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Vergilian cities : visions of Troy, Carthage and Rome

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Vergilian cities

Visions of Troy, Carthage and Rome[1]

Abstract: It is well known that the city of Rome figures largely in Vergil's poetry. Study of this topic has tended to focus on its historical aspects, and special attention has been paid to the fact that the *Aeneid* is a foundation epic. As far as actual descriptions of the city are concerned, most scholars have inevitably been drawn to the famous promenade of Aeneas and Evander through the site of Rome in book 8. In this paper I would like to take a slightly different approach to Vergil's Rome, by looking at a number of passages which offer glimpses of clearly defined urban spaces, arguing that Vergil has a particular interest in depicting cityscapes throughout his career. Right from the first *Eclogue*, and again in the *Georgics*, the depiction of Rome as a physical space is clearly a matter of considerable literary importance for Vergil. Ironically, when one turns to the *Aeneid*, Carthage and Troy receive more direct attention than Rome, but the destinies of all three cities are clearly intertwined. Evocations of the cityscape of Carthage as it is being built by Dido and of Troy as it is being destroyed by the Greeks interact with Vergil's handling of the fate of Rome, and study of the poet's handling of urban space helps to reveal some interesting aspects of his epic technique.

Vergil's *Aeneid* combines the story of a character from Homer's *Iliad* with the history of Rome.[2] Even before its actual publication around 19 BCE, Propertius (2,34,61–6, c. 25 BCE) could characterize it as a poem about the Battle of Actium and immediately go on to compare it directly to the *Iliad*. Servius, in the preface to his commentary on the *Aeneid*, shows his awareness of essential strands in the epic's make-up when he states that Vergil's intention was to imitate Homer and praise Augustus (*Homerum imitari et Augustum laudare a parentibus*). Modern scholarship has explored extensively the ways in which the

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2 The bibliography on this broad topic is so vast that it is hard to know where to start; see, for example, Knauer (1981) on Homer and Rieks (1981) on Roman history; Pöschl (1977³) remains essential reading; more recently, see Hardie (1986) and (1988) 53–7.

poem's narrative combines Homeric plots and themes and Roman subject matter and discourses. As Vergil exploits, among many other models, Homer, the Epic Cycle, Naevius, Ennius, the Roman Annalists and the early decades of Livy's history, he combines the Iliadic battle for Troy, narratives of the city's fall, and the return journeys of Odysseus and other heroes with the foundation stories of Lavinium, Alba Longa and Rome. In doing so, his story of Aeneas contains references to many famous events and characters in Rome's history, right up to the Augustan present of the poem's composition and initial reception.[3]

This essay, however, will not focus on Vergil's epicizing histories of Rome. Instead, it will attempt to contextualize Vergilian visions of Rome, by illustrating the poet's keen interest in cityscapes.[4] By this formulation I do not simply mean that Vergil frequently mentions Rome, the Tiber, the Palatine, the Aventine, individual landmarks and buildings, and so on; this aspect will be important, but not the immediate centre of attention.[5] As has been frequently pointed out, the years in which Vergil was active as a poet were ones in which the fabric of the city was transformed by Octavian/Augustus, and it is not difficult to find many reflections of this urban metamorphosis in the Vergilian

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3 On Vergil, the *Aeneid*, Augustus and the Augustan age see, from a massive bibliography, Binder (1971), Pöschl (1981), Cairns (1989), Stahl (1998), Thomas (2001), Powell (2008); on Vergil's interest in constructions of Roman identity see Reed (2007). On Augustan poetry and politics in general see two important collections of essays, Woodman and West (1984), Powell (1998); see also Galinsky (1996), (2005) and Labate and Rosati (2013).
4 For an extremely useful attempt to survey the problem of how the Romans represented to themselves the city of Rome and cityscapes more generally see Royo and Gruet (2008); see also Devillers (2013). Useful too are Cancik (1985/6) on demarcations of the city as sacred space, and La Rocca (2009) on artistic representations of landscapes, including cities, two references I owe to Bettina Bergmann. For the bird's eye view in relation to the *Circus Maximus*, see Bergmann (2008). On Ovid imagining Rome from Tomis see Edwards (1996) 116–25. The perambulations through the city of Ovid's book and other similar promenades through the city, especially that of Evander and Aeneas in *Aeneid* 8, have of course attracted much discussion; see for example Wiseman (1984). On landscape in Vergil see Witek (2006); more generally see Jenkyns (1998). On Servius' commentary and the city of Rome see Tischer (2012); in general there is much of interest in Fuhrer (2012), with a focus on later antiquity. On the whole question of Roman consciousness of space, with a focus on cartography, see Talbert (2012); see also Ewald and Noreña (2011). For the *Forma Urbis Romae*, the Severan marble plan of the city which enabled its contemporaries to take in the form and scope of the city at a single glance, see now the remarkable on-line collection of material at http://formaurbis.stanford.edu/. On 'the spatial turn' see Döring and Thielmann (2008), Warf and Arias (2009). I have not seen Holdaway and Trentin (2013).
5 On these topics and much more see Edwards (1996), which is essential reading; important also is Jaeger (1997). More generally, some of the best work on space in literary texts has concentrated on Greek literature: see for example Purves (2010), Thalmann (2011), De Jong (2012).

