁴² Of replicas by Agostino, there have

³⁹ Vasari 79. Dürer would have a profound effect on Marcantonio's style for the rest of his career. For a detailed account of this episode, see Alexandra M. Korey, "Creativity, Authenticity and Copy in Early Print Culture" in *Paper Museums*, 35-36. Dürer's original images were woodcuts while Marcantonio's were engraved, a task then considered far more technically demanding.

⁴⁰ The figures were lifted from a cartoon for Michelangelo's now destroyed *Battle of Cascina* and the background from van Leyden's *Mohammad and the Monk Sergius* (1508). For more on these "assembled" compositions see Innis H. Shoemaker, "Marcantonio and his Sources" in *The Engravings of Marcantonio Raimondi*, 4-5. *The Climbers* is Marcantonio's last dated print.

⁴¹ For examples outside the Marcantonio workshop, see Pon, "Prints and Privileges: Regulating the Image in 16th-Century Italy," *Harvard University Art Museums Bulletin* 6.2 (1998): 40-64.

⁴² Landau and Parshall 131. Rather than "replicas," Bartsch called these prints "repetitions."

been noted three examples of the artist copying himself and seven examples of him copying Marcantonio. Marcantonio copied himself twelve times and Agostino once. Marco Dente de Ravenna copied Agostino three times and Marcantonio fifteen times.⁴³

In summary, printmakers freely copied both classical models and each other, and these replicative practices are seen emphatically in the Marcantonio workshop. With this context in place, the design of Agostino's *Hercules and Antaeus* appears even more singular. Unlike the prints that took the Classical or Florentine type as their inspiration, there are no classical sculptural depictions of the distinctive figural grouping seen in *Hercules and Antaeus*. Its collector could not visit a physical version of Hercules swinging the giant over his knee, sculpted in marble or cast in bronze. The design seems to be surprisingly little known to printmakers as well. Bartsch does not record other replicas of the design by the engravers of the Marcantonio workshop nor by any other artist. Unlike *The Climbers*, elements of its composition cannot be found piecemeal in earlier prints.

The design of *Hercules and Antaeus* appears in only two other instances in the sixteenth century. Strangely, both come from outside of Italy. The first is on a carved low-relief medallion from the façade of the Barcelona city hall, dated from sometime during the sixteenth century (fig. 18).⁴⁴ While the relief transposes the print's medium from paper to stone and retrofits its rectangular composition into a circular frame, the three-figure grouping and the distinctive configuration of the fighters are identical to *Hercules and Antaeus*. It is unclear which work preceded which; whether the print was

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Like for Florence, Hercules held special civic importance to the city of Barcelona. See Frederick A. de Armas, "Don Quijote's Barcelona: Echoes of Hercules' *Non Plus Ultra*," *Cervantes: Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America* 29.2 (2009): 112-113. The low relief was found in the online iconographic database of the Warburg Institute.

fashioned after the relief or if the relief served as the print's inspiration. Without concrete dating, it is impossible to know, but other examples of Hercules images that arose in sixteenth-century Spain have been linked to Italian precursors, suggesting that Agostino's print served as a model for the relief's carvers, and not vice versa.⁴⁵

The design also appears in France on a painted enamel medallion by Léonard Limosin, (fig. 19), further demonstrating the design's diffusion across national borders while remaining inexplicably ignored by artists within its originating country. Like Agostino, Limosin often employed the designs of other artists in his works and had previously created enamel versions of prints by Dürer and the Master of the Die. In this medallion dated 1573, the central scene is circumscribed by four smaller pictures of the Nemean lion, the Hydra, the Cretan Bull, and Cerberus. The medallion's distinctive articulation of the figures' muscles and the various background structures follow closely Agostino's engraving, heavily implying Limosin worked directly from the print.

The Limosin medallion is also interesting because it explicitly invokes the name of Raphael in connection with Agostino's engraving. An inscription in the scene's lower margin – "RAPHAEL SANZIO INVENIT" – labels the design (although with erroneous dating) as an invention of the master.⁴⁶ While Marcantonio is not mentioned specifically, the reference to Raphael combined with the dating sufficiently locates the print within the Marcantonio workshop before the master's death in 1520. It cannot be said whether it was Limosin who first asserted this attribution, but it has long defined what we know

⁴⁵ Hercules also appears prominently on the façades of the Seville and Tarazona town halls; Bull 93-94.

⁴⁶ 1533 was thirteen years after Raphael's death, an impossible dating that implies Limosin was rather unfamiliar with the history of the design he was copying. We can assume he took 1533, incised on minute numerals at the base of the boulder at the bottom of the scene, as the date its design was created. "AUGUSTIN VENETIEN SCULSPIT 1573," as the inscription continues, is, however, unexplainably ludicrous.

about *Hercules and Antaeus* as a reproductive print. The innovative structure and complexly duplicative practices of the workshop have been previously studied by Landau and Parshall, and I wish not to retread their careful work here.⁴⁷ However, a basic understanding of how Agostino functioned in relation to his fellow printmakers and to Raphael will help contextualize – and ultimately question - the formation of *Hercules and Antaeus*' design.

Around 1510, Raphael engaged Marcantonio Raimondi in an artistic partnership that would advance the fame of both artists and continue to produce vendible prints even after the master's death ten years later. This collaboration, which extended to Agostino and Marco Dente de Ravenna upon their arrival in Rome a few years later, would revolutionize the business of printmaking. By efficaciously dividing the labor of production amongst three individuals – inventor, engraver, and publisher – printed designs could be created and disseminated to quickly satisfy market demands like never before. Like other reproductive prints from the workshop, we can assume that *Hercules and Antaeus* began life as a drawing, now lost, by Raphael. The master produced preparatory drawings, called *modelli*, that Agostino and his peers then translated into printed form. It is not known what the original purpose of these preparatory sketches were, but of the *modelli* that do survive, most exhibit similar dimensions as their printed twins.⁴⁸ Further, the compositions of final prints were often oriented in the same direction as the *modelli* instead of as mirror images, as would be expected from the printing process. To achieve this, the printmakers would have had to engrave Raphael's

⁴⁷ Landau and Parshall 120-145.

⁴⁸ Shoemaker 9. With recognized exceptions, these *modelli* are not believed to have been specifically created to be engraved, yet were not preparatory sketches for future paintings nor paper facsimiles of already completed canvases either. Whatever their purpose, they were clearly readily accessible to the printmakers.

compositions consciously flipped, a level of care that suggests the printmakers worked under formalized constraints set out by Raphael in commuting his designs.⁴⁹

Despite this oversight, there was also room for the printmakers to exercise their own creativity. Comparison between Marcantonio's *Massacre of the Innocents* (fig. 20) and its accompanying study in red chalk by Raphael (fig. 21), confirms the degree of artistic ingenuity required of the engraver. The sketch conveys how Raphael envisioned the movement of the fleeing mothers and the positioning of their attackers. While Raphael did demarcate the figures and the overall thrust of the composition in pen and brown ink, the background was left empty. It was for the engraver to complete the scene, remaining careful not to unravel Raphael's compositional harmony.⁵⁰

Despite the printmakers' intimate association with Raphael, the worth of their engravings was not derived from the celebrity of their designer as one might expect. None of the prints designed by Raphael originally bore his name, and the printmaker's monogram would not come into regular usage by Italian engravers until the second half

⁴⁹ I mean not to minimize the considerable technical skill required to effectively translate *modelli* into engravings. The drawings, often completed in chalk or ink washes, could express shadow and depth through the gradation of tone. In contrast, the engraving's ability to delineate form relied only on the binary distinction between inked and non-inked space. As Emily Peters has expertly shown in "Systems and Swells: The Collective Lineage of Engraved Lines, 1480-1650" in *The Brilliant Line: Following the Early Modern Engraver 1480-1650* (Providence: Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 2009), Marcantonio devised a system of gridding to transmute the nuances of light and dark in the *modelli* with only inked lines. The need for such a standardized methodology that could be repeated for a variety of images speaks to the scale at which these printmakers worked. The innovation of the swelled line, epitomized by Hendrick Goltzius' statuesque *Hercules*, would come later in the sixteenth century.

⁵⁰ Arthur M. Hind, *Marcantonio and Italian Engravers and Etchers of the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Fred A. Stokes Company, 1912), 5-6. While at least three *modelli* for *The Massacre* survive, none show sketched-in landscape or buildings, suggesting Raphael's principal concern was mapping out the figures for his printmakers. In this matter I concur with Hind ("Raphael might quite well have preferred to leave Marcantonio the liberty justified by his genius as an engraver, merely supplying him with drawings to develop in his own way") over Landau and Parshall, who believed Raphael, given his architectural experience, would have surely taken pleasure in crafting backgrounds for scenes, and that *modelli* showing such backgrounds were simply lost. For an in-depth study of the print and its related drawings and copies, see Pon, *Raphael, Dürer, and Marcantonio Raimondi*: 118-136.

of the sixteenth century.⁵¹ These practices suggest there was little distinction between invention and imitation.⁵² It was a work's design, or *disegno*, from which value was primarily derived.⁵³ Vasari tells us that Marcantonio's "engravings were held in much higher estimation, on account of their good design, than those of the Flemings; and the merchants made very large profits out of them."⁵⁴ We know this cannot be completely true; as the aforementioned episode of Marcantonio appropriating Dürer's monogram shows, signatures for certain artists did carry weight. But in general prints' primary attraction, it seems, was in their aesthetic quality.

Ensuring that these prints would be made ready for sale was left to another of Raphael's trusted associates. Baviero de' Carocci, called il Baviera, handled the publishing for the Marcantonio workshop. It is unclear exactly what role il Baviera played in the printing, marketing, and selling of these works. Both Hind and Griffiths refer to him as Raphael's "factotum," a title implying a range of duties.⁵⁵ In the *Life* of Marcantonio, Vasari refers to il Baviera as Raphael's pigment grinder, implying his employment was chiefly as a laborer.⁵⁶ Marcantonio, Agostino, and Marco Dente probably did not run the presses themselves, an arduous and tedious task, so perhaps this

⁵¹ Landau and Parshall 144. The "empty tablet," seen in a number of prints thought to have been designed by Raphael, could have been added by Marcantonio as a tacit tribute to his friend and collaborator and meant to signify his influence generally. However, Marcantonio also employed the empty tablet much earlier as a result of the aforementioned arbitration with Durer, thereby explicitly "presenting himself as a *tablula rasa*, eliminating all trace of his own manner in order to record objectively the work he is copying;" Broun 22.

⁵² Zorach and Rodini 3-4: "The historical construction of a notion of artistic genius in the Renaissance and Baroque period came both *through* and *in opposition to* prints. Prints provided publicity for genius, but in doing so they also marked a distinction between their own status as a relatively cheap, plentiful images, and the higher-status originals they represented."

⁵³ For discussions on the definition of the term *disegno*, a notoriously knotty term with a multiplicity meanings, see Patricia Rubens, *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) 2, 214 and Lincoln, *The Invention of the Renaissance Printmaker*, 153-158.

⁵⁴ Vasari 82

⁵⁵ Hind 5; Griffiths 46.

⁵⁶ Vasari 82

was il Baviera's job. Raphael, however, valued il Baviera's services enough to subsequently bequeath his entire collection of engraved copper plates to him.⁵⁷ Such a gift, the sum of which constituted the master's life's work in the graphic arts, would surely have been considered extremely valuable. Whatever the particulars of il Baviera's involvement in the workshop, it is clear that his influence was substantial to the production of all three printmakers. Following Raphael's death, il Baviera would go on to publish a great number of prints by a variety of engravers, including Agostino.⁵⁸

It was this ternary apparatus, comprised of a designer, engraver, and publisher, that characterized the Marcantonio workshop's production. But there is reason to question how this arrangement, with Raphael providing creative direction, could have possibly generated *Hercules and Antaeus*. For a design supposedly created by Raphael, why do the figures in *Hercules and Antaeus* seem so unusually wiry and elongated, so conceptually unbalanced and unresolved as a group, so un-Raphaelian in their rendering? As was habitual in the workshop, Agostino, as the engraver, had only secondary involvement with print's design. It was ultimately the designer who was responsible for the modeling of the figures, their spatial relationships, and the emotive responses they were meant to illicit, all of which would have been evident in the *modello*. The treatment of the figures in *Hercules and Antaeus* differs greatly from what one would expect of a print created under Raphael's direct supervision, implying that the attribution

⁵⁷ Witcombe 28. The donation of the plates to il Baviera and rather than heir respective creators - Marcantonio, Agostino, and Marco Dente - is further evidence of the often paradoxical perception of creative property during this era. On this episode, see also Landau and Parshall 121-122, 299.

