Theorising Rome

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INTRODUCTION

ROMAN MULTIPLICITIES

RHIANNON EVANS AND SONYA WURSTER

1. Introduction

What did Rome mean for the ancient Romans, and what does it mean for us? It is no surprise that how we theorise Rome, that is how we *view*, *reconstruct*, and *analyse* Roman culture, is conditioned by our own social, temporal, and geographical context. In our case the "we" engaging with Rome is a group of scholars based in Australia and New Zealand alongside the students we teach. These students often have a firmer grasp on wider perceptions of Rome and the locations in which it is found. While literary scholars and historians focus on the elite works of orators, poets, philosophers, and historians, our students tend to name epic films (*Gladiator, Pompeii*), television shows (*Britannia, HBO Rome*), and video games (*Rome: Total War, Age of Gladiators*). It is difficult to think of a modern production of Rome without a warrior character, a soldier or gladiator, at its centre. Based on sources like this, it is no surprise that our students and the general public tend to view Rome as a place of savage violence, aggressive masculinity, rigid hierarchies, and mystical religion. Some of this is certainly true and clearly present in ancient texts! However, the Rome of popular culture does not catch the full complexity of ancient society that we see in material culture and ancient texts (and arguably is not intended to do so). And, although the vast majority of extant Roman literature is by men, and usually men with power, ancient texts do show us a world of different social classes, ethnicities, political views, and ideas about people and their place in Roman culture.

In this chapter, we, as Antipodean scholars, engage with current debates on how Rome has been theorised in a number of contexts. Firstly, we seek to counter the perception of Rome as a monolithic cultural entity: Rome changed over time and was extremely diverse in its makeup and output—it is important to view Rome as a multivalent society. Secondly,

we address the ways in which Rome has been seen as a model or parallel for a number of social, ethnic, and political groups. Although these groups often have little in common, they tend to fix on one strand of Rome's reception (for example, as an imperial superpower; as a patriarchal or hierarchical society), or to distort what we know of Rome for ideological purposes. And finally, we seek to show that the wide possibility of meanings which can be attached to Rome is both an opportunity and a hazard—we have the opportunity to explore the complexities of this often contradictory past and its fascinating afterlife, yet we should be ever alert to Rome's potential to be reduced to either a mere model of "greatness," or a cautionary tale of how states fall (mostly mad emperors and orgies). It is Rome's multifaceted nature which makes it worth "theorising Rome."

2. Roman flux

If it is difficult to pin down what Rome means today, it is equally difficult to summarise ancient views of the city and its empire. We need only look at the contrasting views of contemporaries such as Caesar, Cicero, and Catullus, and it would be hard to argue that they shared the same idea of Rome.[1] The reality is that there was no simple definition of Rome or Romanness even in antiquity, no single past for later cultures to recall. It has never been easy to reduce the concept of Rome to a single idea. Romans themselves repeatedly questioned and reconfigured the meaning of "Rome" and "Roman" throughout antiquity. From one perspective this is hardly surprising, since the very geographical space encompassed by Rome changed drastically over time, from hilltop village to a vast territory stretching over three continents. Rome's ethnic composition was correspondingly complex, as citizenship was extended ever further amongst peoples of varying language and cultural backgrounds. Thus, most Romans potentially felt (at least) a double allegiance, both to Rome and to their native or transplanted home. This was the case even for those born in Italy, as stated by Cicero: *ego mehercule et illi et omnibus municipibus duas esse censeo patrias, unam naturae, alteram civitatis*.[2] And the Romans' own narratives of their past emphasised multiple origins—Trojan, Latin, Etruscan, Arcadian, elite, refugee, and criminal—rather than a fixed and single ethnic source. The most famous version of the Trojan arrival in Italy, the *Aeneid*, features a war between Italian natives and Trojan incomers. As Anne

[1] Evans *infra*; and compare, for example, alternative ways of referring to Rome's conquest of Gaul to be set against Caesar's account (Catull. 29, Cic. *Prov. cons.* 32).
[2] "By Hercules, I think that he and all who live in Italian communities have two fatherlands, one by nature and the other by citizenship," Cic. *Leg.* 2.5.

Rogerson explores, this involves a questioning of Roman identity and purpose, particularly in the *Aeneid*'s war narrative, as the ideals of Rome's imperial vision come into conflict with the devastating division and violence out of which it grew.[3]

The polyethnic, kaleidoscopic nature of Roman identity is thrown into sharp relief by the autochthonous models available in the ancient Mediterranean, most notably at Athens.[4] In contrast, Rome's own origin myth is famously messy: Romulus and Remus are descendants of Trojan migrants and Latin locals; their story tells of both retributive justice, as they recover the kingdom from the usurper Amulius, and of fratricide, as they squabble over the site of Rome. The city of Rome is founded by a son of Mars on a platform of righteous strength and the murder of kin; it welcomes outsiders to the Asylum, and it facilitates the rape and abduction of neighbouring women. Populated by wise kings, tyrants, misfits, and immigrants, the legendary history of the city illustrates why the meaning of Rome is hard to pin down.

Rome has always held, and continues to hold, radically different meanings. At the same time, the idea that there might be an ideal version of both the Roman state and the Roman people *is* expressed in Roman texts of both the Republican and Imperial periods.[5] These writers tend to express a core model of "Romanness" through an ethical and moral framework centred on concepts such as *virtus, pietas, libertas*, and *iustitia* (manliness, duty, freedom and justice). They are often inherently conservative and see the "real" Rome as a mirage of a lost past. These elite authors maintain a myth that Rome "fell" at a specified point when it had achieved excessive wealth or colonial power,[6] and it was common for imperial writers in particular to situate the pristine version of Rome in the lost past of the early and mid-Republic. In the liminal period of the late first century BCE, when the Republic was in freefall chaos and the Principate was not yet established, we can see Roman power brokers attempting to negotiate public perception. It was clear that the concept of Rome was evolving and becoming more

[3] "Questions are posed, but no clear answers are given. Rather, the reader's desire for answers and narrative progress is intensified and through this tactic the ideal of Rome is made more tantalising and more important." Rogerson *infra.*

[4] E.g. Eur. *Ion* 589–90, Loraux 2000.