text.[6] I intend rather to look at some passages throughout his whole œuvre, starting from the first *Eclogue*, that invites readers to imagine the city of Rome as a cityscape, by which I mean moments in the text which invite readers to imagine a discrete and defined urban space, a unitary spatial entity seen in a single snap-shot.[7] The *Aeneid*'s first sentence, after all, ends with a mention of 'the walls of high Rome' (*altae moenia Romae, Aen.* 1,7). Some prefer to take this expression simply as a reference to the city's power, but there are good reasons for taking the use of the adjective *alta*, beyond its precise function as a programmatic example of enallage, or transferred epithet, that invites us to construe it with *moenia* rather than with *Romae*,[8] as a deliberate, if fleeting, evocation of the city as a physical entity, as an invitation to the reader to delineate for a moment in the mind's eye Rome as a discrete, unified, built-up urban space.[9] In what follows, therefore, it will not be a matter of trying to identify allusions to individual buildings, an aspect of the *Aeneid* that has attracted a considerable body of fascinating scholarship.[10] Nor will we be interested primarily in the history of the city as presented by Vergil writing as a historian, nor in 'Rom als Idee', nor in the rhetorical tradition of *laudes Romae*, nor Augustus' massive building projects, nor in mentions of Rome as symbolic of her power, as expressed, for example, through implicit play on the correlation between *urbs* and *orbis*, which presents Rome as the centre of a world empire.[11] Rather, we will attempt to survey the ways in which Vergil, throughout his career, invites his readers to construct momentary visions of Rome.

6 See for example Favro (1996), Haselberger (2007) on Augustus' transformation of Rome and Morwood (1991) on Vergil's reaction to Augustus as builder. More generally see Scheithauer (2000).
7 According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, usage of the term city-scape/cityscape, defined as a 'view of a city; city scenery; the layout of a city', can be traced back to 1856.
8 On Vergilian enallage see Conte (2007) chap. 3.
9 I will not discuss here the complexities involved in trying to theorize the act of reading and questions about representation and mimesis, narration and description, and so on. For a way into these topics see for example Elsner (1996), Squire (2009) and Spencer (2010), all with extensive bibliographies. From a more philosophical perspective see Gaskin 2013 on language, literature and worldly reality. On ancient ecphrasis see Webb (2009). On the city as a theme in the *Aeneid*, see Morwood (1991) and Reed (2007) chap. 5, two contributions from which I have learned much. In general on textual representations of Rome see Edwards (1996), Auvray-Assayas/Dupont (1998), Larmour/Spencer (2007); more generally, Leach (1988). On the dangers involved in assuming that ancient writers seek topographical precision see Horsfall (1985). On every aspect of writing about Rome and describing Rome see Edwards (1996).
10 See for example Harrison (2006) for discussion.
11 For these aspects of the poem see, for example, Gerentz (1918) on *laudes Romae*, Bréguet (1969) on *urbs/orbis*, Putnam (1975) and the collection of articles in Kytzler (1993) on „Rom als Idee", Hardie (1986) on cosmos and *imperium*, Rehak (2006) on *imperium* and cosmos, Favro (1996) and Haselberger (2007) on Augustan adornment of the city.