⁵⁸ While he may have begun his career in Raphael's circle, there is reason to believe il Baviera became a wholly independent contractor, and therefore the first in a line of independent print publishers that includes Antonio Salamanca and Antonio Lafreri. For more on il Baviera's career, see Witcombe's chapter, "Artists and Entrepreneurs," 19 – 59.

“after Raphael” is incorrect. Ultimately, it is the print’s formal characteristics, the all-important *disegno*, that suggest alternative authorship.

I believe there is evidence to suggest that the print’s designer was in actuality another artist, one well known to Agostino: the Florentine painter Rosso Fiorentino.⁵⁹ A substitution of Rosso for Raphael, who was twelve years the Florentine’s senior, is not so difficult. The two artists engaged printmakers in fundamentally the same way.⁶⁰ Both employed a retinue of printmakers – Raphael in Rome and Rosso most notably during his tenure as court painter at Fontainebleau – as part of their larger artistic enterprises. Like Raphael, Rosso also produced drawings with an eye towards future printing. Rosso’s *modelli*, like those of Raphael, are of equal dimensions to their subsequent prints, similarly suggesting that Rosso held a measure of authority over their production. Rosso also repeatedly contracted il Baviera, originally Raphael’s attendant, to handle the publishing of nearly all of the prints he designed while in Italy.⁶¹

Traditionally, Agostino is believed to have collaborated only once with Rosso. In 1518 the two artists partnered in the creation of one of the largest and most complicated engravings attempted up to that point: *The Allegory of Death and Fame* (fig. 22).⁶² In the macabre print, a menagerie of crones and wise men, mourners and spectators gather together to bear witness to a type of judgment ceremony. Some figures are nude or half-

⁵⁹ In constructing this alternative attribution to Rosso Fiorentino, I am grateful for the insight of Mary Pardo. We find also the beginnings of an attribution to Rosso in Ravenel’s brief appraisal of the print. His masters thesis describes *Hercules and Antaeus* as perhaps after a “design by Raphael or Rosso. It is more probably that the figures derive from an antique sculptural relief and that the background has been added to give a pictorial effect. In the print Hercules is seen in the process of crushing Antaeus while mother Earth looks on full of agony, being able to do nothing to proven the death of her son;” 49.

⁶⁰ The similarities between Raphael and Rosso when it came to prints have been remarked upon previously by Landau and Parshall; 159.

⁶¹ Eugene A. Carroll, *Rosso Fiorentino: Prints, Drawings and Decorative Arts* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1987): 38-40.

⁶² Landau and Parshall 160

shrouded. Others wear robes with hoods. A winged skeleton, standing in the center of the tableau, seems to hold court over this ghoulish assembly. To his left, he confers with an hermaphroditic figure of both male and female anatomy, perhaps discussing the fate of the skeleton lying before them. More heads, straining to catch a glimpse of the proceedings, peek out of the shadows between the standing onlookers. On the left, a male figure of extraordinary cadaverous form wails and gestures over the congregation.⁶³

It is curious that Rosso devised this harrowing scene for his first printed work. The subject has no apparent textual basis, and its plainly disturbing imagery was surely not the safest bet for ensuring widespread appeal to buyers. Whatever the reason for Rosso's decision, the print was indeed popular; perhaps it was Agostino or il Baviera who recommended that Marco Dente de Ravenna create a replica (fig. 23) to further capitalize on the design's success.

The Allegory has little in common thematically with *Hercules and Antaeus*, but its handling of the nude figure readily supports comparison. Placed side-by-side, the two prints exhibit an unmistakable similarity in their anatomical modeling. The treatment of the clavicle bone structure in a number of figures from *The Allegory* directly evokes the neck area of Antaeus and the female figure in the *Hercules and Antaeus*. In particular, a female figure in *The Allegory*, her head and torso emerging from the shadows in the print's left half, shares the wind-swept hair, sagging breasts, and angular shoulders with the female figure in *Hercules and Antaeus*.

⁶³ For a full formal analysis of *The Allegory*, see again Carroll 54-57. In "Fare un Cosa Morta Parer Viva: Michelangelo, Rosso, and the Un(Divinity) of Art," *The Art Bulletin* 84.4 (2002): 600, Stephen Campbell connects the *Fury* figure to the Laocoön statue, asserting the print as another manifestation of the influence of classical sculpture in the early modern period. While Campbell's reading relies primarily on the figure's frenzied pose, equating its dynamism to that of Laocoön and his sons, no mention is made of the figure's abject emaciation, which differs greatly from the full-bodied Laocoön.

A broader survey of Rosso's oeuvre further solidifies this new attribution, revealing a sustained interest in the angular undergirdings of the human body. *Fury*, (fig. 24), a thematically bizarre print engraved by Jacapo Caraglio in 1524 after Rosso's design, presents a frighteningly gaunt male figure whose haggard expression and bedraggled hair again bring to mind the female in *Hercules and Antaeus*.⁶⁴ While this inexplicable figure may reflect an exaggeration of Rosso's Mannerist style, other more conventional works still evoke the nudes of *Hercules and Antaeus*. In all of these images, we notice a marked and perhaps intentional deviation from the generously rounded modeling that was Raphael's specialty.⁶⁵ The protracted Christ figures in *Pietà with Four Angels* (fig. 25) and in a preparatory drawing (fig. 26) for *Deposition from the Cross* in Sansepolcro exemplify the painter's habitual lean and broad-shoulder figures. In the drawing particularly, Christ's thigh and calf, with extended tendons, recalls Hercules' similarly bent legs in *Hercules and Antaeus*.

To further connect the print's design to Rosso, we may also note the re-use of a distinctive figural motif in both the body of Antaeus and the idealized Adonis figure from the painter's *Death of Adonis* fresco (fig. 27). Conceived in 1532 as a part of the elaborate wall decorations for the Galerie François I^{er} at Fontainebleau, the mural's dating places it directly contemporaneous with our *Hercules and Antaeus*. In both the mural and the print, an expiring male nude, with contracted torso and legs held apart, throws one arm

⁶⁴ Vasari 90. It is possible that il Baviera, hoping to repeat the success of *The Allegory* six years earlier, wished to commission from Rosso another print of similarly dark subject matter; Carroll 39.

⁶⁵ According to David Franklin in *Rosso in Italy: The Italian Career of Rosso Fiorentino* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994) 133, Rosso's rather nonconformist figurative style was, in fact, quite deliberate. He sought to offer an alternative definition of beauty beyond what could be found in the figures of Raphael's and Michelangelo's canvases. A terse rivalry with Raphael and Michelangelo would come to define Rosso's career in Rome. See again Campbell, "Fare un Cosa Morta Parer Viva: Michelangelo, Rosso, and the Un(Divinity) of Art," 600. Campbell labels the designs of Rosso's Roman prints "a parody directed against the classical tradition and the art and reputation of Michelangelo."

around his face in anguish. The plight of Adonis was not dissimilar to Antaeus'; the god was senselessly gored by a wild boar, ending a life characterized by divine vitality. The mural appears to illustrate the aftermath of the attack as Adonis, attended by various putti, sighs his last breaths. Based on these images, we can perhaps conclude that when charged with the problem of representing a masculine, dying youth, Rosso simply altered a favored figurative pose as demanded by the narrative at hand.⁶⁶

Attributing the design of *Hercules and Antaeus* to Rosso with any measure of certainty is, however, slightly problematic. Before *Hercules and Antaeus*, Rosso's only treatment of the Hercules theme was in a series of engravings he designed depicting six of the hero's labors. These prints, collectively titled *The Labors and Adventures of Hercules*, represent a conspicuous counterargument to a Rosso attribution for *Hercules and Antaeus*, and therefore must be addressed. Engraved by Caraglio and published by il Baviera in 1524, the figures in these six prints share little with the attenuated nudes of *Hercules and Antaeus*. Their figures display a solidness and heft that the bodies of Agostino's print lack. In *The Labors* series, Hercules corresponds more to the conventional depictions of the hero we have seen that emphasized his anatomical perfection and physical capability. He assumes poses of expected movement, alternately kneeling, lunging, or striking at foes. In *Hercules Fighting the Centaur* (fig. 28), the hero springs forward at a dying centaur writhing on the ground.⁶⁷ In *Hercules Overpowering*

⁶⁶ Formal linkages between the *Pietà* and the *Death of Adonis* have previously been drawn, with special comment given to the lack of pictured genitals in both works. See Regina Stefaniak, "Replicating Mysteries of the Passion: Rosso's Dead Christ with Angels," *Renaissance Quarterly* 45.5 (1992): 711 and Rebecca Zorach, "'The Flower that Falls Before the Fruit': The Galerie François I^{er} at Fontainebleau and Atys Excastratus," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 62.1 (2000): 77-78. This privation is seen too in *Hercules and Antaeus*, in which Antaeus' phallus is tucked discreetly between his legs away from the viewer. See also Franklin 170.

⁶⁷ With his club raised and his lion's pelt billowing from around his waist, the image plainly alludes to Antonio Pollaiuolo's *Hercules and the Hydra* panel for the Medici palace from half a century earlier.

the River Achelous (fig. 29), he nimbly hurdles the river god, manifest as a bull, and jams his knee into the beast's head while gripping its ear. The four other prints, which show Hercules battling the Hydra, Cerberus, Nessus, and Cacus, similarly portray the hero as a vigorous and athletic fighter caught in the heat of battle.

If Rosso was the designer of both *The Labors* series and *Hercules and Antaeus*, why do their portrayals of the hero's nude body differ so sharply? Although *The Labors* were engraved by Caraglio and *Hercules and Antaeus* by Agostino, it is unlikely this difference in engravers was consequential. As we have already seen in the *Massacre of the Innocents* by Marcantonio and its *modello* by Raphael, it was the designer, not the engraver, who was most accountable for the figures' appearances. The designs of *The Labors* instead point to an intentional shift in Rosso's pictorial style. It appears that Rosso was adept at dramatically altering his style as the circumstances called for. His exact reasons for doing so remain obscure, but may have been based on the subject matter of the print at hand, the literary or visual sources of the scene, or the current tastes of the public for whom the print was ultimately intended. We can only speculate in what ways *Hercules and Antaeus* was a product of some or all of these pressures. The print effectively combines Rosso's affinity for elongated anatomy with the popular mythological themes of *The Labors* series. Almost a decade after *The Labors*, it is possible Rosso sought to revert to his signature, attenuated style but this time in the service of more mainstream – and thus potentially more profitable – subject matter, and *Hercules and Antaeus* was the result. Yet clearly Rosso misjudged the market's appetite for this type of design. Unlike *The Allegory*, which was replicated by Marco Dente, *Hercules and Antaeus* was never popular enough to merit a second engraved plate.

Finally, if any further evidence was needed to remove the persistent Raphael attribution from *Hercules and Antaeus*, it would surely be found in the print's dating. 1533 was more than a decade after Raphael's death. It was also long after the heyday of the Marcantonio workshop. As no versions by the other printmakers of the Marcantonio workshop exist, it is quite possible that the print was an independent commission and completed unassociated from the workshop in Rome.