[5] E.g. Enn. *Ann*. 156 Skutsch (= 500 Vahlen) = Cic. *Rep*. 5.1; Hor. *Carm*. 3.5.13–56; Livy, *Praef*. 11–12; and Tac. *Agr*. 1.2–3.

[6] Polyb. 31.25.3; Diod. Sic. 31.26; Sall. *Cat*. 10.1–6, *Iug*. 41; Livy, 39.6–7; Vell. Pat. 2.1.1; Calp. *hist*. fr. 38 *HRRel* = Plin. *HN* 17.244; Plin. *HN* 33.150. See Evans 2008, 5–6, 120–24.

complex as late-Republican warlords attracted the sense of duty previously owed to Rome. Julius Caesar ultimately failed to iron out these contradictions, at least in a way which satisfied the Senate in the 40s BCE, but he did attempt to exploit his dynasty in order to counter his autocratic image and to spin his primacy in a way which might disperse the sensitivities of republicans.[7] Caesar's actions confuse the allegiance of Romans: is it to the Julian family or to Rome? Eventually the two become essentially the same, but it would take Augustus to mediate these tensions successfully, through strategies such as associating himself with key Roman values and attaching the adjectival form *Augusta* to personified abstractions such as *Pax* and *Victoria*.[8]

3. Rome and its interpretation today

In the twenty-first century, the place of Classical Studies as an exclusive, high-brow club is frequently being raised and questioned. Ancient Rome is being claimed as a prototype for fringe and extreme behaviours, particularly those which justify stratified identities and serve to entrench racism or misogyny. Donna Zuckerberg has shown how pick-up artists draw authority from ancient texts such as Ovid's *Art of Love*, using it as though it were a modern-day self-help manual. Here, a Roman poem is taken out of context and read superficially with a view to confirming misogynist positions and a false continuity of gender roles.[9] In addition, groups broadly categorised as the alt-right commandeer Stoic writers and feel an affinity with a version of Rome cast as rigidly militaristic and patriarchal.[10] We are recognising that museums full of seemingly endless white marble statuary, many of them Roman, with no hint of their original polychromy, are not only misleading, but also implicitly consolidate the hierarchical narrative of European imperialism.[11] The issue of how to read Rome's reception is a pressing and

[7] Stevenson *infra*.
[8] See Galinsky 1996, 82–90 for the co-option of virtues. Other Augustanised abstractions include *Concordia*, *Iustitia*, *Fortuna*, *Ops* (Galinsky 1996, 299), *Salus*, and *Pietas Augusta* (Fishwick 1991, 465).
[9] Zuckerberg 2018, 91–5.
[10] See Sharpe 2018, who critiques Zuckerberg 2018, 45–88 and argues that alt-right appropriation of Stoicism requires a superficial level of interaction with the ancient philosophy.
[11] See Sarah E. Bond, "Whitewashing Ancient Statues: Whiteness, Racism, and Color in the Ancient World," *Forbes*, April 27, 2017, https://www.forbes.com/sites/drsarahbond/2017/04/27/whitewashing-ancient-statues-whiteness-racism-and-color-in-the-ancient-world/#3e55884f75ad.

increasingly interrogated one, one that should force us to renegotiate the various lenses through which we look back at Rome.

The idea of a diverse Roman Empire, however, is also contested, at least on platforms where non-specialists can pose their views on the past. The social media spat over a Romano-British black man in a BBC cartoon,[12] which drew accusations of political correctness, shows the way that anyone can apply modern arguments and debates to the past.[13] As Jennifer Raff, a geneticist at the University of Kansas, commented "The theme uniting all these efforts is rhetoric accusing scholars and the BBC of 'rewriting history' while simultaneously projecting contemporary notions of race backwards in time onto a society that didn't share them."[14] She goes on to say that Roman Britain was indeed multi-ethnic and included people from North Africa. The claim that specialists are rewriting history contains an implicit assumption that there is a single, "correct" version of ancient Rome, and that it is the one familiar to them. In this case, those who object to a multi-ethnic Rome are deploying an image of a "white" Rome that bears a striking resemblance to nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century views of "Romanisation," the process by which Rome transferred its more civilised and superior culture to those it conquered. Roman culture was envisaged as a monolithic entity consisting of the Latin language, art, religion, urban structures, and villas.[15] Rome was held up as the ultimate civilisation, and Roman conquest was represented as beneficial to the "natives" of Western Europe.[16] It was commonly thought that Roman expansion had prepared Western Europe for

[12] https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01zfw4w; http://blogs.reading.ac.uk/the-forum/2017/07/28/how-diverse-was-roman-britain/; https://www.classics.cam.ac.uk/news/roman-britain; https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/roman-britain-black-white/; https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2017/08/dna-romans/535701/.

[13] https://twitter.com/PrisonPlanet/status/890658172158881793.

[14] https://www.theguardian.com/science/2017/aug/09/if-africans-were-in-roman-britain-why-dont-we-see-their-dna-today-mary-beard

[15] See Haverfield 1912, 11 for an example of this belief. For recent discussions on this see Alcock 1997, 103; Dietler 2005, 36–47; Hingley 2005, 34; Woolf 1998, 4.

[16] For the way in which Rome and Greece were regarded as civilised by nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century scholars see Dietler 2005, 35–47. See also Habinek 1998, 15. Habinek discusses the fact that Rome was held up as an ideal in France, Britain, and the US, whilst, because of political differences, Germany looked to Greece. On Romanisation in an eastern context see Alcock 2005; Woolf 1994; Woolf 1997.

its colonising efforts in the modern period, and imperialists saw their role as continuing the civilising mission started by Rome.[17]

Traditionally, scholars imagined Roman and modern European expansion as working in essentially the same way, and in this sense European expansion functioned as a false paradigm for Romanisation.[18] Proponents of this view included Theodor Mommsen, Francis Haverfield, and Fustel du Coulanges. Haverfield coined the term "Romanisation" in 1905, later publishing a work entitled *The Romanization of Roman Britain*.[19] All three regarded Romanisation as progressive and beneficial, a notion exemplified by Haverfield's contention that the Roman élite "acted for the betterment and happiness of the world."[20] Haverfield also argued that the process operated differently throughout the empire. By virtue of its "older" cultures, the East was represented as less Romanised than the West, with Greece the least affected as a consequence of its already highly developed culture.[21] The latter idea was very much affected by ancient representations of Greek culture as superior.[22]