1 The *Eclogues*: the view from the woods

Eclogue 1 takes the form of a dialogue between two rustics, and it is their conversation alone that permits reconstruction of their respective situations. In order to try to save his lands and prevent eviction from his farm and subsequent exile, the cruel fate suffered by Meliboeus, Tityrus has been to Rome. There, the intervention of a man he describes as a god (*deus, Ecl.* 1,6–7) has led to his being allowed to retain his property, and so when we first see him, in the poem's opening line, he is found reclining peacefully under the shade of a beech tree. Trees are obviously an important part of the bucolic world, and, laden with symbolic associations, can represent the bucolic world itself.[12] It is noteworthy therefore, that when Tityrus attempts to describe Rome to Meliboeus, in what is the only time the name of the city is used in the *Eclogues*, he uses trees in order to give as vivid an impression as possible of the sheer scale of the place:

> *Urbem quam dicunt Romam, Meliboee, putavi*
> *stultus ego huic nostrae similem, quo saepe solemus*
> *pastores ovium teneros depellere fetus.*
> *sic canibus catulos similis, sic matribus haedos*
> *noram, sic parvis componere magna solebam.*
> *verum haec tantum alias inter caput extulit urbes*
> *quantum lenta solent inter viburna cupressi.*   (*Ecl.* 1,19–25[13])

> The city, Meliboeus, they call Rome,
> I, simpleton, deemed like this town of ours,
> whereto we shepherds oft are wont to drive
> the younglings of the flock: so too I knew
> whelps to resemble dogs, and kids their dams,
> comparing small with great; but this as far
> above all other cities rears her head
> as cypress above pliant osier towers.[14]

The countryman reprimands himself for having imagined that Rome could resemble his local town, and after adopting terms drawn from his daily life, dogs and sheep, concludes with the picture of Rome as comparable to cypresses

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12 Cf. for example, *Ecl.* 4,3, *si canimus silvas* ...; *Ecl.* 6,2, *nostra neque erubuit silvas habitare Thalea.*

13 The text used is that of R. A. B Mynors (1969), with substitution of *v* for consonantal *u*.

14 For translations of the Latin, when a precise detail in the argument is not at issue, I have used those handily available on-line at http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/. These are by J. B. Greenough for the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* and T. C Williams for the *Aeneid*.

towering straight and tall over low-lying plants. In his recent commentary, A. Cucchiarelli points out that the former (identified as *Cupressus sempervirens*) can reach the height of fifty metres, while the latter (identified as *Viburnum lantana*) rarely grows to more than two metres, a difference that clearly underlines the point Vergil is making: Rome towers over the towns of Italy.[15] On one level, this dominance has a political aspect, and the poem suggests that events in Rome now influence what goes on in the rest of the peninsula. On another level, the mention of Rome in these lines has to be interpreted in relation to the poetics of space in the first *Eclogue* and subsequently in the rest of the collection.[16] In a linear reading of the text, we move outward from the spreading beech of the first line, via Rome in line 19 to the frontiers of the Roman world in lines 59–66, where Tityrus and Meliboeus, evoking the topic of exile, mention Parthia, Germania, Scythia, Asia and Britannia, before the shadows fall from the mountains and bring the poem to a close with the onset of darkness in the last line. Much has been written in attempting to identify the landscape evoked by the first *Eclogue*, but an interesting element in that topic is the way in which Rome as a place functions in a dynamic relationship first to a single tree, then to Italy and finally to the whole world beyond, before the closing in of night from the horizon created by the high mountains of the final line. Furthermore, coming in the first poem, this reference to Rome provides a context within which to situate the references to historical events and persons which will appear in the rest of the collection, as Vergil returns at various points and in numerous ways to the concerns of Roman politics. Crucially, of course, the city of Rome is linked from the very beginning of the Vergilian œuvre to the 'god', to the young man (*iuvenem*, *Ecl.* 1,42, carefully placed right at the very mid-point of the whole poem) who comes to Tityrus' rescue there.[17]

Amidst all these associations and resonances, it is important to pay due attention to the physical image of the city as tall cypresses towering over smaller trees. The most immediate image to come to mind is obviously that of preeminent height. While clearly evoking influence and power, Tityrus' words also conjure up a dialogue between the rural and the urban, since they imply that most country-folk can simply have no idea of the grandeur of Rome. The very brevity of the image and the lack of detail perhaps invite readers to allow their thoughts to run on a little further, and to think about a city as a tall tree may also conjure up a sense of place and fixed rootedness. The comparison of a

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15 Cuchiarelli (2012) on 25.

16 On Vergil's bucolic space see Jones (2011).

17 See Mundt (2012) 164–6; more generally on politics and the divine in the *Eclogues* see Cucchiarelli (2011).

city to a tree is one to which Vergil will use again, thus making it possible to test the validity of such assumptions. But for the moment it will suffice to learn the lesson of this first occurrence of the name of Rome in Vergilian poetry. From the outset, Vergil attaches great importance to the city as a physically striking and dominant physical entity. And as the cypresses tower over the smaller trees, so the humble pastoral world constructed by these bucolic poems is overshadowed right from the outset by the towering city of Rome.