The 1533 dating actually situates *Hercules and Antaeus* within a second phase of Agostino's printmaking career. Following Raphael's death, Agostino, Marcantonio, and Marco Dente remained active in Rome under the leadership of Giulio Romano, who seems to have assumed Raphael's place as de facto head of the workshop and who continued the tradition of drawing-based engravings.⁶⁸ In 1524, Marcantonio was imprisoned for his involvement in the blasphemously erotic *I Modi* engravings. Perhaps sensing new opportunities elsewhere, Giulio soon after left for Mantua, signaling the end of the workshop in terms of new production. From here on Agostino's whereabouts are less certain. Vasari writes that the printmaker moved to Florence to work with Andrea del Sarto, although it also appears that he followed Giulio to Mantua, for in 1528 he engraved *Hercules and the Nemean Lion* (fig. 30), thought to be after Giulio's design.⁶⁹ But it was also in 1528 that the printmaker collaborated in Venice with Sebastiano Serlio, a contributing architect to François I^{er}'s construction at Fontainebleau, on a visual guide to the antique columnic orders.⁷⁰ By at least 1530, Agostino was back in Rome where he

⁶⁸ Bette Talvacchia, *Taking Positions: On the Erotic in Renaissance Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1999): 3-4. Vasari also writes of how Agostino came under the employment of Baccio Bandinelli sometime "after the death of Raffaello," apparently in Rome; 85.

⁶⁹ Bartsch attributed the print to Raphael; it is now believed to be after Giulio. Its design was taken from a classical relief from the Villa Medici, Rome; Hoff 69.

⁷⁰ Waters 500; Witcombe 57.

began producing a series of prints illustrating classical vases.⁷¹ In 1533, he engraved a scene of an infant Hercules strangling snakes in his cradle (fig. 31), an allusion to one of the earliest stories of the hero's life. While this print was ostensibly finished in the same year as *Hercules and Antaeus* (the date appears corrected from 1532 to 1533), the brawny male and voluptuous female nude also present in the scene distinguishes it from our *Hercules and Antaeus* and seems to confirm its traditional attribution to Giulio Romano.⁷²

Attempts to geographically link Agostino and Rosso are also inconclusive. Until decamping to Fontainebleau in late 1530 at the invitation of François I^{er}, Rosso was primarily based in Florence, notwithstanding a three-year sojourn to Rome beginning in 1524.⁷³ The intimate nature of Marcantonio and Raphael's collaboration has always implied the painter and engraver worked side-by-side, or at least through regular, in-person contact.⁷⁴ Yet it is unknown if, or when, Rosso and Agostino met. It has been previously asserted, although somewhat unconvincingly, that *The Allegory* resulted from some sort of long-distance artistic exchange between Rosso and Agostino in 1518.⁷⁵

Perhaps *Hercules and Antaeus* arose from a similar arrangement, meaning the design was

⁷¹ Ibid. 59. Two of these vases features lions and the Medici ring, implying the work was commissioned by Clement VII or a member of his family.

⁷² Ibid. Witcombe suggests that this print and *Hercules and Antaeus* would maybe intended as a later expansion of the aforementioned *The Labors and Adventures of Hercules* series engraved by Caraglio.

⁷³ Franklin 134. The impetus for Rosso's move to Rome was a commission to paint the entrance of the Santa Maria della Place at the invitation of Aneflo di Piero Cesi. After some sort of quarrel between the church's architect and its painter, the commission was cancelled. Suddenly without work in a new city, Rosso turned to printmaking, which would be his main source of income during his stay. Thirty-one engravings survive from this period, all engraved by Caraglio and all but one commissioned by il Baviera.

⁷⁴ The idea of Raphael's "workshop" has long been a point of discussion; whether it was a community of artists with formal membership that worked in synchronicity in a common space, such as in Raphael's own studio in the Palazzo Caprini, or if it was a looser association that followed from whatever commission consumed Raphael at the time. For more on this possible structure, and on the role of drawing in Raphael's creative process, see John Shearman, "The Organization of Raphael's Workshop," *Museum Studies* 10 (1983): 40-57.

⁷⁵ Carroll 38, 54-58. This explanation is refuted by Landau and Parshall, who hypothesize that Veneziano traveled himself to Florence to receive this important commission; 160.

formulated in France by Rosso while he was occupied with the expansive mural program for the Galerie François I^{er}, and was then shipped to Rome, where Agostino engraved it. But there are also sufficiently large gaps in Agostino's later biography to suggest that the engraver himself journeyed to Fontainebleau to receive the commission from Rosso. It is unlikely Rosso travelled to Agostino in Italy. From 1532 to 1539, the painter would have been heavily occupied by his commission at Fontainebleau, a much more important – and time-consuming – project than anything that his partnership with Agostino would have represented.⁷⁶

Nevertheless, the preceding evidence heavily implies a more significant association between Rosso and Agostino than was once thought, one that extended from the creation of *The Allegory* in 1518 to *Hercules and Antaeus* in 1533. It also unsettles the somewhat simplistic understanding of Agostino's printmaking career as only a retainer in the Marcantonio workshop, a mere assistant professionally and creatively bound to Marcantonio and, by extension, Raphael. *Hercules and Antaeus*, despite its relatively meager influence on the canon of visualizations of the Hercules and Antaeus theme, significantly complicates what is known of the print production of Agostino and Rosso in the early 1530s.

⁷⁶ Carroll 31

Chapter 3: The Moralization of the Myth

We have now examined two of the main issues that concern *Hercules and Antaeus* by Agostino Veneziano: the idiosyncrasies of the print's design in relation to canonical representations of the myth and the collaborative strategies of print production that drew Agostino and the print's designer together. While these inquiries have uncovered factors important to the print's creation, fundamental questions about its unique design remain. How was the viewer meant to interpret the print's anomalous depiction of the hero, the unusual configuration of the duel, and the prominent inclusion of the female figure, all of which would have been at odds with the corpus of visual depictions that had preceded it? To answer these questions, it is necessary to understand the layered meaning Hercules held for Renaissance audiences, and how the Hercules and Antaeus story in particular had taken on new subtexts by the time of the cinquecento. As mentioned in the introduction, recent work on this issue by Patricia Simons will be analyzed and qualified in light of Agostino's *Hercules and Antaeus*, which presents an unusual picturing of these figures which Simons does not address.

The Hercules character was not, of course, a Renaissance invention. From his first mention by Homer, the hero was by far the most popular and widely invoked character of classical mythology.⁷⁷ His pervasiveness in the classical period was probably a consequence of his remarkably multivalent character. The “most adaptable, and adapted” of all the mythological figures in literature, Hercules was a catchall protagonist who readily accepted personality traits from each new author who chose to deploy him.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Karl G. Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme: The Adaptation of the Hero in Literature from Homer to the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972): 3.

⁷⁸ Galinsky, “Hercules,” in *The Classical Tradition*, ed. Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most, and Salvatore Settis (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2010) 426.

Writers freely introduced new dimensions to the character, fabricating an amalgamated persona that today seems dizzyingly complex.⁷⁹ Compared to the Olympic gods, whose idiosyncratic personalities were more rigidly defined, Hercules was elastic. A surfeit of seemingly contradictory personalities were alternately ascribed to him: righteous and just, while at other times oafish and vacuous; venerable and messianic but also, depending on the circumstances, lustful and rash.⁸⁰ Pindar trumpeted Hercules as the epitome of noble virtue;⁸¹ for Aristophanes, he was “a fool and glutton.”⁸²

Even the particulars of Hercules’ biography are inconsistent. Thebes, Argos and Mycenae all made claims to the hero as their ancestral founder.⁸³ The number of his Labors was hardly gospel. The twelve Herculean metopes from the Temple of Zeus in Olympus helped standardize the dodecathlon - Hercules and the Nemean lion, the Lernaean hydra, the hind of Kernyeia, the cattle of Geryon, the Erymanthian boar, the Stymphalian birds, the Cretan bull, the Augean stables, the horses of Diomedes, the belt of Hyppolite, the apples of Hesperides, and Cerberus - but alternative lists could be found in Sophocles’ *Trachiniae* and Euripides’ *Hercules*.⁸⁴ The metopes from the Temple of Hephaestus in Athens depicted only nine Labors, omitting those episodes that were either

⁷⁹ To contemporary readers, “the resulting contradictions have mattered little (being important only to academics, for whom the demonstration of dichotomies and ambiguities is part of making a living.)”; Galinsky, “Hercules” in *The Classical Tradition*: 426.

⁸⁰ For a comprehensive survey of Hercules’ varied appearances in the tragedies and comedies of the 5th century, see Susan Woodford, *Exemplum Virtutis: A Study of Herakles in Athens in the Second Half of the Fifth Century*, Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1966: 55-102.

⁸¹ Galinsky, *The Hercules Theme*: 30. See also William Mullen, “Herakles in Pindar” in *Herakles: Passage of the Hero Through 1000 Years of Classical Art*, ed. Jaimee B. Uhlenbrock (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972): 29-24.

⁸² Aristophanes, *Aves*, trans. B.B. Rogers (Cambridge: Loeb, 1950): 1.1604, as quoted in Woodford 94.

⁸³ Kerényi 128.

⁸⁴ Ann Birchall, *Greek Gods and Heroes* (London: British Museum Publications Ltd., 1974): 20; Woodford 225-226. The origins and promulgation of Hercules’ Labors is a topic of continuous debate. The ones that I have listed here, from the Temple of Zeus, are also those given in Kerényi and in Jaimee P. Uhlenbrock’s “Herakles: Labors, Works, Deeds” in *Herakles: Passage of the Hero Through 1000 Years of Classical Art*: 2-4.

deemed irrelevant to its Athenian worshippers or repetitive of the temple's other decorations.⁸⁵ The chronology of the labors was also never standardized and the abundance of the more minor labors, among which the episodes with Antaeus, the incendiary giant Cacus, the river god Achelous, and Nessus and the centaurs are traditionally counted, further muddled any official timeline of the deeds.

Pinning down a unified understanding of Hercules' identity, at least during the classical period, is therefore a feat worthy of the hero himself. Instead of attempting to define *who* Hercules was, perhaps it would be more profitable to consider *which* Hercules appears in our *Hercules and Antaeus*. By the time of the print's creation in 1533, a more unified conception of Hercules, so much as one can be established, was crystallized around a few underlying features. This gradual transformation, or "moralization," as it is referred to in much of the scholarly literature, of Hercules from a polymorphic hero deity to a more concrete paradigm of moral conduct is central to defining the Renaissance response to the print.

The most inviolable of Hercules' traits was probably his idealized strength. A fantastic physical ability exhibited in the face of daunting odds was an essential facet of the hero's description in both text and image. Hercules, while not a god, was undeniably god-like. Even as a newborn child he was known to have single-handedly killed twin snakes that had sneaked into his cradle at night to poison him, an anecdote illustrated by the aforementioned print (fig. 31) by Agostino.⁸⁶ The lion's skin and club, accessories seen in Etruscan bronzes from as early as the sixth century B.C., visually reinforced the

⁸⁵ Woodford 225-226

⁸⁶ Kerényi 134

impression of a prize-winning warrior, ever-ready for his next altercation.⁸⁷ Hercules was adopted as the civic emblem for a number of cities in the early modern period, most notably Florence, which saw the hero as both official mascot and mythic protector.⁸⁸ Baccio Bandinelli's monumental sculpture of Hercules (fig. 32), standing majestically over Cacus in the Piazza della Signoria, personifies the strapping, self-confident victor the city sought to promote.

In paradoxical contrast to his idealized fortitude, Hercules was also mortal and, therefore, imperfect. As the son of Alkemele, a human woman, and Zeus, the hero's ascension to Olympus was never assured. Rather than an already perfected idol, Hercules was a hero in process, and his attraction lay in his humanity.⁸⁹ The Labors, initiated as a form of penance for the murdering of his wife and children in a moment of uncontrolled rage, were meant to be admired as a continued marathon of spectacular feats necessary for the atonement of past transgressions. This fundamentally differed from the Olympic gods, whose eternalness was constant despite the deviant hijinks they often stirred up. By contrast, Hercules' life was never so easy. As the hero traipsed through an expansive landscape of sea monsters, centaurs, and strong men, his persistent survival reflected the human impulse for personal betterment, even in the face of grave odds.