There are two ideas implicit in accounts like Haverfield's, as Greg Woolf has noted:

> first, a belief that not all races had an equal potential to participate in civilization; and second, a faith in the absolute validity of the values of European culture, seen as the heir to the civilization of the classical world.[23]

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[17] Dietler 2005, 45; Hingley 2005, 18ff. and 113; van Dommelen 1997, 307; van Dommelen 2005, 109.
[18] Brunt 1990, 111; Dietler 2005, 39, 43–44.
[19] Haverfield 1912, 10; For modern discussions about Haverfield's impact see Clarke 1996; Freeman 1997; Hingley 1996, 35–48; Hingley 2003; Hingley 2005, 16; Mattingly 1997; Woolf 1998, 5. For an opposing view see Freeman 1996.
[20] Haverfield 1912, 12. As Dietler 2005, 45 has remarked "[a] major aspect of this invocation of ancient empires was the representation of modern colonialism as the continuation of the civilising mission that had been inherited from one's cultural ancestors. Colonization could thus be portrayed as an unavoidable altruistic duty imposed by history."
[21] Haverfield 1912, 12. This notion is heavily influenced by "Graecolatry," and scholars tended to believe that Rome had been conquered by Greece's culture.
[22] See Alcock 1993 and Alcock 1997. Alcock begins her 1993 book *Graecia Capta: The Landscapes of Roman Greece* with Horace's quote which encapsulates a common theme in ancient sources; see Hor. *Epist*. 2.1.156–57: *Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artis / intulit agresti Latio* ("Greece, the captive, took her savage victor captive, and brought the arts into rustic Latium").
[23] Woolf 1998, 5.

The widely held conviction that Western cultural values were more valid than other systems contributed to the tendency of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century accounts of Romanisation to become narratives of modern European descent that had very little to do with Roman history.[24] The way they understood and represented the Roman Empire centred around a number of central themes: the monolithic nature of Roman culture, the agency of the local élite in the transformation process, and the positive way in which western "natives" received culture and civilisation from the technologically advanced Romans.

This is clearly seen in the settlement of Australia by the British. As Sarah Midford argues, "When Captain Cook claimed *Terra Australis* for the British Empire in 1770, the continent was understood to be an empty land, devoid of history, culture, and civilisation. In place of built environments and written histories, or what was thought of as recognisable cultural and historical heritage, the new settlers emphasised Australia's great potential: Australia was a sleeping continent brought to life by European settlement."[25] To do so, officials and poets deployed Rome in order to imagine the colony of New South Wales as an antipodean Arcadia that would prosper and become a great empire. Of course, as the more recent debate between specialists and social media users highlights, there is no one uniform deployment of Rome at any particular moment. In an Australian context, there was a tendency to use Rome in an official way. By way of contrast, it was possible to engage with Rome more personally. John Davidson, for example, shows how the New Zealand poets R.A.K. Mason and James K. Baxter explored Rome to channel and express their own feelings and views on life. They both "responded positively to the highs and lows of personal human experience as reflected in the significant contribution made to western literature by Roman poets such as Horace and Catullus."[26] Despite the dominant, and still influential, narrative that Rome is the spiritual ancestor of European culture and empire, it has always been possible to negotiate a nuanced, specific way to employ Rome.

However, the overwhelming legacy of Rome is its association with power. If we return to an Australasian student's view of Rome and dig a little deeper, we might find that students also identify Roman influence over institutions, architecture, and language which seek to convey authority. Melbourne's motto, first adopted in 1843, is *vires acquirit eundo* ("it gathers

[24] Woolf 1998, 5.
[25] Midford *infra*.
[26] Davidson *infra*.

strength by going"): Latin not only connects the city to an ancient European heritage to the exclusion of all others, but also links Melbourne to a worldwide network of cities and institutions with Latin tags. It also ignores the source of the phrase: Virgil's description of the devastating force of Rumour personified at *Aeneid* 4.175—something which even the City of Melbourne's website struggles to explain![27] Clearly the power and vitality of the phrase appealed to the city's early leaders, regardless of its sinister origin. From popular movies to Latin mottos, we still connect Rome with violence and authority.

4. Multivalent Rome

Although no one *should* ever claim Rome as a bastion of liberal democracy or freedom—the Roman Empire was undoubtedly brutal and enslaved hundreds of thousands of conquered peoples; moreover, women had no voting rights—it was undoubtedly a multicultural and diverse city. One only need think of the opening scene in Mary Beard's *Meet the Romans* when she canvases gravestones along the Appian way with the names of people of all social classes and from all over the empire who had come to Rome. And if Rome appeared as complex and contradictory in both the Republican and Imperial periods,[28] it certainly continued to produce a multiplicity of meanings in later periods. Roman models have long been recognised as templates for more recent cultural, legal, and political systems.[29]

The simultaneous positive and negative reactions towards Donald Trump's comment that "The United States and Italy are bound together by a shared cultural and political heritage dating back thousands of years to Ancient Rome" speaks to Rome's multivalence.[30] It is this multivalence that explains why confirmation bias happens so often when the concept of Rome is used: it is easy to make Rome stand for anything when we have such limited evidence. It also represents the ongoing tendency to cherry-pick from the Roman past: Rome as great empire, militarily powerful, culturally authoritative. While it is easy to point to connections between ancient and modern cultures, a neat assimilation of the two is misleading. Trump's

[27] https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/about-melbourne/melbourne-heritage/history/Pages/coat-of-arms.aspx
[28] Conrau-Lewis *infra*, Evans *infra* and Wurster *infra*.
[29] Brunt 1965, Hingley 2000, Murphy 2008, Turner *infra*, Blyth *infra* and Midford *infra*.
[30] https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/trump-takes-heat-for-tracing-us-cultural-and-political-heritage-to-ancient-rome.

comment ignores Rome as slave economy, the gladiatorial games as entertainment, the torture and capital punishment that were enshrined in Roman law and empire, and its patriarchy. The calls to take "Western Civ 101" to understand the truth of Trump's statement is indicative of the tendency to ignore Roman diversity. Rome was not either an empire or a culturally diverse place: it was diverse *because* it was an empire. Certainly, modern institutions, buildings, and political systems have been influenced by Rome, but this influence is so filtered through the lenses of later peoples and ideas that they bear only passing resemblance.