2 The *Georgics*: the view from the fields

In the *Georgics*, Rome is named twice, in two closely related passages, the closing panels of books 1 and 2. In line 466 of the first book, in an abrupt transition from a section dedicated to weather signs provided by the sun and the moon, at the death of Julius Caesar, the sun pities the city (*ille etiam extincto miseratus Caesare Romam*). There is no immediately obvious spatial or physical aspect whatsoever here, except perhaps for the fact that in the next two lines Vergil goes on to say that the sun covered itself up, thus provoking a sudden fear of eternal night (*aeternam ... noctem, Georg.* 1,468) and perhaps conjuring up an image of the city covered in total darkness. When Rome is named again, at *Georgics* 2,534, Vergil certainly offers his readers an image of a cityscape. The passage in question runs as follows, following a description of an idyllic rustic festival:

> *hanc olim veteres vitam coluere Sabini,*
> *hanc Remus et frater; sic fortis Etruria crevit*
> *scilicet et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma,*
> *septemque una sibi muro muro circumdedit arces.*   (*Georg.* 2,532–5)

> Such life of yore the ancient Sabines led,
> Such Remus and his brother: Etruria thus,
> Doubt not, to greatness grew, and Rome became
> The fair world's fairest, and with circling wall
> Clasped to her single breast the sevenfold hills.

In these lines, fascinating temporal strategies are in play, as troubled present and peaceful past are juxtaposed.[18] But space is equally important, as a brief reading of some strands of the passage will demonstrate.

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18 See Putnam (1979) 158–9.

Rome's foundation, alluded to in the reference to Remus and Romulus (*Remus et frater, Georg.* 2,533) is placed here in relation to a rustic style of life, and this shift from rural to urban is extended further when the single city surrounds its seven hills with a wall and becomes the most beautiful of places. By mentioning the hills and the surrounding wall and the beauty of the city, Vergil certainly wants his readers to think in terms of a defined urban space, even if, as in the first *Eclogue*, that space is not described in any detail. In fact, it is precisely the absence of reference to any constituent elements in the urban landscape that emphasizes the importance of the urban space as a unified entity. The city stands in contrast to the countryside of the previous lines, and in addition, Rome, as in *Eclogue* 1, is described in relation to other parts of Italy, by means of the references to the Sabines and Etruria in lines 532–3. Again also, as in the earlier poem, Rome's power is clearly emphasized. But its walls and beauty also set it apart in ways which some scholars have seen as introducing troubling elements into the picture. It has been pointed out that the building of city walls is an activity that does not sit well with traditional images of the Golden Age, many of which are evoked in the preceding verses.[19] In terms of the oppositions between rural and urban and peace and war in the passage as a whole, it is in fact tempting to see Rome as more closely associated with war than with peace. This interpretation fits well with the final section of book 1, where Julius Caesar's death, the city of Rome and civil war are all inter-connected, and the book comes to a close in the description of the whole world caught up in an apparently endless cycle of grim violence.[20] At least superficially, the close of the second book of the poem seems more optimistic than that of the first, but at *Georgics* 2,495–512 Vergil very deliberately associates Rome with immoral excess, corruption and civil strife, and when it comes, the mention of the beauty of Rome and its seven hills surrounded by a wall, *rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma*, seems to recall line 498. There, among the things that are said not to trouble those who are fortunate enough to enjoy the pleasure of life in the country are 'Roman affairs and kingdoms doomed to perish' (*res Romanae perituraque regna, Georg.* 2,498). Scholars are divided on what this expression means, but it surely takes a lot of special pleading to maintain a complete distinction between Rome and other *regna*.[21] Therefore, when Vergil mentions Remus and Romulus and the walls of the beautiful city of Rome in lines 533–5, it must be remembered that just 36 lines earlier he had

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19 See Thomas (1988) on 2,535.
20 Note in particular the way in which Vergil relates cities, *urbes*, to the world, *orbis*, by placing at line-end *orbem, urbes* and *orbe* within the space of seven lines (*Georg.* 1,505–11).
21 See Thomas (1988) on 2,498.

at the very least not excluded the idea of the city's eventual destruction. The passage as a whole thus contains in one sweeping glance a vision of the whole history of the city, so that the image of the seven hills and the surrounding walls already contains within it a fleeting glimpse of a beautiful cityscape doomed to perish. When in addition, it is recalled that the closing section of book 2 looks back in various ways to the close of book 1 and that both passages offer images of Rome caught up in war, a further detail may come into focus.