The "moralization" of Hercules, which slowly reconstituted the hero as an object worthy of admiration, naturally also scrubbed away some of his less explainable

⁸⁷ Uhlenbrock 8

⁸⁸ Ettliger 120-123

⁸⁹ Patricia Simons, "Hercules in Italian Renaissance Art: Masculine Labour and Homoerotic Libido," *Art History* 31.5 (2008): 634. As in the Classical period, Hercules' appeal was derived from his adaptability: "Varied in political allegiance, rank and location, that buying public consumed a suggestion not so much of victory but of stress, of public heroics under pressure, of a youth deciding his future conduct in the Choice at the crossroads, of an elder statesman tested to his physical and psychic limits, especially at Omphale's court and when experiencing fits of raging madness, of classical icon animated almost beyond endurance in his numerous Labours. He had to work at his masculinity."

imperfections. Writers began to whitewash Hercules' transgressions, such as his womanizing or tendency for violence, and replace them with aspects that were more agreeable to the stories they wished to tell. According to Susan Woodford, this transition to a fetishized *exemplum virtutis*, or exemplar of virtuous conduct, may have first taken root in as early as the fifth century B.C. Woodford points to the parable of *Hercules in bivio*, or "Hercules at the Crossroads" as it is generally known, as a significant moment in Hercules' shift from a symbol of the "primitive" to the "sublime."⁹⁰ The story, recorded by Xenophon, tells of a young Hercules who comes to a fork in the path on the way to his next labor.⁹¹ There he is met by two women, allegorically named Virtue and Vice, who each guard a respective way forward. After hearing the appeals of both women, Hercules must choose which road to take, a decision that will determine, quite literally, the direction of his life. Unlike the Labors, the difficulty of the choice was psychological, not physical. The selection of Virtue and the denial of Vice, despite her allure, was requisite for the hero's eventual apotheosis. Even though the Labors were certainly seminal to Hercules' formation as a paragon of physical dynamism, they could also be interpreted as a mere product of "harsh necessity rather than moral inclination."⁹² In effect, they were a form of extended punishment doled out by the gods to expiate the deaths of the hero's

⁹⁰ Woodford 117. See also Emma Stafford, "Vice or Virtue? Herakles and the Art of Allegory" in *Herakles and Hercules: Exploring a Graeco-Roman Deity*, ed. Louis Rawlings and Hugh Bowden (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2005): 73. The term *Hecules in bivio* was coined by Petrarch, who attempted to explain the parable with the Pythagorean letter "Y" whose dual arms symbolized the two "paths" apparent at a critical juncture in one's life; Theodor E. Mommsen, "Petrarch and the Story of the Choice of Hercules," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 16.3 (1953): 183. An image of the "Y moralisé," appearing in a monogram by the fifteenth-century printmaker Geoffrey Tory, shows a crown and laurel wreath hanging from one arm of the Y and prisoner's shackles, a fire, and "le glaive de jugement" dangling ominously from the other; Irwin Panofsky, *Hercules à la croisée des chemins, et autres matériaux figuratifs de l'Antiquité dans l'art plus récent*, trans. Danièle Cohn (Paris: Flammarion, 1999): 116.

⁹¹ Xenophon of Athens, *Memorabilia*, trans. C.E. Marchant (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013): 103-113. Xenophon attributes the parable to Prodicus.

⁹² Woodford 117

family. But “the choice,” according to Woodford, was proof positive of Hercules’ active virtuosity.

While the story of “Hercules at the Crossroads” was a prevalent trope during the early modern period, it was, with certain exceptions, generally unknown during the Middle Ages.⁹³ Hercules’ mutation, however, would continue through other means. A series of texts by medieval theologians and anonymous writers attempted to reconcile Hercules, a pagan near-deity, with Christian typology. In this sense, the moralization of Hercules fortified him “from attack by Christians, who could no longer claim moral superiority for their own religion.”⁹⁴ Among the most prominent of these revisionist texts was *L’ovide moralisé*, a voluminous work compiled at the turn of the fourteenth century that provided an extensive, biblically informed gloss on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.⁹⁵ *L’ovide moralisé* was followed in 1464 by Raoul le Fèvre’s *Recuyell des hystoires de Troyes*, a massively popular text which recast the hero as a chivalric knight, his rudimentary club replaced with a lance.⁹⁶ These somewhat anachronistic interpretations seeped too into the accompanying marginal illustrations of these glosses. A late fifteenth-century Flemish copy of the French text pictures both Hercules and Antaeus dressed in

⁹³ Panofksy 83; Mommsen 178.

⁹⁴ Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972): 87. This reconciliation, at least initially, was rocky. Early Church fathers denounced the hero as an agent of the devil; Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*: 188-189. Yet this enmity would eventually cool, clearing the way for what may seem like the hero’s remarkably blatant intrusion on the *porta della mandorla* façade of the Florentine Cathedral at the end of the fourteenth century, as discussed in chapter one; Ettliger 125-126.

⁹⁵ Seznec 92; Ana Pairet, “Recasting the Metamorphoses in Fourteenth-Century France: The Challenges of the Ovid Moralised” in *Ovid in the Middle Ages*, ed. James G. Clark, Frank T. Coulson, and Kathryn L. McKinley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 83; Peter Mack and John North, Introduction to *The Afterlife of Ovid*, ed. Peter Mack and John North (London: Institute of Classical Studies, University of London, 2015): vii.

⁹⁶ *Recuyell des histories de Troyes*, which was reprinted in over twenty editions, would reach England in a translation by William Caxton in 1474. Galinsky, “Hercules” in *The Classical Tradition*: 426-427.

Medieval armor, entangled in the middle of a city street. (fig. 33)⁹⁷ Once again, the hero expanded to accommodate the demands of the time.

The moralization of Hercules perhaps reached its apogee in the writing of Cristoforo Landino, a quattrocento humanist who became Lorenzo Medici's tutor.⁹⁸ In his *On True Nobility*, Landino instructs the reader to imitate Hercules as the epitome of virtue, which he defined as "a habit of mind which is in harmony with nature and reason in a kind of perpetual stability."⁹⁹ Virtuosity, according to Landino, was not a purely innate quality, but an aspirational state of being that could be fostered through daily acts. It is no wonder that this understanding of what virtue was and how it could be attained was so easily mapped onto Hercules. The hero's own mythology revolved around a succession of existential battles – the Labors – that provided repeated opportunity for the character to exercise righteous behavior. Landino's interpretation emphasizes not the physical dangers that the Labors posed, but their potential ramifications for Hercules' psyche. Antaeus, the Cretan bull, and the Lernaean hydra were all interpreted as metaphorical incarnations of discrete evils.¹⁰⁰ Each new hazard represented a lethal challenge to the virtuosity that Landino lauded.

As Hercules became closely associated with virtue, the character of Antaeus too took on a revised connotation. According to Landino, "Antaeus is called the child of

⁹⁷ Hoff 69

⁹⁸ Perhaps it is less than coincidental that Lorenzo, inculcated by his tutor's teachings on the virtuous Hercules and the lecherous Antaeus, would later commission the *Hercules and Antaeus* panel from Antonio Pollaiuolo, as discussed in chapter one.

⁹⁹ Cristoforo Landino. "On True Nobility" in *Knowledge, Goodness and Power: The Debate over Nobility among Quattrocento Italian Humanists*, trans. Albert Rabil, Jr. (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1991) 226. *On True Nobility* is constructed as a fictitious dialogue between two men, one the proponent of virtue, the other of honor. See also Bull 106.

¹⁰⁰ Landino 257

earth, because bodily and earthly and corruptible things within us arouse him.”¹⁰¹ This interpretation, which sets up a natural dichotomy between the moralized understanding of the hero and the giant, strongly echoes the duality of virtue and vice presented in “Hercules at the Crossroads.” It also sits comfortably with the specifics of the myth’s classical narrative. The source of Antaeus’ bodily power, the earth, represented the font of his licentiousness. By uprooting the giant, Hercules emphatically rejects the immoral appetites that are virtue’s foil. Landino takes the metaphor one step further by supposing, “If our minds are lifted up on high to divine things and seized by the love of those things, all desire for earthly things completely perishes.”¹⁰² This corresponds also to the myth’s classical descriptions and doubles the meaning of Hercules’s method of attack. More than a fatal assault, the lifting of Antaeus skyward initiates a spiritual purification of hedonistic inclinations.

Landino’s instructional annotation on the Hercules and Antaeus myth throws the design of Agostino’s *Hercules and Antaeus* into new light. No longer appearing oddly ambivalent in comparison to other representations we have examined, the fighters’ positioning in relation to each other underscores the psychomachic stress that the episode represented. In this way, the print can be considered a visual manifestation of the *Hercules in bivio* theme. As Hercules dangles the giant over his thigh, he seems to be caught in a moment of moral uncertainty. He stares directly into Antaeus’ eyes as he considers, fleetingly, the sinful temptation that the giant personifies.

What exactly was the temptation that Antaeus offered? In “Hercules at the Crossroads,” the pleasures Vice extolls are rather expansive: freedom from hunger or

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

thirst, perpetual comfort, and “the most blessed happiness,” as Xenophon puts it.¹⁰³ In *On True Nobility*, Landino does not specify the exact nature of the giant’s threat beyond saying he represented “bodily and corruptible things.”¹⁰⁴ Presumably, Landino was influenced by the late fourteenth-century writings of Coluccio Salutati, a fellow Florentine and humanist who analyzed the etymological underpinnings of many of Hercules’ adversaries.¹⁰⁵ Salutati suggested that “Libya,” Antaeus’ dominion, was related to “libido.”¹⁰⁶ This interpretation was set forth even earlier by the sixth-century theologian Fulgentius, who equated Antaeus with desire of a specifically sexual nature. According to Fulgentius, “Antaeus is explained as a form of lust, whence in Greek we say *antion*, contrary; he was born of the earth because lust is conceived of the flesh. Also he emerged the more agile by keeping touch with the earth, for lust rises more evilly as it shares the flesh.”¹⁰⁷ Similar to *L’Ovide moralisé*, Fulgentius’ construal of the topos is emblematic of the integration of the pagan deities within Christian moral codes.¹⁰⁸ Hercules, often understood as a Christ figure dressed in a lion’s skin, renounces the cardinal sin of lust so to earn entry into awaited paradise.

Fulgentius and Salutati’s interpretation of Antaeus as seducer fundamentally re-orientes our understanding of the *mêlée* represented in visualizations of the story, including in Agostino’s *Hercules and Antaeus*. According to this reading, Antaeus was not just Hercules’ foe; he was also his lover. Seizing upon this alleged impropriety, Patricia Simons has argued for a re-appraisal of Hercules as the singularly masculine

¹⁰³ Xenophon 113

¹⁰⁴ Landino 257

¹⁰⁵ Ronald G. Witt, *Hercules at the Crossroads: The Life, Works, and Thoughts of Coluccio Salutati* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1983): 212-213.

¹⁰⁶ As quoted in Simons 639

¹⁰⁷ Fulgentius the Mythographer. *The Mythographies*, trans. Leslie George Whitbread (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1971): 69. Fulgentius was most likely Christian and perhaps a bishop.

¹⁰⁸ Seznec 89-90; Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*: 203-204.

archetype erected by Italian nobility for emulation.¹⁰⁹ Simons argues that the hero had a history, albeit a minor one, in the classical literature of cross-dressing and “gender slippage in the allegorical process,” which she uses as evidence to portray Hercules as susceptible to homosexual desire.¹¹⁰ As such, Antaeus posed an explicitly homoerotic challenge to the hero’s supposed righteousness. The abundance of extant Hercules and Antaeus images, Simons argues, suggests that these representations were clandestinely prized by collectors as pornographic material. In particular, the large number of prints illustrating the myth imply that “the wrestling match was a top seller, sometimes serving not only as a didactic or inspirational gift but also as a love token to boys and young men.”¹¹¹ Their totality stands as a sort of visual barometer for the pervasiveness of homosexual activity in Italian Renaissance culture.