In Australia the ongoing controversy surrounding the Ramsay Centre,[31] which is funded by a politically conservative foundation, and its program in western civilisation that would study the key texts and "achievements" of western culture highlights the ideologically fraught place of Ancient Greece and Rome today. For universities that have accepted money, it is a rare chance to inject funds into the humanities. However, to critics, the centre represents the elitism rife in the discipline of Classics: accepting the funding raises legitimate concerns that it negates the work of scholars working to show the complexity, nuance, and shortcomings of Ancient Greece and Rome. The ability to re-theorise Rome is potentially undermined by any affiliation to an institution that promotes an ideological vision of Rome as a monoculture. This argument is also relevant in Australia and New Zealand, whose peoples comprise anything but an homogeneous culture. Australasians come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and many, including their indigenous peoples, do not have an historical connection to European heritage and traditions. For them the so-called canon of Ancient Greek and Roman texts is potentially meaningless. Thus, studying Rome from an Antipodean context underscores its reach, both chronologically and geographically, but it also emphasises the way that it needs to be positioned alongside other cultures. In so doing, it becomes clear that Rome is worth studying, not because it is the purveyor of western culture, but because it makes us aware of our own biases.

[31] https://www.ramsaycentre.org/

CHAPTER ONE

ON THE WAY TO ROME IN *AENEID* 8

ANNE ROGERSON

Of all the books of the *Aeneid*, Book 8 is undoubtedly the one in which Rome as a city and the Roman people as an actuality feature most strongly. Aeneas' tour of the future site of Rome and the shield he is given, displaying Rome's glorious future, are two of the most talked-about and most obviously significant moments in this book.[1] Moreover, much of the book looks forward to the shield that Venus will give Aeneas, its encompassing of Roman history and in particular the appearance upon it of Augustus in his triple triumph.[2] Book 8, indeed, holds out for us the end which the *Aeneid* promised from the beginning. Here we see the site where "the walls of the great city of Rome" will rise,[3] walls which featured at the end of the first sentence of the epic, the ultimate consequence of Virgil's story of arms and a suffering man:[4]

> arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris
> Italiam fato profugus Lavinaque venit
> litora—multum ille et terris iactatus et alto
> vi superum, saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram,
> multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem,
> inferretque deos Latio; genus unde Latinum,
> Albanique patres, atque altae moenia Romae. (*Aen*. 1.1–7)

[1] We can note Rome's particular dominance in Book 8 in how the book is summarised in the scholarship: the chapter on *Aeneid* 8 by Boyle 1999 is titled "Images of Rome"; Horsfall 2000, 162–67, briefly discusses Book 8 under the heading "Historical allegory"; Smith 2011, 131–35, opens his account of the book: "The eighth book gives form to Rome's future" (131).

[2] For a brief outline, see Smith 2011, 131–35.

[3] *Aen.* 8.337–65.

[4] For the text, see Conte 2011. All translations are my own.

> I sing of arms and the man who first came to Italy and Lavinia's shores, a refugee driven by fate—he was much tossed about on land and on sea by the violence of the gods above, all because of savage Juno's unforgetting anger, and he suffered many things also in war, until he could found a city, and import his gods to Latium; and from all this came the Latin race, our Alban ancestors, and the walls of the great city of Rome.

And by means of the shield Book 8 looks even more explicitly to the future, showing us in multi-coloured metal relief both Rome's city walls (*Romana . . . moenia*, *Aen*. 8.714–15) and the *gens Romana*, the promise of which forms the conclusion to the proem of Book 1, the final outcome of Aeneas' toils (*tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem*, *Aen*. 1.33: "such a struggle was it to found the Roman race").[5]

From the beginning of the *Aeneid* the revelations of Book 8 and particularly the description of Aeneas' shield which fills the book's final lines are constructed as the aspirational and Roman end of Virgil's epic story. Though the poem has several more books to go before it reaches its hard-fought conclusion on the plains of ancient Latium, the eighth book clearly has much to tell us about how the *Aeneid* speaks to contemporary questions regarding Roman identity. These messages have been studied in particular in analyses of the shield itself,[6] but in this chapter I focus not on the end of the book but its beginning, which looks not to Rome but to Latium, and shows us a very different image of the future unfolding than we might expect from a book that ends—and is strongly associated—with the cosmic and triumphal shield. Before moving to the opening lines of Book 8, however, it is important to note the preoccupation in this book with strangeness, a preoccupation which enhances and highlights its destabilising effect on the epic narrative and its trajectory. Much about Book 8 is unexpected. Its genre is mixed, and the *Aetia* of Callimachus is at least as strong an influence as Virgil's epic predecessors.[7] The book is more than usually episodic, with long inset narratives describing the conflict between Hercules and Cacus as well as the history of Rome on the great shield given to Aeneas.[8] And it is, in addition, a book where strangeness and wonder are repeatedly stressed. Aeneas marvels (*miratur*) at the shield both when it first

[5] For the deep significance of this line and the verb *condere* in the *Aeneid*, see James 1995.
[6] See, for example, Hardie 1986, 336–76; Putnam 1998, 119–88; Vella 2004.
[7] For *Aeneid* 8 and the *Aetia* see George 1974.
[8] We can also note shorter stories, such as Evander's reminiscence of his meeting with Anchises, ll. 157–68.

appears and at the conclusion of the book.[9] The omen of the sow and her thirty piglets is marvellous (*mirabile monstrum*, *Aen*. 8.81) and Aeneas himself appears as a marvel to the landscape when he floats upstream with his picked band of Trojans as the Tiber's current reverses to help his journey.[10] Pallas is stunned (*percussus*, *Aen*. 8.121) when welcoming Aeneas to Pallanteum, and his amazement echoes that of his father Evander when he received Priam's Trojan delegation a generation earlier.[11] Remarkable stories are told (*mirabile dictum*, *Aen*. 8.252). Stupendous sights are seen.[12] Astonishment even becomes an educational tool, as Evander hopes that Pallas will learn to be a warrior hero by marvelling at Aeneas.[13] This is a book of wonderment.[14] The only other book which equals its stress on amazement is Book 1.[15] This is no coincidence: the two books are linked not only by their emphasis on the marvellous, but also by key events,[16] by arrivals, by strange beginnings *in medias res* and by an interest in false starts. They are also connected by a theme that runs throughout much of the *Aeneid*: the confusion of human beings in the face of a bewildering divine plot.[17] The cloud of uncertainty that hangs over human existence is stressed

[9] *expleri nequit atque oculos per singula voluit / miraturque* (*Aen.* 8.618–19: "Aeneas cannot be satisfied and his eyes roam over the separate vignettes, and he marvels"), *miratur rerumque ignarus imagine gaudet* (*Aen.* 8.730: "Aeneas marvels and, not knowing what it is about, rejoices in the representation").