As Vergil begins the final section of the first book, lines 498–513, he goes some way to suggesting a vision of the actual cityscape of Rome. The passage in question begins with a prayer, which reads thus:

> *di patrii Indigetes et Romule Vestaque mater,*
> *quae Tuscum Tiberim et Romana Palatia servas,*
> *hunc saltem everso iuvenem succurrere saeclo*
> *ne prohibete.*   (*Georg.* 1,498–501)

> Gods of my country, heroes of the soil,
> And Romulus, and Mother Vesta, thou
> Who Tuscan Tiber and Rome's Palatine
> Preservest, this new champion at the least
> Our fallen generation to repair
> Forbid not.

The naming of the Tiber and the Palatine evokes all sorts of religious and historical associations, but taken together they also invite readers to construct an image of a section of the city. And as will be the case at the end of book 2, danger and destruction are present. Vergil goes on to pray that the gods will allow a young man (*iuvenem, Georg.* 1,500)[22] to come to the aid of an 'overturned age' (*everso … saeclo*). This striking expression must be read on one level in relation to the content of a book which has so far had a great deal to say about ploughing, described as the 'turning of the earth' in the opening two lines (*terram/vertere, Georg.* 1,1–2). At the book's end, in a passage that in many ways describes a situation which is a total inversion of the world described hitherto in the poem, the fields are emptied of their ploughmen (*squalent abuctis arva colonis, Georg.* 1,507), and the farmers no longer turn the earth, having become soldiers in a 'turned epoch'.[23] But in addition to this inversion in the agricultural world, it is also noteworthy that immediately after naming the Tiber and the Palatine and thus evoking the centre of Rome, Vergil goes on to use a verb which can mean 'overthrow' and 'sack'.[24] That the reader should

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22 Cf. the occurrence of *iuvenem* at *Ecl.* 1,42, each time in exactly the same metrical position.
23 See Thomas (1998) ad loc.
24 See *OLD* s. v. *everto*, 4.

indeed be thinking of the destruction of Rome itself may be hinted at also in the famous simile, which brings the book to a close in a frightening illustration of a world at war and apparently heading to destruction:

> *ut cum carceribus sese effudere quadrigae,*
> *addunt in spatia, et frustra retinacula tendens*
> *fertur equis auriga neque audit currus habenas.* (*Georg.* 1,512–14)

> as when
> The four-horse chariots from the barriers poured
> Still quicken o'er the course, and, idly now
> Grasping the reins, the driver by his team
> Is onward borne, nor heeds the car his curb.

Vergil's racing chariot will have evoked for Roman readers the Circus Maximus, the monumental complex which was reconstructed after a fire by Maecenas around 30 BCE, and which, therefore, must have been of contemporary concern.[25] It should also be noted that the location of the Circus Maximus is close to both the Palatine and the Tiber, suggesting that Vergil is indeed deliberately thinking in the passage as a whole in terms of a defined Roman cityscape. Obviously, possible connections between Tiber, Palatine and Circus will have come much more easily to Roman readers with local knowledge of the city, but modern readers of Augustan poetry must also pay attention to such topographical details. It is not at all by chance that Vergil returns to this same view of the city in another passage, and one that is closely related to the closing section of *Georgics* 2.

The passage in question is of course the famous prologue to book 3, where the description of a temple (*templum ... ponam, Georg.* 3,13) connected with both Caesar and Apollo (*in medio mihi Caesar erit*, Georg. 3,316; *Troiae Cynthius auctor, Georg.* 3,36) a river (*ingens ... Mincius, Georg.* 3,14–15) and chariot racing (*centum quadriiugos agitabo, Georg. 3,*15) would, I believe, immediately have brought to the minds of contemporary Roman readers the image of central Rome, the Tiber, the Palatine and the Circus Maximus, even if the none of these is explicitly named and the river that is in fact named in the passage in question is the Mincius, a tributary of the Po flowing near Mantua.[26] In three

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25 On the rebuilding of the Circus see Haslberger (2007) 84–5; see Nelis (2008) for a detailed discussion of the possible connections between references to chariots in the *Georgics* and the contemporary cultural and political scene; further on the ways in which Vergil links the writing and reading of the poem to contemporary Roman history see Nelis (2013).