As further evidence for her claims, Simons points (with a great deal of hyperbole) to depictions of the myth that exhibited the front-to-front Florentine type. The Antaeus in small relief on the Florentine Cathedral (fig. 11) is “gigantic but legless, rendered literally base and morally base.”¹¹² In Antonio Pollaiuolo’s *Hercules and Antaeus* panel for the Medici palace (fig. 12), she writes that “Toes curl and clutch, nipples stand erect, and breath bursts from Antaeus’ collapsed lungs in orgasmic expiry.”¹¹³ Concerning a print attributed to Baccio Baldini or Maso Finiguerra (fig. 34), she describes how Antaeus’ “genitals hang between Hercules’ legs as though the bodies have merged at the physical

¹⁰⁹ Simons 634. On the modern scholarly re-assessment of Hercules’ machismo, to which Simons seeks to add, see Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, “Herakles Re-dressed: Gender, Clothing, and the Construction of a Greek hero” in *Herakles and Hercules: Exploring a Graeco-Roman Divinity*, 51-64.

¹¹⁰ Simons 635

¹¹¹ Ibid. 648

¹¹² Ibid. 640

¹¹³ Ibid. 641

source of lust.”¹¹⁴ Simons’ descriptions, which conflate the biological markers of pain and pleasure, seem to imply that the hero indulged his illicit sexual desires in the process of destroying Antaeus.

While we may agree that the works Simons cites, many of which conjoin the figures at the genital zones, have an undeniable sexual appeal, these examples are not representative of the entire tradition of the theme in art. Simons ignores those of the more platonic Classical type, such as the highly influential Palazzo Pitti statue (fig. 3) and the many prints it inspired, that carried little of the homoerotic undertones of the more intimate Florentine type. Even though the writings of Salutati, Landino, and Fulgentius do shade Antaeus in terms of libidinous invitation, Simons’ argument is difficult to reconcile with the age-old perception of Hercules as an *exemplum virtutis*. Her interpretation of the visual evidence problematizes the lofty ideals that Italian patrons wished to promote through these works.

If Simons is to be truly believed – that these are images with a clear, if not indecent, homoerotic implication – how were they created and then presented in public spaces in good taste? As we have seen, representations of the myth were displayed in such highly visible spots as the façade of the Florentine Cathedral, the doors of St. Peter’s, and in the *salle grande* of the Medici palace. It is unlikely that Isabella d’Este, by placing Antico’s bronze *Hercules and Antaeus* (fig. 5) in her *grotta*, was acquiescing to the tacit display of a homosexual act. Furthermore, Simons’ appraisal of the many Hercules and Antaeus prints seems to ignore the conventions of reproductive printmaking that bred a “vertiginous proliferation of related images,” as discussed in the previous

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 644-645

chapter.¹¹⁵ Rather than reflecting the prevalence and fervor of homosexual activity in Renaissance society, the profusion of Hercules and Antaeus prints could equally have been a consequence of these printmakers' penchant for duplicating pre-existing conceptions of the theme.

For the purpose of this thesis, Simons' argument is also inconsistent with the configuration of the figures presented in Agostino's *Hercules and Antaeus*. The print's design lacks an obvious sexual intent. Neither figures' genitals are clearly seen, nor are their nude bodies displayed openly for the viewer to admire. If this print was indeed "a love token between young boys and men," it must have been a disappointment. Other than Antaeus' bare bottom resting on the hero's thigh, there is very little skin-on-skin contact that would help to evoke a sodomitical encounter. The existence of a third figure, the woman, further disrupts the supposed intimacy between Hercules and Antaeus. She denies the two men the privacy to commit any such lewd act.

I wish now to turn to this female, who I believe has a much more substantial effect on the print's narrative beyond that of just detached onlooker. As we have seen in chapter one, a third figure is virtually unknown in any of the preceding representations of the myth beyond those, like the relief sculpture from the Barcelona city hall (fig. 18) and the painted enamel by Léonard Limosin (fig. 19), that were probably copied directly from Agostino's print. To my knowledge, she appears in only one instance from antiquity in a Roman altar relief (fig. 36) dated from sometime between the first and third centuries A.D. Its existence suggests that her inclusion in the composition was actually a classical motif and not a Renaissance insertion. The work shows an unmistakable relation to the compositional structure of *Hercules and Antaeus*. We can discern the outlines of

¹¹⁵ Pon, *Raphael, Dürer, and Marcantonio Raimondi*, 2

Hercules and Antaeus on the left. To their right, a seated figure sits draped from the waist down. A wavy stroke suggests the profile of a face turned toward the fighters and an angle across the abdomen suggests the idea of breasts.

Who was this woman? Her presence within a narrative in which she has no material purpose or active involvement is curiously ambiguous. The most reasonable explanation is that she represents Gaia, Antaeus' mother and the primal earth goddess of Greek mythology. In the print, she appears to be looking up in sorrow at Antaeus, her son, as he is violently murdered above her. She braces herself with her hands firmly on the ground, her mythic domain. Her elderly appearance speaks to the allegorical eternalness of the earth. Her breasts, deflated, metaphorically represent a lifetime of nursing, and the Greek term *kourotrophos*, meaning "nursing mother," has been used as an epithet for Gaia.¹¹⁶ This interpretation also corresponds with a description given in the Homeric *Hymn of Gaia* of an archetypical mother goddess who displays a "strong foundation, the oldest one. / She feeds everything in the world."¹¹⁷

In the Classical texts that describe the Hercules and Antaeus myth, Gaia is generally only mentioned in the abstract and as a cursory explanation for giant's fearsome power. The *Imagines* by Philostratus however, which we examined in the first chapter, again proves relevant to *Hercules and Antaeus*. The sophist's narration of a painting that closely resembles the brawl pictured in the print suggests that the print's designer was inspired by Philostratus' description in a second way. The *Imagines* is the only Classical text that incorporates Gaia (Earth) so directly into the action:

¹¹⁶ Theodora Hadzisteliou Price, *Kourotrophos: Cults and Representations of Greek Nursing Deities* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978): 1. Price goes on to explain the multivalent nature of *kourotrophos* figures within different cultures and religious sects, including male versions.

¹¹⁷ Homer, *The Homeric Hymns*, trans. Jules Cashford (London: Penguin, 2003): 143.

But [Hercules] lays his opponent low at a distance above the earth, for Earth was helping Antaeus in the struggle by arching herself up and heaving him up to this feet again whenever he was thrust down. So Heracles, at a loss how to deal with Earth, has caught Antaeus by the middle just above the waist Doubtless you see Antaeus groaning and looking to Earth, who does not help him, while Heracles is strong and smiles at his achievement.”¹¹⁸

Philostratus here designates Earth (Gaia) a principal antagonist to Hercules. Given bodily form, she comes to the aid of her son but, because Hercules has untethered Antaeus from solid ground, is powerless to intervene. Agostino’s *Hercules and Antaeus* ostensibly illustrates the final moment of Philostratus’ narrative when Gaia resigns herself to the destruction of her son.

Gaia, or Tellus as she was known in the Roman pantheon, was far less represented in art than the perennially popular Hercules. Her attributes as a maternal figure and giver of life could be easily conflated with those of Ceres, Venus and the Roman goddess of victory, Pax.¹¹⁹ On a relief panel from the Ara Pacis (fig. 36), she appears as a youthful fertility goddess enshrined around a multiplicity of flora and fauna. On her lap sit two children who gesture toward her breasts. This visualization is nearly antithetical to the destitute crone pictured in Agostino’s print. The Gaia of the Ara Pacis heralds the flowering of life. The Gaia in *Hercules and Antaeus*, by contrast, laments its end.

The female in *Hercules and Antaeus* would have likely appeared familiar to some Renaissance viewers, but unless they were well versed in the classical history of the myth, they may have struggled to identify her as Gaia and Antaeus’ mother. Instead, her frenzied appearance more seamlessly links her to traditional representations of Envy, or

¹¹⁸ Philostratus 227

¹¹⁹ The iconography of the “Tellus” panel, as it is called, was perhaps intentionally unspecific so to generally evoke the bounty and prosperity of the Roman Pax. Galinsky, “Venus, Polysemy, and the Ara Pacis Augustae,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 96.3 (1992): 457-475.

invidia, that were known in prints during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In some works, Envy was but one player in composite images of frightening ghouls and leviathans. Two large prints, *The Battle of the Sea Gods* attributed to Andrea Mantegna (fig. 37) and *Lo stregozzo* by Agostino Veneziano (after an unknown design) (fig. 38), render Envy as a villainous hag unleashed to wreak havoc on the scene.¹²⁰ In other instances, her purpose was strictly instructional. The trope is handled quite explicitly in *The Allegory of Envy* (fig. 39) by the Italian engraver Cristofano Robetta.¹²¹ The print shows a malformed Envy figure flanked on either side by two, more idealized nude women, each of whom are pursued by a male suitor. Beautiful, coveted, and ready for motherhood (as symbolized by the new-born baby lounging at the bottom left of the scene), the females allegorize the collective object of Envy's scorn.

The interpretation of the female figure in *Hercules and Antaeus* as a personification of *invidia* helps to explain perhaps why her appearance diverges from the canonical representation of Gaia as a benevolent earth deity. Yet the insertion of Envy into this scene, which traditionally had centered on only two fighters locked in combat, also complicates the straightforward binary of virtue and vice that would have likely been expected by viewers of Hercules and Antaeus images. If we think of Gaia and Antaeus not as mythological characters but as the depravities they were intended to signify, a whole range of possible interpretations for the scene becomes evident. Libido and envy both fall under the umbrella of the “bodily and earthly and corruptible things” that

¹²⁰ Linda C. Hulst, *The Print in the Western World* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991): 150; Patricia Emison, “Truth and *Bizzarria* in an Engraving of *Lo stregozzo*.” *The Art Bulletin*. 81.4 (1999): 625.

¹²¹ Thematic connections between this print and the *Hercules in bivio* theme have been remarked upon before. Fascinatingly, Robetta's print appropriates the landscape from Dürer's *Choice of Hercules*; Jay A. Levenson, Konrad Oberhuber, and Jacquelyn L. Sheehan, *Early Italian Engravings from the National Gallery of Art* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1973): 298.

Landino forbade in *On True Nobility*.¹²² The familial relationship between Gaia and Antaeus suggests some degree of inter-relatedness between the moral failings they respectively represented. To take this metaphor to its natural end: envy is the mother of sexual appetite. Hercules' immobilization of Antaeus also suggests that envy can be rendered powerless through the rejection of libido.

The interpretations of *Hercules and Antaeus* offered here provide another lens through which to consider the moralized meanings of Agostino's print and the larger category of Hercules and Antaeus visualizations during the early modern period. Hercules' long transformation as an *exemplum virtutis* can be considered to have culminated in images like *Hercules and Antaeus*, which consider the hero in moralized terms specific to this era. While we may disagree with Simon's wholesale portrayal of Hercules and Antaeus prints as homoerotic "love tokens," clearly these works were conceived as more than just allusions to Classical myth. In Agostino's print, each character is imbued with special meaning, and the inclusion of the Gaia/Envy figure adds a level of didactic richness not found in other contemporary illustrations of the topos. Above all, *Hercules and Antaeus* was an instructional image meant to champion the victory of virtue over vice.

¹²² Landino 257

Conclusion

The preceding pages have, it is hoped, provided new or revised information by which we may attempt to better understand *Hercules and Antaeus* by Agostino Veneziano. As explored in chapter one, the print's design is uncharacteristic of visualizations of the myth. Based on the print's idiosyncratic figurative style and dating, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the print was engraved after a now-lost drawing not by Raphael, but by Rosso Fiorentino. As discussed in chapter two, this overturns the traditional attribution of the print's design and removes it from the body of work today categorized as of the Marcantonio Raimondi workshop. The new attribution also helps augment what little is known of Agostino's later career, which I would define as the period following 1524 when the Marcantonio Raimondi workshop broke up. It is clear that the collaboration between Agostino and Rosso was actually more substantive than has been previously assumed and constituted more than just the engraving of *The Allegory of Death and Fame* (fig. 22) in 1518. To complete *Hercules and Antaeus* in 1533, it is likely that Agostino travelled to France around that time to receive the commission from Rosso, who by then was in the service of François I^{er} at Fontainebleau.