[10] *mirantur et undae, / miratur nemus* (*Aen.* 8.91–92: "The waves marvel, and so do the woods").

[11] *mirabarque duces Teucros, mirabar et ipsum / Laomedontiaden* (*Aen.* 8.161–62: "I [Evander] marvelled at the Trojan leaders, and in particular at Priam").

[12] *miratur facilisque oculos fert omnia circum / Aeneas* (*Aen.* 8.310–11: "Aeneas marvels and his eyes swiftly survey all around him").

[13] *primis et te miretur ab annis* (*Aen.* 8.517: "May Pallas marvel at you in his foundational years").

[14] For this theme, see further Bacon 1939 and Labate 2009.

[15] There are nine cognates of *mirari* in Book 1 and ten in Book 8. Other books have between two and four.

[16] Each contains a divine epiphany (Venus in Book 1, Tiber in Book 8), in each the Trojans arrive in a foreign, strangely Rome-like city as they seek aid (Carthage and Pallanteum respectively), and each also is distinguished by a significant historical ecphrasis (the decorative frieze around Juno's temple with its Trojan history in Book 1, the shield in Book 8).

[17] Compare, for example, the state of anxious confusion with which Aeneas starts Book 8 to his emotional turmoil after Venus reveals herself as she departs in Book 1, and note also how Aeneas' wakeful night of thought in Book 1 (l. 305) is echoed by his troubled deliberations in the early lines of Book 8 (ll. 18–21).

throughout Book 8,[18] despite the apparent certainties of its future predictions, and this uncertainty—as we will see—also surrounds the book's opening lines, setting the tone for a bemused reading experience mirroring that of the hero of the text, in which Virgil's audience must struggle to see how the troubled present and glorious future that is promised can be reconciled.

Book 8 opens not with Rome's future, but with scenes set elsewhere in Italy:

> ut belli signum Laurenti Turnus ab arce
> extulit et rauco strepuerunt cornua cantu,
> utque acris concussit equos utque impulit arma,
> extemplo turbati animi, simul omne tumultu
> coniurat trepido Latium saevitque iuventus
> effera. ductores primi Messapus et Ufens
> contemptorque deum Mezentius undique cogunt
> auxilia et latos vastant cultoribus agros.
> mittitur et magni Venulus Diomedis ad urbem
> qui petat auxilium, et Latio consistere Teucros,
> advectum Aenean classi victosque penatis
> inferre et fatis regem se dicere posci
> edoceat multasque viro se adiungere gentis
> Dardanio et late Latio increbrescere nomen:
> quid struat his coeptis, quem, si fortuna sequatur,
> eventum pugnae cupiat, manifestius ipsi
> quam Turno regi aut regi apparere Latino. (*Aen*. 8.1–17)
>
> When Turnus brought war's standard out from the Laurentian citadel and the horns blasted with their raucous song, and when he excited the fierce horses to activity and set arms in motion, immediately their spirits were thrown into disorder, and at the same time all Latium banded together under

[18] When the god Tiber appears with his prophecy about the foundation of Alba Longa, for example, he emphatically underscores its truth (and deflects attention from the fact that he is suppressing some unpalatable aspects of the future he recounts) (ll. 39, 49), see further O'Hara 1990, 31–35. Evander is keen to emphasise that his people's religious practices are not the result of empty and ignorant superstition (ll. 185–88), and later talks about superstitious peasants who are terrified by the numinous Capitol (ll. 348–49), which houses a god, though he himself is not sure which one (l. 352). Familiarity and Venus' knowingness is a key feature of her seduction of Vulcan when she persuades him to make the shield (ll. 388–93). Amazement is an understandable reaction to the portentous appearance of Aeneas' armour glowing in a clear sky (ll. 530–31), and Aeneas is marked as the only one who recognises what is going on. Finally, when Evander parts from Pallas he notes that he is in a state of suspense, with the future uncertain (l. 580).

> oath in confused rebellion, and the wild youth raged. And the leaders out the front were Messapus and Ufens and Mezentius, the despiser of the gods, and they conscripted auxiliary troops from every side and despoiled the broad fields of their cultivators. Venulus was sent as well to the city of great Diomedes to ask for aid, and inform him that the Trojans were settling in Latium, that Aeneas had been carried there in his fleet and was importing his conquered gods into Italy with him and was claiming that the fates said that he had to be king, and that many races had joined themselves to the Dardanian hero and his name was spreading through Latium far and wide: what Aeneas might be plotting on the basis of these beginnings, and what outcome he desired from the war, if fortune turned out as he wished, would be more clearly apparent to Diomedes himself than to Turnus the king or to king Latinus.

This is a strange beginning to a book that is to be mostly about Aeneas sailing upstream away from the war that has just erupted, towards Evander's Arcadia and the shield. These lines do not give a sense at all that this is the book's destination: they gesture instead towards a book in which Turnus will be the hero, rather than—as it turns out—Aeneas. Indeed, the first line's *ut . . . Turnus* ("when Turnus . . . ") closely echoes the first line of Book 12, *Turnus ut* ("when Turnus"), and hints that Turnus will be the protagonist here too, as he is in the final book.[19] As well as suggesting that Turnus is to play a major role as the book develops, these lines also intimate that the nitty gritty of the present war will be the book's focus, instead of a retreat up the Tiber to look at the past (Hercules) and the future (Rome and Rome's heroes). It turns out, however, that this short segment which begins and ends with Turnus is all the action that Turnus gets in Book 8. The next section begins in line 18 with *talia per Latium* ("so much for Latium") and our attention turns to Aeneas. There are very few references to Turnus in the remainder of the book,[20] and he does not appear again until the opening of Book 9, with the return of the action to Latium and the advent of Iris:

> atque ea diversa penitus dum parte geruntur,
> Irim de caelo misit Saturnia Iuno
> audacem ad Turnum (*Aen*. 9.1–3)

[19] See further Tarrant 2012, *ad Aen.* 12.1, and compare also the opening line of Book 4, *at regina* ("but the queen") which establishes Dido's central role in that book.