26 For further detail see Nelis (2008) 514–15; see also Barchiesi (2008) and (2009) on Ovid's Phaethon and visions of central Rome and on the close connections between the Palatine and the Circus Maximus.

separate but related passages (the closing panels of books 1 and 2 and the prologue of book 3) of the *Georgics*, therefore, Vergil uses visions of the Roman cityscape. As he relates city to county, Rome to Italy and political turmoil to the divine help of a young man, he is looking back to the *Eclogues*. But when, in addition to these connections, he links present to past, world war to peace, and evokes massive contemporary building projects in the heart of Rome, he is also glancing forward to and trying his hand at treating themes that will be of central importance in the *Aeneid*.

3 The *Aeneid*: epic cityscapes and the journey towards Rome

Right from the very beginning of the *Aeneid* it is clear that cities will play a major role in the poem. The first sentence, after the opening words *arma virumque cano*, moves from Troy (*Troiae, Aen*. 1,1) to Rome (*Romae, Aen*. 1,7) and provides explicit indication that in generic terms this is a ctistic epic, a narrative dedicated to recounting the foundation of Lavinium (*Laviniaque ... litora ... dum conderet urbem, Aen*. 1,2–7), whence eventually Rome will rise. Immediately after the opening prologue, yet another city is brought into the equation, Carthage (*Urbs antiqua fuit (Tyrii tenuere coloni) / Karthago, ...; Aen*. 1,12–13). Much has been written about these matters,[27] but as well as a keen interest in foundation myths and histories, we also have a recurrent and fascinating interest in narrative evocations of cities as physical entities seen in a series of snapshot images. Vergil typically avoids straightforward descriptions, of course. His approach is indirect and impressionistic, but cityscapes are a recurrent feature of his conception of epic space. The topic is deserving of detailed study. Here it will not be possible to offer more than a survey of some key passages in a linear reading of the text, in an attempt to seize the dynamics of Vergil's strategy in this domain.

Right from the outset of the poem, individual cities are related to others and their destinies are intertwined in temporal trajectories that lead from foundation and construction to decline and destruction. Troy gives way or leads on to Rome (1,1–7); Tyrians settle in an ancient city in North Africa (12); Carthage (13) is said to be 'over against' Italy and the Tiber (*contra*, 13–14), in an obvious evocation of the Carthaginian wars, a part of the historical future that hangs

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27 See, for example, Carney (1986), Horsfall (1989), Morwood (1991), Reed (2007) chap. 5.

heavily over much of the epic.[28] Before long, following the arrival of the Tro-
jans in Libya, Vergil inserts into his narrative of Aeneas' approach to the city
of Dido a view out over the city from the vantage point of a nearby hill top
(1,418–38). This extraordinary passage is worth quoting in its entirety:

> *Corripuere viam interea, qua semita monstrat.*
> *iamque ascendebant collem, qui plurimus urbi*
> *imminet, adversasque adspectat desuper arces.*
> *miratur molem Aeneas, magalia quondam,*
> *miratur portas strepitumque et strata viarum.*
> *instant ardentes Tyrii pars ducere muros,*
> *molirique arcem et manibus subvolvere saxa,*
> *pars optare locum tecto et concludere sulco.*
> *iura magistratusque legunt sanctumque senatum.*
> *hic portus alii effodiunt; hic alta theatris*
> *fundamenta locant alii, immanisque columnas*
> *rupibus excidunt, scaenis decora alta futuris.*
> *qualis apes aestate nova per florea rura*
> *exercet sub sole labor, cum gentis adultos*
> *educunt fetus, aut cum liquentia mella*
> *stipant et dulci distendunt nectare cellas,*
> *aut onera accipiunt venientum, aut agmine facto*
> *ignavom fucos pecus a praesepibus arcent:*
> *fervet opus, redolentque thymo fragrantia mella.*
> *'o fortunati, quorum iam moenia surgunt!'*
> *Aeneas ait, et fastigia suspicit urbis.*　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(*Aen.* 1,418–38)

> Meanwhile the wanderers swiftly journey on
> along the clear-marked road, and soon they climb
> the brow of a high hill, which close in view
> o'er-towers the city's crown. The vast exploit,
> where lately rose but Afric cabins rude,
> Aeneas wondered at: the smooth, wide ways;
> the bastioned gates; the uproar of the throng.
> The Tyrians toil unwearied; some up-raise
> a wall or citadel, from far below
> lifting the ponderous stone; or with due care
> choose where to build, and close the space around
> with sacred furrow; in their gathering-place
> the people for just governors, just laws,
> and for their reverend senate shout acclaim.
> Some clear the harbor mouth; some deeply lay
> the base of a great theatre, and carve out
> proud columns from the mountain, to adorn

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28 See Horsfall (1973/4).