Without Rosso's *modello* for *Hercules and Antaeus*, it is difficult to say anything more specific concerning the origins of the print's unique design. However, based on the precedent of copying and systematic reproduction established by the Marcantonio Raimondi workshop in the early sixteenth century, we can surmise at least two distinct explanations for how the design was conceived. The first, and perhaps the more likely of the two, is that the design began as a sketch of a pre-existing classical sculpture. Of course, no such sculpture survives today by which we may judge the print's resemblance.

However, reproductive prints of this type were highly indebted to antique visualizations of myth, and there is no reason to suspect Agostino's print would run counter to this tradition. This is especially true when we recall from chapter one the design's close resemblance to Philostratus' third-century narrative. In his drawing, Rosso articulated the depiction of myth described by Philostratus in the *Imagines*, showing Hercules resting the giant on his knee and rendering Gaia proximate to the action. Additionally, the Roman altar relief (fig. 35) identified in chapter three, which also includes a female figure sitting below and to the right of the fighters, would further suggest an antique inspiration for Rosso's drawing.

The second possibility is that the drawing was entirely unrelated to a classical visual representation and was instead Rosso's cinquecento invention. As explored in chapter two, the similarities between the bent pose of the Antaeus figure and a number of representations of idealized, but expiring, male nudes in Rosso's oeuvre would suggest that the painter deployed a consistent figural type to suggest youthful masculinity confronted by sudden mortality. In particular, the tucked arm and similarly twisted torso of Antaeus in the print and Adonis in Rosso's *Death of Adonis* (fig. 27), a work directly contemporaneous with Agostino's print, further intimates that both images sprang from the Florentine's imagination, an association that would also help to explain why the fighters' configuration in the print reflect neither the pre-existing Classical nor Florentine types.

It is difficult to say whether it was Agostino's or Rosso's decision to include the female figure into the scene. Once again, the lack of an extant *modello*, which would show the extent of Rosso's responsibility for the composition, proves problematic to

delineating Agostino's agency in the conception of the design. Based on the precedent of printmakers working exclusively from drawings of other artists, we may assume that Rosso, again drawing inspiration either directly or indirectly from Philostratus' account of the myth, placed the woman into the scene. Her wavy hair and detailed clavicle area recall greatly the appearance of the peering woman from Rosso and Agostino's earlier collaboration, *The Allegory of Death and Fame* (fig. 22), from 1518. If instead it was Agostino who inserted the female, the print represents a rare instance of a printmaker taking significant artistic license in the conversion of a *modello* into an engraving, and is therefore unlikely. However, it is probable that the female figure was derived from another drawing available to the printmaker that he simply combined with Rosso's pre-existing drawing, in much the same way Marcantonio fused motifs by Michelangelo and Lucas van Leyden in *The Climbers* (fig. 17), as discussed in chapter one.

This new understanding of how the design of *Hercules and Antaeus* came to be engraved also has bearing on the design's social implications for cinquecento viewers. As discussed in chapter three, the print had a definite didactic purpose, and its characters were laden with powerful, moralized meaning. Agostino and Rosso were surely aware of these allegorical interpretations, as well as the widespread appeal of the topos for period audiences. The myth's popularity in Renaissance visual culture is apparent in the diversity of its appearances: public sculpture where the fighters' impressive physiques could be gazed upon from below; paintings and smaller statuary intended for private admiration in cloistered settings; and a bevy of prints, whose duplicative ability allowed the Hercules and Antaeus characters, and their associated morals, to be diffused even further through early modern society. As I suggested in chapter two, it is possible the

decision to produce a Hercules and Antaeus design was economically motivated; the artists knew (or at least hoped) such a print would sell. I would further add that the decision to include the female figure, a perhaps deliberately ambiguous amalgamation of Gaia and Envy, was likely made in the hope of expanding the moralized significance of the scene and, by extension, increasing the print's desirability.

What effect did the unusual depiction of Hercules and Antaeus seen in Agostino's print have on ensuing representations of the myth after 1533? We have already seen to some extent how surprisingly lacking in influence the design was. Beyond Limosin's painted enamel and the Barcelona relief sculpture, no other works from the sixteenth century or beyond are known to be directly derived from the print. We can contrast the design's relative insignificance to the canon of Hercules and Antaeus visualizations with the steady popularity of the Classical and Florentine types, which continued to have relevance into the Baroque period in paintings or sketches by Annibale Caracci, Guercino, Nicolas Poussin, and Peter Paul Rubens.¹²³ Of all the ensuing visualizations of the myth after 1533, very few included a female figure and are therefore difficult to link to the three-figure composition of *Hercules and Antaeus*. Perhaps our print's closest relative, if it can be considered that at all, is a 1563 engraving by the Dutch printmaker Cornelius Cort (fig. 39) after a painting by Frans Floris.¹²⁴ Cort similarly situated the fight on the side of a hill, with an embankment and tree occupying the far left reaches of the scene. A female figure, although relocated to the left side of the composition, greatly

¹²³ Hoff 71-72. For the influence of the workshop's prints on subsequent painters generally, see Broun 30-34.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 78. Apparently unaware of Agostino's print, Hoff presupposes Cort's depiction of Antaeus to be inspired by the twisting bodies of Laocoön sculpture.

resembles the abject crone pictured in Agostino's print. However, here Hercules props one knee up not on an adjacent boulder as in Agostino's version, but on the lap of the seated woman. This striking modification seems to even more clearly involve the woman in the contest. By physically positioning Hercules directly above her, Cort's print makes explicit the hero's metaphorical dominance over Envy. A seventeenth-century etching by the minor Italian printmaker Giovanni Pietro Possenti (fig. 40) further accentuates the pathos at which Agostino's earlier *Hercules and Antaeus* hinted. Radically altering Cort's compositional structure, Possenti stacks the three figures vertically within the pictorial space to form a swirling column of corporeal distress.

In the study of prints, printmakers, and the print culture that made the dissemination and valuation of these images possible, *Hercules and Antaeus* by Agostino Veneziano is doubly significant. It represents both an emblematic work of early reproductive printmaking by one of the medium's central practitioners and a captivatingly unique design that provides a glimpse into the reception of mythological imagery and meaning in the early modern period. While much has been pinned down in the preceding pages about this print's design and its maker, many crucial details remain unsubstantiated. It is hoped that this analysis of *Hercules and Antaeus* will spur further inquiry into the many other enigmatic prints and printmakers that comprise the first centuries in the history of the graphic arts.

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Images

1. Agostino Veneziano (after Raphael), *Hercules and Antaeus*, engraving, 1533
2. Euphronios, *Krater of Antaeus*, red-figure vase, c. 515-510 B.C.
3. Anonymous sculpture, *Hercules and Antaeus*, Palazzo Pitti, c. 0-300
4. Anonymous relief sculpture (detail), *Hercules and Antaeus*, Leptis Magna, c. 200 A.D.
5. Antico, *Hercules and Antaeus*, bronze sculpture, 1519
6. Marcantonio Raimondi (after Giulio Romano or Raphael), *Hercules and Antaeus*, engraving, c. 1520
7. Agostino Veneziano (after Marcantonio Raimondi, after Giulio Romano or Raphael), *Hercules and Antaeus*, engraving, c. 1520
8. Ugo da Carpi (after Marcantonio Raimondi, after Giulio Romano or Raphael), *Hercules and Antaeus*, woodcut, c. 1520
9. Marcantonio Raimondi, *Hercules and Antaeus*, engraving c. 1510-1530
10. Giovanni Antonio da Brescia (after Mantegna), *Hercules and Antaeus*, engraving, c. 1507
11. Relief sculpture (detail), *Hercules and Antaeus*, Florentine Cathedral, c. 1391-1405
12. Antonio Pollaiuolo, *Hercules and Antaeus*, painting, c. 1470
13. Antonio Pollaiuolo, *Hercules and Antaeus*, bronze maquette, c. 1470
14. Moderno, *Hercules and Antaeus*, copper plaquette, c. 1488
15. School of Mantegna, *Hercules and Antaeus*, engraving c. 1497
16. Gabriel Salmon, *Hercules and Antaeus*, engraving, c. 1528
17. Marcantonio Raimondi (after Michelangelo, Lucas van Leyden), *The Climbers*, engraving, 1510
18. Relief sculpture (detail), façade from city hall, Barcelona, c. 1500
19. Léonard Limosin, *Medallion with Hercules and Antaeus*, painted enamel on copper, 1573
20. Marcantonio Raimondi (after Raphael), *The Massacre of the Innocents*, engraving, c. 1512-1514
21. Raphael, study for *The Massacre of the Innocents*, drawing, c. 1510-1514
22. Agostino Veneziano (after Rosso Fiorentino), *The Allegory of Death and Fame*, engraving, 1518
23. Marco Dente (after Agostino Veneziano, after Rosso Fiorentino), *The Allegory of Death and Fame*, c. 1520
24. Jacopo Caraglio (after Rosso Fiorentino), *Fury*, engraving, 1524
25. Rosso Fiorentino, *Pietà with Four Angels*, painting, c. 1524-1527
26. Rosso Fiorentino, study for *Deposition from the Cross*, drawing, 1527
27. Rosso Fiorentino, *The Death of Adonis*, fresco, c. 1533
28. Jacopo Caraglio, *Hercules Fighting the Centaur*, engraving, 1524
29. Jacopo Caraglio *Hercules Overpowering the River Achelous*, engraving, 1524
30. Agostino Veneziano, *Hercules Strangling the Nemean Lion*, engraving 1528
31. Agostino Veneziano, *Infant Hercules Strangling Snakes in his Cradle*, engraving, 1533
32. Baccio Bandinelli, *Hercules and Cacus*, marble statue, 1534

33. Anonymous illustrator, *Hercules and Alethon (Antaeus)*, c. 1475
34. Baccio Baldini or Maso Giniguerra, *Hercules and Antaeus*, engraving, c. 1470-1475
35. Anonymous Roman altar relief sculpture, *Hercules and Antaeus*, c. 100 B.C.-300 A.D.
36. "Tellus" panel, Ara Pacis Augustae, marble relief, c. 9-13 B.C.
37. Andrea Mantegna, *The Battle of the Sea Gods*, engraving
38. Agostino Veneziano, *Lo stregozzo*, engraving, c. 1514-1536
39. Cristofano Robetta, *The Allegory of Envy*, engraving, 1535
40. Cornelius Cort, *Hercules defeats Antaeus*, engraving, 1545
41. Giovanni Pietro Possenti, *Hercules and Antaeus*, etching, c.1618-1649



Fig. 1: Agostino Veneziano, after Raphael, *Hercules and Antaeus*, engraving, 1513, Chapel Hill, NC: Ackland Art Museum.