[20] He is mentioned as a refuge for the exiled king of the Etruscans, Mezentius (l. 493); addressed by Aeneas with a promise of defeat and suffering (l. 538); and spoken of by Venus as an enemy with whom her son should not hesitate to engage (l. 614). In all these cases he has a role outside the present action described in the book.

> And meanwhile as all this was going on in a completely different locale, Saturnian Juno sent Iris down from the heavens to bold Turnus.

As has been noted, it is these lines and not the opening lines of Book 8 that mark the real start of the action for Turnus;[21] Book 8 begins with a lengthy false start.[22]

It is perhaps for this reason that discussions of Book 8 tend on the whole to ignore or downplay its opening lines.[23] When they have been subject to scholarly attention, they have not avoided adverse critical notice. In the late eighteenth century Christian Heyne, the editor of the first great modern edition of Virgil, observed that "the start of the book seems a bit lacklustre" (*principium libri parum splendere videtur*),[24] and criticised Virgil for repeating, in the first eight lines of Book 8, events that he believed had already been sufficiently narrated at the end of the previous book. Georg Wagner, who edited the fourth edition of Heyne's text and commentary, soon added a salutary note, cautioning against the easy dismissal of these lines:

> si verum est, quae modo narrata sunt, hic repetita legi, in iustam gravemque incurrit Virgilius reprehensionem. neque excusat poetam, quod Heynius ait 'nexum tamen posci et progressum a superioribus ad alia.' sed quidquid in hoc exordio haeretur, id interpretibus vitio vertendum est, non Virgilio.

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[21] See Hardie 1994, 65: "a new stage in the action. . . . Servius observes that 'in this book there is a complete change [from book VIII]: for both the characters and the setting are different, and a different action is begun'; book VIII had been Aen.'s book, book IX is T.'s book."

[22] Preparations for war and approaches made to potential allies unite ll. 1–17 with the rest of the book, as noted by Heyne 1833, 178, but Aeneas's mission to Evander takes on a life of its own and expands to a book-length narrative in its own right.

[23] See, for example, Smith 2011, 131, who states that "[t]he book begins with Aeneas encountering the river god Tiber." The opening is briefly discussed by Putnam 1966, 107, who sees lines 1–17 as "a study in concentrated action . . . [that] suggests with intensity the human concerns which are now the lot of Aeneas and which must ultimately force him into long hours of trial and conflict." For Cannon 1967, 85, the opening lines serve to characterise Turnus as "fierce, warlike and savage . . . rough and hard."

[24] Heyne 1883, *ad Aen.* 8.1. Heyne's first edition of his text and commentary appeared 1767–75. A very different opinion was expressed by James Henry 1889, 630, in the late nineteenth century: "Nothing can be more spirited than this commencement of the eighth Book; . . . all the more striking when taken in contrast with the sweet, soft, and tender peacefulness of the commencement of the preceding Book." Later commentators refrain from judgement.

> If it is the case that a story already told is here repeated and to be read again, then Virgil rightly incurs our serious censure. What Heyne says—'that there is, however, need for a narrative link, and something that allows the poem to move on from what happened before to other things'—does not excuse the poet. But whatever problem is associated with this beginning is attributable to the fault of Virgil's interpreters, not Virgil himself.

Wagner goes on to argue that those who believe the opening of Book 8 is repetitive fail to recognise that Virgil has added a new element here to his account of events throughout Italy after the outbreak of war in Book 7, by telling us what is happening among Latinus' people. The people of Latium, he notes, are not mentioned in the catalogue of Italians that makes up the final part of Book 7, and so have finally to make their appearance as the preparations for war spill over into the next book.[25] Wagner stresses the unorthodox situation in which the Latins find themselves, noting that they do not appear in the catalogue in Book 7 because they do not have a leader, since Latinus has shut himself away, and thus it is only here that we see them, when they enthusiastically take up arms after Turnus displays the *signum belli* ("the standard of war") from the Laurentian citadel. Swept excitedly into the conflict, the inhabitants of Latinus' city break the mould of people following their appointed *duces* that we see so clearly in the catalogue in Book 7, and which was introduced as a key theme of the *Aeneid* with the simile of Neptune calming the winds like a statesman soothing the tumultuous rabble in Book 1.[26] Their entry into the war may reflect this, spilling as it does beyond the ordered confines of the catalogue and into the beginning of a book that is really not about them and their self-appointed leader, Turnus, but the Trojan Aeneas.

The unorthodox position and uncontrolled emotions of the Latins are highlighted by the details of their entry into the war. The passage looks back to Virgil's earlier description of the Italians' entry into war, where there are similarly a *signum*, a blast of trumpets, horses, weapons, and some anxiety in the midst of the preparations for battle:[27]

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[25] This argument can be further developed when we note Henry's observation that *Aen*. 8.1–3 closely echoes *Aen.* 7.637–40, the lines immediately before the catalogue of Italians, a digression which fills the remaining lines of Book 7. Virgil's diction as well as the similar action described mark the beginning of Book 8 as the resumption and continuation of the action, rather than a repetition.

[26] *Aen.* 1.132–41. On the ways in which issues of power in Book 1 are developed in the rest of the *Aeneid*, see Cowan 2015.

[27] See n. 25 above. Direct echoes with *Aen.* 8.1–3 are underlined; where different language is used but a similar event is described, I have used italics.

> classica iamque sonant, it bello tessera signum;
> hic galeam tectis trepidus rapit, ille trementis
> ad iuga cogit equos, clipeumque auroque trilicem
> loricam induitur fidoque accingitur ense. (*Aen*. 7.637–40)
>
> Now the trumpets sound, the standard appears—the sign for war—one man snatches his helmet from his house in fearful haste, another compels his trembling horses to be yoked, and dons his shield and breastplate with its triple layer of gold, and girds himself with his trusty sword.