> their rising stage with lofty ornament.
> so busy bees above a field of flowers
> in early summer amid sunbeams toil,
> leading abroad their nation's youthful brood;
> or with the flowing honey storing close
> the pliant cells, until they quite run o'er
> with nectared sweet; while from the entering swarm
> they take their little loads; or lined for war,
> rout the dull drones, and chase them from the hive;
> brisk is the task, and all the honeyed air
> breathes odors of wild thyme. "How blest of Heaven.
> These men that see their promised ramparts rise!"
> Aeneas sighed; and swift his glances moved
> from tower to tower;

These lines are partly modelled on Homer, *Odyssey* 7,37–45, and Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 3,213–17, two related passages in which heroes approach impressive cities and their palaces. But as always, models are reworked and borrowed details are taken in new directions.[29] On this occasion, Vergil has added a significant amount of extra detail in order to present readers with a vision of the whole of the city of Carthage spread before the eyes of Aeneas and Achates. Furthermore, and this is an element quite foreign to the Homeric and Apollonian models, he describes the city not in a finished state, but in the process of being built. The phrase *magalia quondam* (*Aen.* 1,421), with its unobtrusive but crucially important temporal adverb, helps chart the transition from virgin territory to simple huts to urban metropolis. The narrative as a whole recounts the processes of colonisation, as these lines look back to *Tyrii tenuere coloni* at *Aen.* 1,12, and thus establish a thematic pattern that will recur throughout the whole poem.[30] By its occurrence so early in the first book, this vision of a cityscape assumes programmatic significance.

When Aeneas says *"o fortunate, quorum iam m o e n i a surgunt"*, (*Aen.* 1,437) as he looks at the building works, the reader's mind may well go back to the *altae moenia Romae* of line 7 (where the word occurs in the same metrical position, with *surgunt* perhaps also recalling *altae*). But in fact, this noun has already appeared on a number of other occasions, its repeated use contributing to the creation of a pattern of association:

> Aen. 1,7:   *Albanique patres, atque altae m o e n i a Romae.*
> Aen. 1,259:   *m o e n i a, sublimemque feres ad sidera caeli*
> Aen. 1,264:   *contundet, moresque uiris et m o e n i a ponet,*

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29 Harrison (1984) on building at Carthage during the Augustan period.
30 See Horsfall (1989) on Aeneas as colonist.

Aen. 1,277:   *m o e n i a, Romanosque suo de nomine dicet.*
Aen. 1,366:   *m o e n i a surgentemque nouae Karthaginis arcem,*
Aen. 1,410:   *talibus incusat, gressumque ad m o e n i a tendit.*[31]

Each of the first four occurrences refers to Rome, the final pair to Carthage. Obviously, the repetition contributes to the close relationship Vergil establishes between the two cities and their intertwined histories. It also establishes city walls as a key constituent element in the creation of a vision of a city as a single spatial entity and so of the creation of a cityscape. Overall, Vergil's descriptive technique is impressionistic. He favours a rapid piling up of individual details over the delineation of a coherent image: the citadel, gates, roads, senate, theatres, and so on all come in no obviously rational order (*arces, molem, magalia, portas, strata viarum, muros, portus, senatum, theatris, scaenis*). Everything evokes hard work and hustle and bustle, contributing to the creation of a brilliantly vivid scene, all subsequently reimagined when extra details are provided by the bee simile of lines 430–6, another feature that does not appear in the Homeric and Apollonian models. The passage as a whole provides enough material for a lengthy commentary, but it will be possible to focus only on one key aspect of the topic that interests us here.[32]

It has been suggested that in describing nascent Carthage in this way Vergil provides "an ideal vision, a blueprint for the perfect city".[33] Whether this is true or not, the lines in question do take on a paradigmatic function as far as the rest of the poem is concerned. There are several occasions later in the poem that seem very deliberately to cast the reader's mind back to this description. Attention is drawn to this passage for a number of reasons, but one that is particularly important is the irony involved in the fact that in a poem which sets out to be the foundation story of Lavinium, an event that will lead eventually to the foundation of Rome, it is in fact the foundation of the arch-enemy Carthage that comes first. In addition, Dido's success as a city-founder, contrasts markedly with the failure of Aeneas, who in his own words presents himself as a man without walls.[34] As has often been pointed out, Vergil's hero is caught between the ruins of a destroyed Troy and the dream of a non-existent Rome.[35] There may therefore be a strong sense of irony in the fact that the