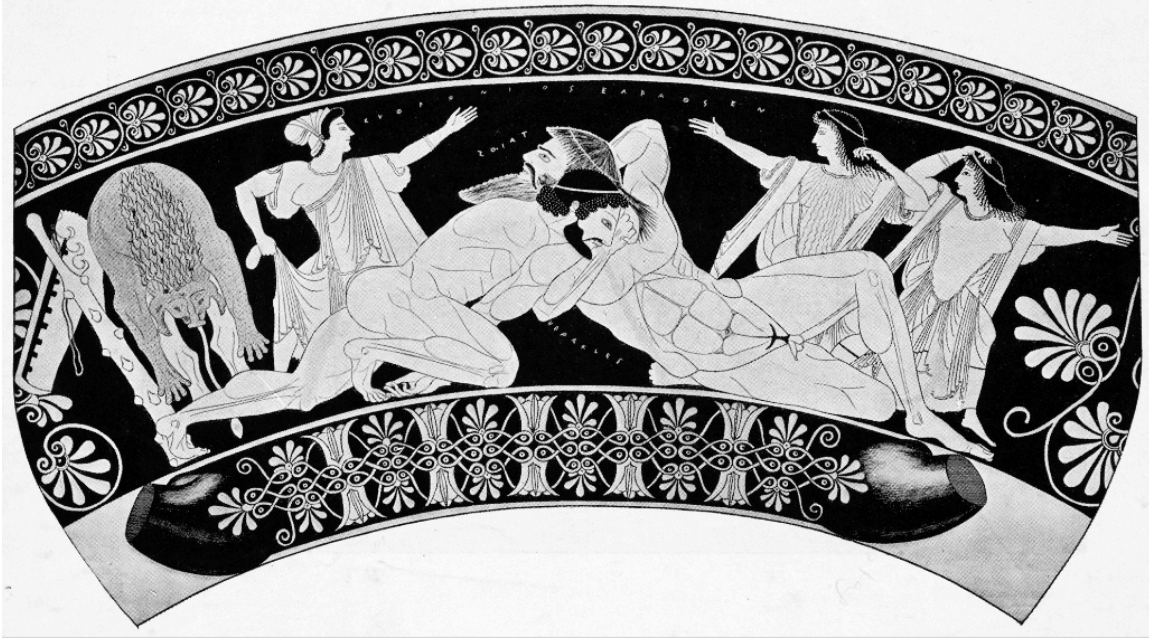


Fig. 2: Euphronios, *Krater of Antaeus*, red-figure vase, c.515-510 B.C., Paris: Louvre



Fig. 3: *Hercules and Antaeus*, marble, c.0-300 A.D, restored c.1560, Florence: Palazzo Pitti.



Fig. 4: *Hercules and Antaeus*, Leptis Magna (modern Libya): Severan Basilica, c. 200 A.D.



Fig. 5: Antico, *Hercules and Antaeus*, modeled 1511, cast 1519, bronze, Vienna: Kunsthistorisches Museum



Fig. 6: Marcantonio Raimondi (after Raphael or Giulio Romano), *Hercules and Antaeus*, engraving, c.1520, Cambridge: Harvard Art Museums



Fig. 7: Agostino Veneziano (after Marcantonio Raimondi, after Raphael or Giulio Romano), *Hercules and Antaeus*, engraving, c.1520, Cambridge: Harvard Art Museums



Fig. 8: Ugo da Carpi (after Marcantonio Raimondi, after Giulio Romano or Raphael), *Hercules and Antaeus*, chiaroscuro woodcut, c. 1520, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art



Fig. 9: Marcantonio Raimondi, *Hercules and Antaeus*, engraving, c. 1510 – 1530



Fig. 10: Giovanni Antonio da Brescia (after Mantegna), engraving c. 1507, Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art



Fig. 11: *Hercules and Antaeus*, detail of *porta della mandorla* jamb, Florentine Cathedral, relief sculpture, c. 1391-1405, Florence

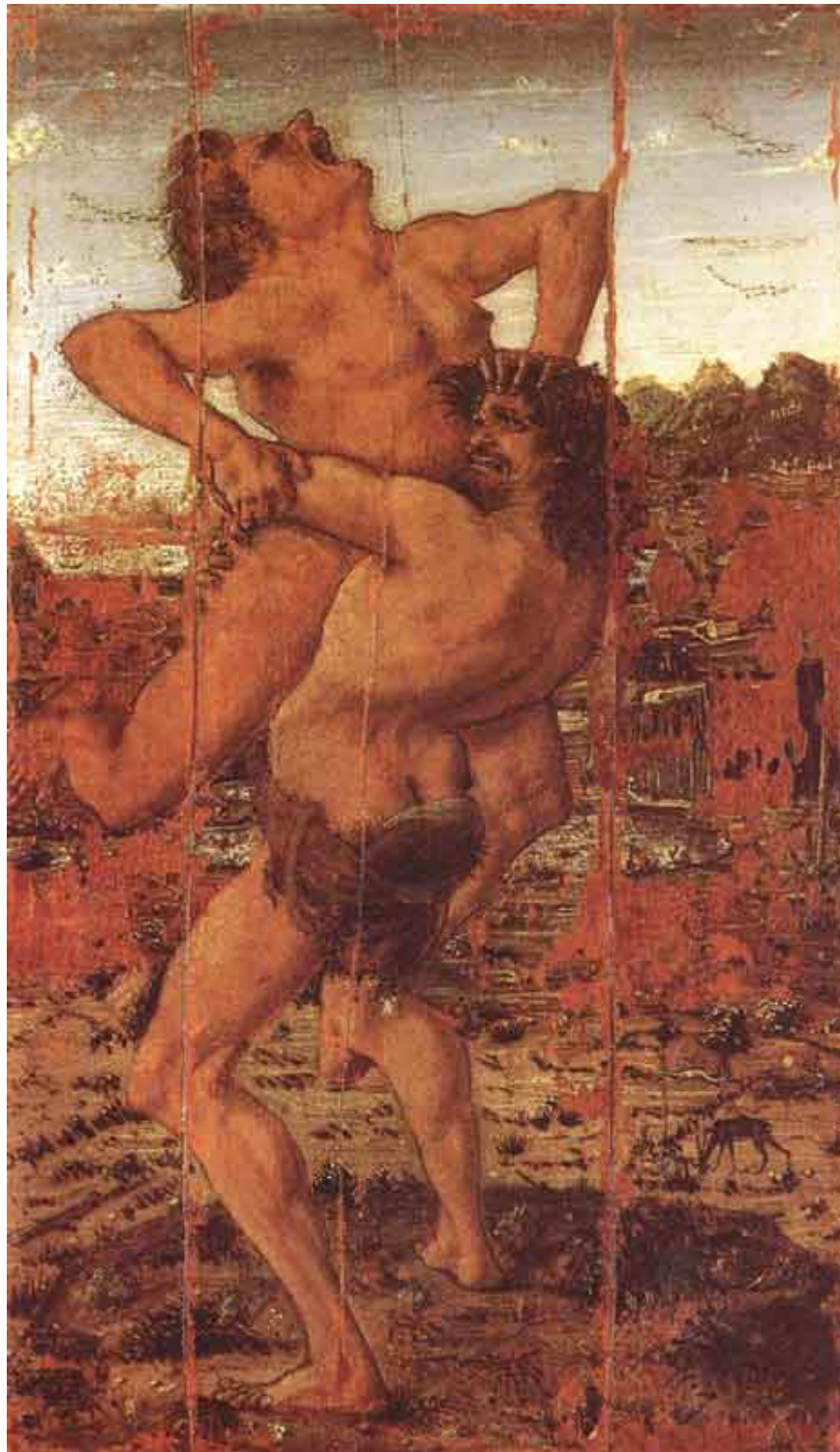


Fig. 12: Antonio Pollaiuolo, *Hercules and Antaeus*, c.1443-1496, tempera on wood, Florence: Uffizi Gallery



Fig. 13: Antonio Pollaiuolo, *Hercules and Antaeus*, c. 1470, bronze, Florence: Museo Nazionale del Bargello



Fig. 14: Moderno, *Hercules and Antaeus*, bronze, c. 1888-1889, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art



Fig. 15: School of Andrea Mantegna, *Hercules and Antaeus*, engraving, c. 1497, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art



Fig. 16: Gabriel Salmon, *Hercules and Antaeus*, engraving, c. 1528, Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago



Fig. 17: Marcantonio Raimondi, after Michelangelo and Lucas van Leyden, *The Climbers*, 1510, engraving, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Fig. 18: low relief sculpture, c.1500s, Barcelona.



Fig. 19: Léonard Limosin, *Medallion with Hercules and Antaeus*, 1573, painted enamel on copper, Baltimore: Walters Art Museum.



Fig. 20: Marcantonio Raimondi, after Raphael, *The Massacre of the Innocents*, c.1512-1514, engraving, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Fig. 21: Raphael, study for *The Massacre of the Innocents*, c.1510-1514, drawing, London: The British Museum



Fig. 22: Agostino Veneziano, after Rosso Fiorentino, *The Allegory of Death and Fame*, 1518, engraving, Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art.



Fig. 23: Marco Dente de Ravenna, after Rosso Fiorentino, *The Allegory of Death and Fame*, engraving, c. 1518, Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art



Fig. 24: Jacopo Caraglio, after Rosso Fiorentino, *Fury*, 1524, engraving, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

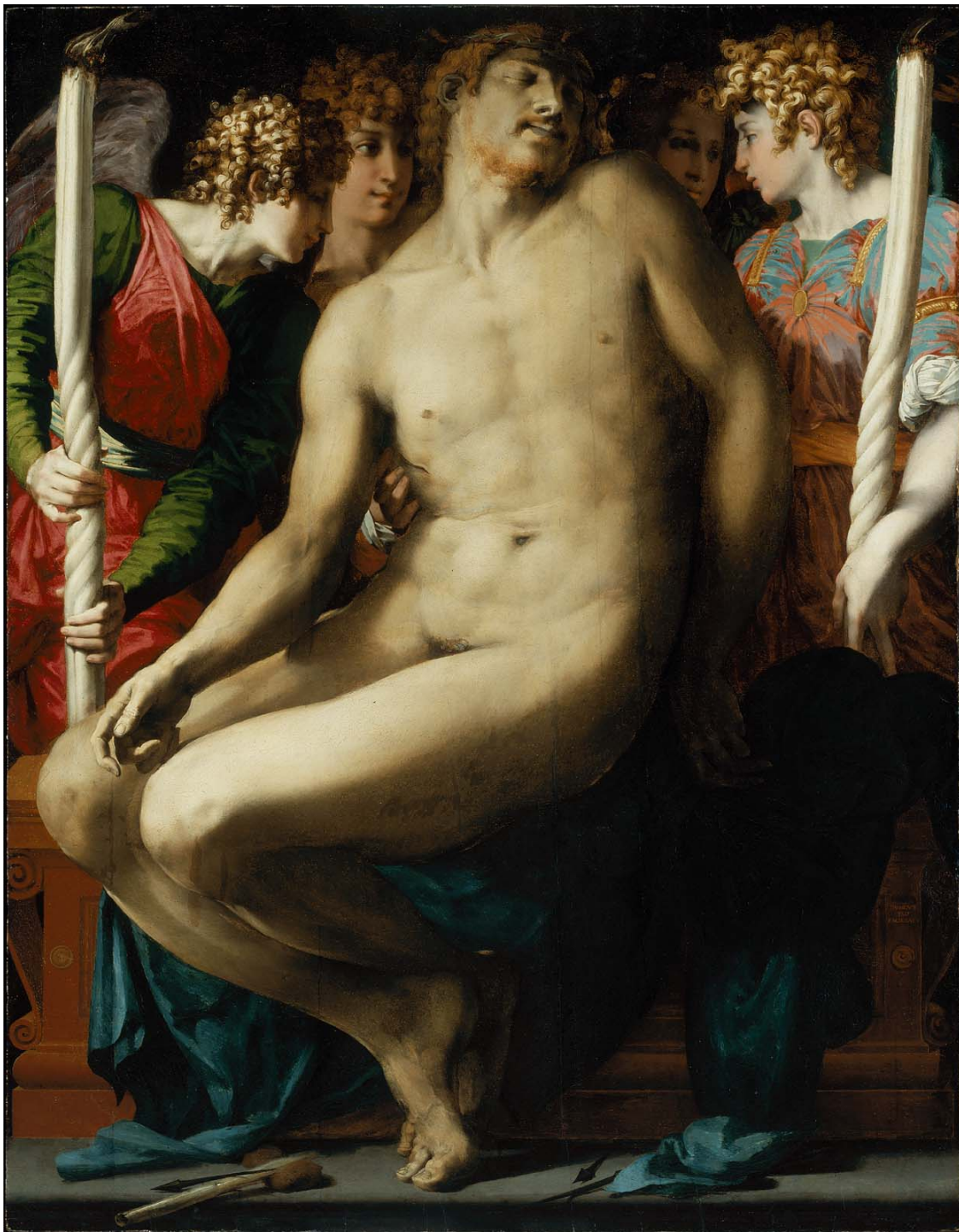


Fig. 25: Rosso Fiorentino, *Pieta with Four Angels*, c. 1524-1527, painting, Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