As we will see, however, the passage in Book 8 introduces a number of uncertainties not present in the previous book, and heightened emotions lead to a relative lack of confidence and control. Ambiguity, for example, surrounds Turnus' raising of "the sign for war" (*signum belli*, *Aen*. 8.1–2), which could refer either to the flag raised to call Romans together under arms for the *comitia centuriata* or the flag flown from a general's quarters to call soldiers already in the field to fight in a sudden emergency.[28] As Virgil gives no indication of which he means, it seems likely that both actions are in play at once, and the Latins are to be understood both as a people being mustered before war starts and as soldiers already engaged, their confused and liminal status a reflection of the fact that the war that has broken out in Latium is not—as Roman wars were supposed to be—an ordered or controlled affair.[29] The Gates of War were violently broken apart by Juno rather than opened by the king as is proper procedure at the end of Book 7, and the war that erupts as a result does not strictly follow normal rules. The connection between the beginning of Book 8 and the deviant opening of the war in the previous book is underlined by the way in which the horns sounding with their raucous song (*et rauco strepuerunt cornua cantu*, *Aen*. 8.2) both echo and differ from those that sound in hoarse accord in Virgil's description of the usual practice when the Gates of War are unchained (*aereaque* ***adsensu conspirant*** *cornua rauco*, *Aen*. 7.615).[30] In Book 8 there is little of the accord seen in the idealised picture of war's beginnings in Book 7, however, and tumult reigns. Though the Latin people take the oath as one (*coniurat*, *Aen*. 8.5), their spirits are disordered (*turbati animi*, *Aen*. 8.4), and they band together in a confused rebellion (*tumultu* /.

[28] Cf. *vexillo in arce posito comitiorum causa exercitus eductus esset* (Livy 39.15.11: "The army was gathered together for the *comitia centuriata* by a flag set up on the citadel"); *vexillum proponendum, quod erat insigne, cum ad arma concurri oporteret* (Caes. *BGal.* 2.20.1: "The flag had to be displayed, which was the sign that it was necessary to rush together to arms"). The double meaning of *signum* here has long been noted: see de la Cerda 1617, ad loc.

[29] See further Fowler 1998.

[30] Similarities are underlined, and differences highlighted in bold.

. . *trepido*, *Aen*. 8.4–5). The turbulent nature of their uprising is emphasised by its echoes of the barbarian onslaught stayed by the Roman hero Marcellus in the future revealed by Anchises in Book 6 (*hic rem Romanam magno turbante tumultu / sistet eques*, *Aen*. 6.857–58: "This is the stalwart soldier to stabilise the Roman state when a great crisis rages"). Raging and confused as they come together to fight, reminiscent at one and the same time of citizens, soldiers, and a barbarian horde, Virgil's Latin troops at the beginning of Book 8 look as though they are about to engage in a civil conflict, in which they will become their own country's enemies.[31] This implication was recognised by Virgil's epic successor Lucan, who echoes the language of this passage in the first book of his epic about the civil wars that ended the Roman Republic. Here, Caesar calls citizens to arms, and silences them so he can speak:[32]

> convocat armatos extemplo ad signa maniplos,
> utque satis trepidum turba coeunte tumultum
> conposuit vultu dextraque silentia iussit (Luc. 1.296–98)
>
> Immediately [Caesar] calls the armed companies together to the standards, and when the anxious uproar of the crowd coming together was sufficiently quelled by his look, he ordered silence with his hand [and spoke].

The close correspondences with *Aeneid* 8, which are underlined here, emphasise the uncontrolled nature of the war erupting there, where young men rage wildly (*saevitque iuventus / effera*, *Aen*. 8.5–6), and the broad fields are depopulated of their cultivators (*latos vastant cultoribus agros*, *Aen*. 8.8) in a way that foreshadows the effects of the war to come.[33]

Even Virgil's diction joins the mayhem. The third line is particularly problematic (*utque acris concussit equos utque impulit arma*, *Aen*. 8.3: "and when he excited the fierce horses to activity and set arms in motion") and was excised by Ribbeck who "preferred it not to be there".[34] Ribbeck's criticism was based on the belief that the line interrupted the logical

[31] For *tumultus* "in the special sense of a Gallic rising," see Horsfall 2013, *ad Aen.* 6.857.
[32] Echoes of *Aen.* 8.1–6 are underlined. For the correspondences, see further Roche 2009, ad loc.
[33] For the destructive impact of war on the landscape of Roman epic, see Newlands 2004. Note also the echo of this line in the description of the Etruscan armies spreading out across the broad fields later in the book (*et latis tendebat in arvis*, *Aen.* 8.605).
[34] *abesse malim*, Ribbeck 1895, *ad Aen.* 8.3.

progression of the Latin uprising,[35] though there seems little reason why Turnus should raise the standard and then refrain from further martial activity until after the Latin people had caught the excitement of war. The fact that he may seem to act impulsively in line 3 accords both with his hot-headed character and with the speed and urgency with which the opening lines of Book 8 unfold.[36] There is, however, another reason to pause over this impetuous line: the verbs used are not the ones we might naturally expect with their respective objects, and the line would be smoother, though less interesting, if *concussit* governed *arma* and *impulit* governed *equos* instead. Then Turnus would appear brandishing his weapons, as is not infrequently seen in Latin poetry,[37] and urging on his horses.[38] Instead, readers make a different sense of these verbs, imagining horses not brandished but shaken up and roused to action (*concussit*), and arms not urged into motion but, as the phrase is usually interpreted, beaten against (*impulit*) an unspecified object, perhaps the hero's shield or breastplate. Neither Virgilian phrase does genuine violence to the language,[39] but the

[35] He explains this decision in the critical notes that accompanied his edition: *perversus est, nam animos prius turbari et saevire iuventutem consentaneum erat, tum demum equos et arma excitari*, Ribbeck 1866, 83. "The line is awry, for it makes sense for their spirits to be in an uproar and the youth to rage first, and only then the horses and weapons are roused up." It is not clear from Ribbeck's note that he takes Turnus to be the subject of *concussit* and *impulit* in line 3, and a misapprehension may partly explain his dissatisfaction with the line.

[36] For the ambiguities and flaws of Turnus' character, see Tarrant 2012, 9–16. The succession of conjunctions *ut . . . utque . . . utque . . . extemplo . . . simul* in the first four lines emphasise the speed at which events unfold in Latium and, as Henry 1889, 628–29 notes, the verbs *concussit* and *impulit* in line 3 "signify the violence and impetuosity with which Turnus [acts]. . . . Virgil wished to express something more than the mere making of war—wished to express the violence, suddenness and impetuosity with which it was made."

[37] Cf. *concutit arma* (Ov. *Met.* 1.143, 7.130), *arma(que) concussit* (Ov. *Met.* 12.468, Sen. *Tro.* 683), *concussa . . . arma* (Sil. *Pun.* 2.212, 12.183). The meaning "to brandish (a weapon)" is among the primary definitions of *concutere* in the *OLD* 2nd ed. s.v.

[38] Also a common epic phrase, e.g. *impellit equos* (Stat. *Theb.* 7.83), *impellebat equum* (Sil. *Pun.* 7.697). Cf. also *impulit . . . currus* (V. Fl. 6.6).

[39] Note that Virgil's usage is followed by Statius, who rephrases and clarifies *impulit arma*, specifying the arms he refers to and substituting two different verbs for the action taken: *ter sustulit hastam, / ter concussit equos, clipeum ter pectore plausit*, *Theb.* 7.133–34 ("three times he raised up his spear, three times whipped his horses forwards, three times beat his shield against his chest"). Here too, this inspiring action is followed by a tumultuous and disorderly uprising (*Theb.* 7.135–38).

slight dissonance of the two together underscores the discord of the scene and the confused nature of the start to the war in Latium.

This discord can also be seen in the debate in the commentary tradition about the nature of the *arma* of line 3. Servius believed that the word referred to Turnus' foot soldiers (*ad pedites*), who balanced the *equites* that he believed were implicit in the *equos* seen earlier in the line.[40] Later commentators dismiss this idea, generally agreeing that the *arma* are Turnus' own weapons.[41] Consensus holds that Virgil here describes how Turnus "clashed his arms by way of exciting the ardour of his followers."[42] It is difficult, however, to read of *arma* being "set in motion" (*impulit*) in the *Aeneid* without also thinking of the *arma* of the first line of the epic. When the phrase appears, as it does here, in the opening lines of another book in which the wars promised in the proem appear about to erupt into full-scale conflict, it seems not unreasonable to interpret it also as a reference to Turnus as a driving force behind the battles that fill much of the second half of the *Aeneid*.[43] The slightly cryptic and historically problematic third line of Book 8 thus encapsulates the strong forward momentum that its opening appears to give to the epic plot. As Turnus drives the *arma* on, he impels the story forward, allowing the Iliadic half of the *Aeneid* to get properly underway.

Soon afterwards we are explicitly reminded of the *Iliad* when the Latins send an embassy to the Greek hero Diomedes in line 9, asking his advice about Aeneas, whom he knew from encounters in the Homeric epic.

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[40] He also mentions a tradition in which the leader who has taken on the responsibilities of war enters a temple of Mars and agitates first the shield and then the spear of the god's statue, crying "Mars, wake up" and suggests that this may be what Turnus is to be understood as doing here (see Serv. *ad Aen.* 8.3).

[41] The comments of Servius *auctus* make it clear that this interpretation was favoured in antiquity as well: *quidam sane suos equos et sua arma de Turno tradunt, scilicet ut ceteris esset exemplum*, *ad Aen*. 8.3: "some sensibly say that these are Turnus' own horses and weapons, no doubt from the example of comparable phrases elsewhere."

[42] Conington and Nettleship 1875, ad loc., comparing *clipeo increpat* at *Aen.* 12.332 and Sil. *Pun.* 12.684–85.

[43] A similar argument is advanced by Henry 1889, 629: "*equos* and *arma* jointly represent *bellum*, being the two principal requisites necessary to be provided before making war: these provided, the belligerents were in a fit state for the *pugna*, or actual battle, which we therefore find sometimes added to *equos* and *arma* in order to complete the idea of *bellum*, as 9.777." Page 1900, *ad Aen.* 8.3 notes "Henry prefers [the translation] 'roused the spirited steeds (of his followers) and urged on the war.'"

This too helps to mark the opening of Book 8 as a true beginning both to the wars promised in the proem, and to the repetition of the great battle of Homeric epic in the second half of Virgil's poem.[44] As we have already seen, this promise is significantly delayed when the book's focus changes in line 18, and its trajectory follows Aeneas upstream to Rome instead of pursuing Turnus' headlong course into battle. The story returns to Turnus in Book 9, which follows his exploits during Aeneas' adventures off the stage of battle, and he and Aeneas come close to engaging in combat in Book 10, but the action begun in Book 8 does not fully resume until Diomedes replies to the Latin embassy early in Book 11, where he declines to become involved in the war that has broken out between the Italians and the Trojan invaders, advising the Latins to sue for peace and choose a different path to that upon which they set out at the bidding of Allecto and Juno earlier in the epic.[45] This long delay mirrors the postponement of personal combat between Turnus and Aeneas until the end of Book 12, and one function of the enthusiastically martial and uncontrolled opening of Book 8 is to highlight the series of digressions and deferrals that put off the conflict that had been promised since the first word of the poem.

When looked at from a narrative perspective, the action at the opening of Book 8 is a new beginning, doomed to be placed on hold for a considerable period of time. It is also a beginning *in medias res* as battle fervour rages, and in that way, it looks back to the start of the *Aeneid* with the raging storm that threatened to drown the Trojans almost before their story had begun. In addition, it is a type of ending, recalling as it does the end of Book 7, with the main action of Book 8 starting later with Aeneas. It thus evokes the beginning of Book 7 too, where the burial of Caieta and the cautious skirting of the land of Circe look back to the first half of the *Aeneid* and come before the delayed second proem that announces the start of a greater enterprise, an epic of war. Rather than dismiss these lines, then, in our haste to get on to Aeneas' adventures, we can employ them to think more deeply about the tortuous pace and complex development of the *Aeneid*'s epic plot. Indeed, the message sent to Diomedes might be seen as encouragement to think about the plot as we think about these lines. As Venulus reports the Italians' experiences of Aeneas' arrival to the Greek hero, he constructs a miniature version of the epic, with a number of echoes of the portrayal of Aeneas' mission elsewhere, and a striking alternative point of view. When he reports how "the Trojans have settled in Latium"

[44] On repetition in the *Aeneid*, see in particular Quint 1989, and for the *Iliad* in the *Aeneid* see Anderson 1957 and Knauer 1964*a*, 1964*b*.
[45] *Aen.* 11.243–95.