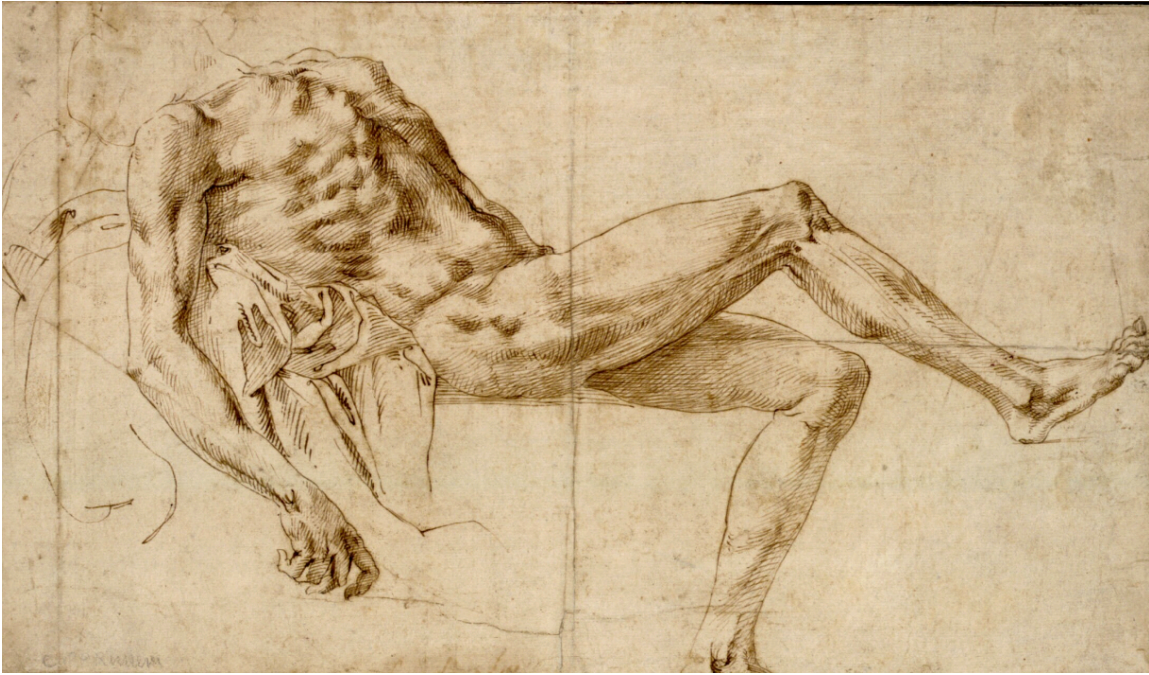


Fig. 30: Rosso Fiorentino, study for *Deposition from the Cross*, 1527, drawing, Vienna: Graphische Sammlung Albertina



Fig. 27: Rosso Fiorentino, *The Death of Adonis*, 1533-1536, fresco, France: Galerie François I^{er}, Chateau de Fontainebleau



Fig. 28: Jacopo Caraglio, after Rosso Fiorentino, *Hercules Fighting the Centaur*, 1524, engraving, London: The British Museum.



Fig. 29: Jacopo Caraglio, after Rosso Fiorentino, *Hercules Overpowering the River Achelous*, 1524, engraving, London: The British Museum.



Fig. 30: Agostino Veneziano, after Giulio Romano, *Hercules Strangling the Nemean Lion*, 1528, engraving, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Fig. 31: Agostino Veneziano, after Giulio Romano, *Infant Hercules Strangling Snakes in his Cradle*, engraving, 1533, London: Victoria & Albert Museum



Fig. 32: Baccio Bandinelli, *Hercules and Antaeus*, 1534, marble, Florence: Piazza della Signoria



Fig. 33: Anonymous illustrator, *Hercules and Alethon (Antaeus)*, B.M. Royal MS. 17. E IV., fol. 136r., c. 1475 London: British Library



Fig. 34: Circle of Baccio Baldini or Maso Finiguerra, *Hercules and Antaeus*, c. 1470-1475, pen and ink drawing with brown wash, London: The British Museum

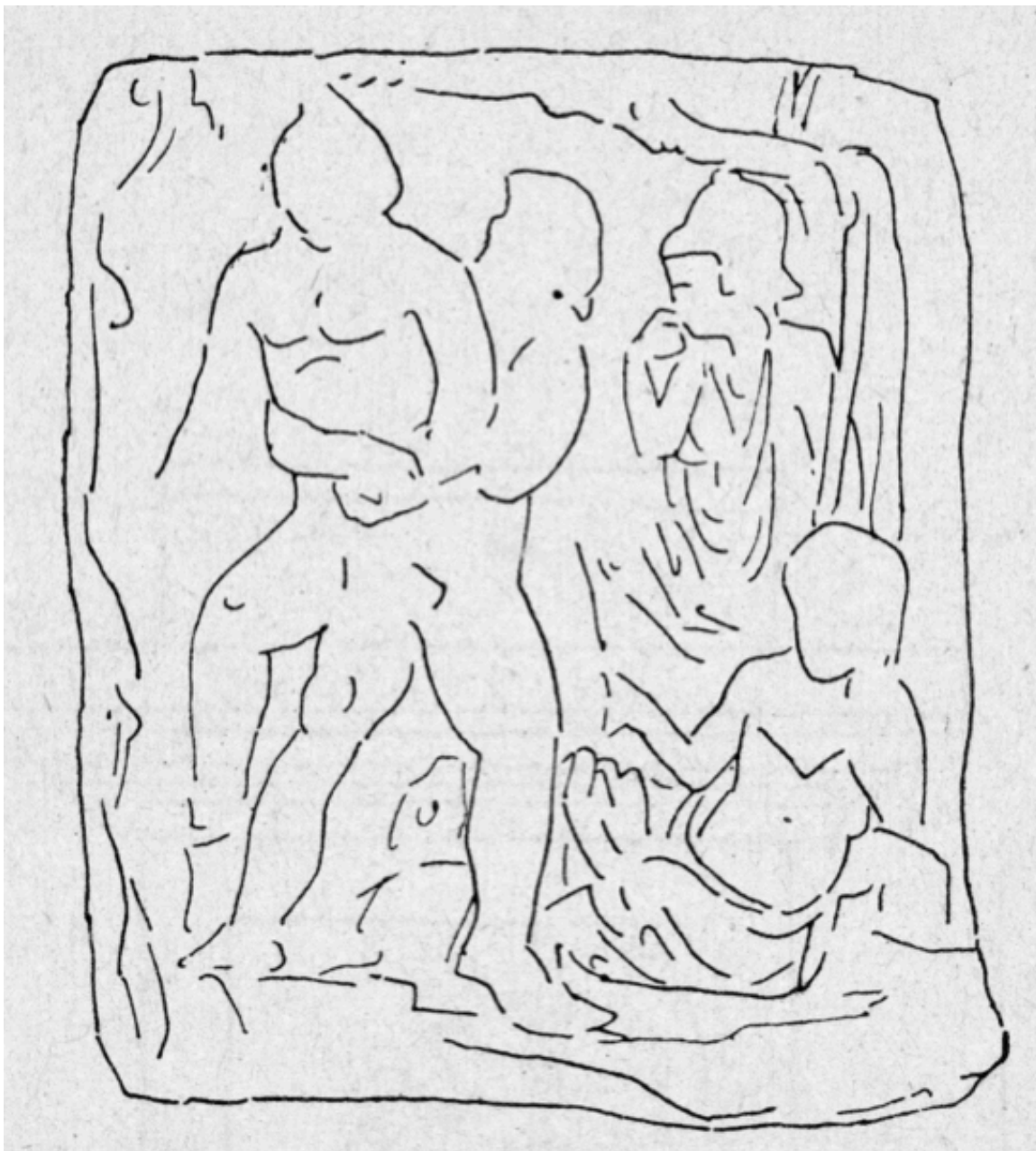


Fig. 35: Relief from an altar, c.100 B.C.-300 A.D., Stuttgart: Württembergisches Landesmuseum

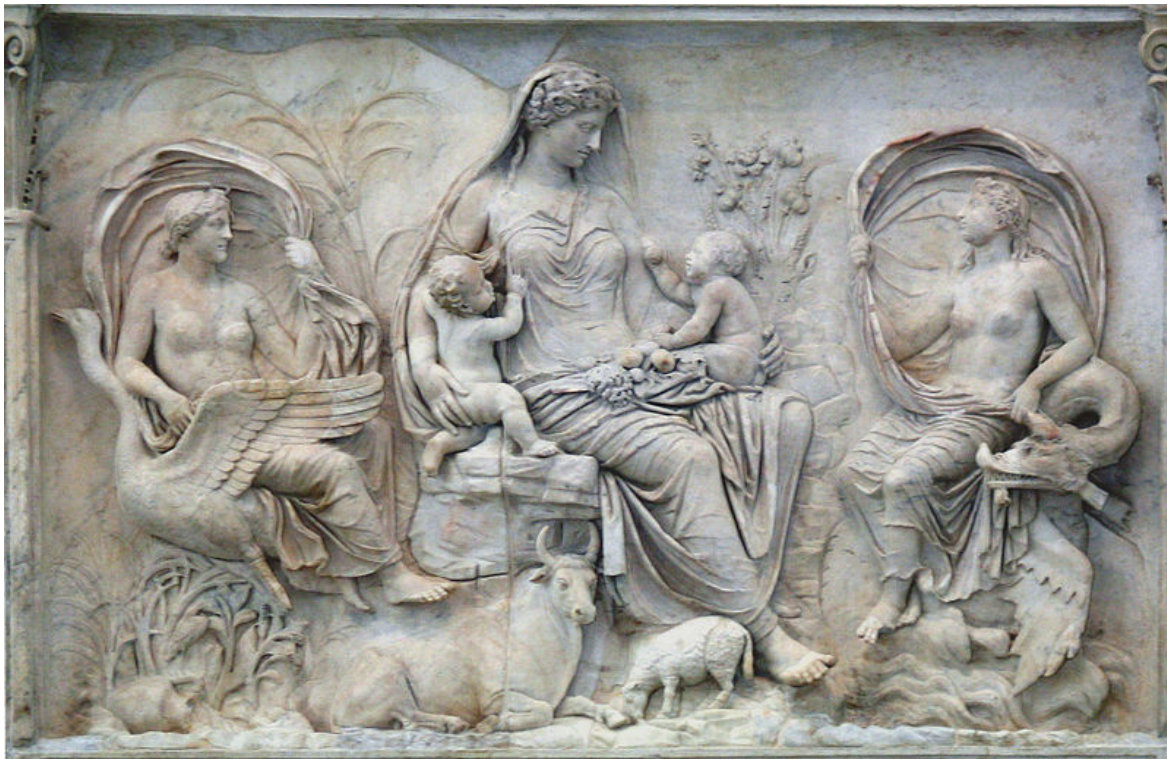


Fig. 36: "Tellus" panel, Ara Pacis Augustae, marble relief, c. 9-13 B.C., Rome: Museo dell'Ara Pacis



Fig. 37: Andrea Mantegna, *Battle of the Sea Gods* (left panel), c. 1485, engraving, Washington: National Gallery of Art



Fig. 38: Agostino Veneziano, *Lo stregozzo*, c. 1515-1525, engraving, London: The British Museum



Fig. 39: Cristofano Robetta, *The Allegory of Envy*, c. 1500-1510, engraving, Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago



Fig. 40: Cornelius Cort, *Hercules defeats Antaeus*, 1563, engraving, Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art.



Fig. 41: Giovanni Pietro Possenti, *Hercules and Antaeus*, c. 1618-1649, etching, Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art.