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31 In all, the word appears seventy-seven times in the poem as a whole. It is not used in the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*.
32 Limited space precludes detailed analysis here of the important links between bee-hives and cities and Vergil's reworking of *Georgics* 4 in *Aeneid* 1; see for example Nelis (1992).
33 Morwood (1991) 213.
34 See Cairns (1989) chap. 2 on kingship theory and the characterisation of Dido and Aeneas.
35 See for example Suerbaum (1993).

unfolding narrative of the *Aeneid* offers many visions of cityscapes, since that of Rome itself can only lie beyond the poem's end and can only be glimpsed in those visions of the future that the poem offers form time to time. Most of them are quite fleeting, but given the evident programmatic importance of the vision of Carthage in establishing the cityscape as a key motif in the epic, they assume considerable significance. A rapid survey of some key moments follows, before coming to a conclusion with a more detailed look at one sentence in book 8, which is very much the book of the poem in which the whole topic of cityscapes comes to a climax.[36]

When Aeneas and Achates finally enter the city of Carthage, they make their way to a temple of Juno. There, they discover a series of paintings (*Aen.* 1,453–93). This scene has of course attracted an enormous amount of critical attention. It is the first formal full-scale ekphrasis in the poem.[37] Two small points alone will concern us. As a weeping Aeneas looks at the images, we are told that he sees a depiction of the fighting around Troy:

> *namque videbat uti bellantes P e r g a m a c i r c u m*
> *hac fugerent Grai, premeret Troiana iuventus;*
> *hac Phryges, instaret curru cristatus A c h i l l e s.* (*Aen.* 1,466–8)

> There he beheld the citadel of Troy
> girt with embattled foes; here, Greeks in flight
> some Trojan onset 'scaped; there, Phrygian bands
> before tall-plumed Achilles' chariot sped.

The words *Pergama circum* immediately raise the question of whether the city was in some way depicted, and if so, in what manner?[38] By a ring of city walls? It is of course impossible to answer the question, because Vergil provides no further detail, but it is noteworthy that he insists on the topic by returning to it a few lines later. Another of the images in the temple seems to have depicted Achilles dragging the body of Hector around the walls of Troy:

> *ter c i r c u m I l i a c o s raptaverat Hectorea m u r o s*
> *exanimumque auro corpus vendebat A c h i l l e s.* (*Aen.* 1,484–5)

> Achilles round the Trojan rampart thrice
> had dragged the fallen Hector, and for gold
> was making traffic of the lifeless clay.

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36 An interesting topic for further study would be to analyse the ways in which these cityscapes are represented in manuscript illustrations. See, for example, Stevenson (1983) 41 and 58 for representations of Carthage as a walled city in the Vatican Vergil.

37 See for example Putnam (1998) chap. 1.

38 Pergamum strictly speaking refers to the Trojan citadel, but is often used to mean the city as a whole.

It is not impossible that the force of the pluperfect verb *raptaverat* here is to mark out this line as a temporal marker, as if Vergil means 'After the dragging the body around the walls of Troy three times ...', simply in order to contextualize the meeting between Priam and Achilles and the return of Hector's body, which is the scene that is actually depicted. But whether this is the case or not, the mention of Achilles at line-end and the use of the words *circum Iliacos ... muros* cannot but recall lines 466–8 and the expression *Pergama circum*. It looks as if Vergil is quite deliberately provoking questions about artistic production and reception, artistic choice and viewer's focalisation, image and text. Amidst such broad matters, one small detail, the repeated use of *circum*, draws attention to the whole issue of the pictorial representation of cities in particular, thereby emphasizing the importance of cityscapes for this poem. Apparent confirmation comes in the second book of the poem, which is devoted entirely to Aeneas' description of the destruction of Troy.

The hero tells this story in direct response to a request from Dido, who at 1,753–5 says:

> *'immo age et a prima dic, hospes, origine nobis*
> *insidias' inquit 'Danaum casusque turoum*
> *erroresque tuos;'*

> 'Come, illustrious guest,
> begin the tale,' she said, 'begin and tell
> the perfidy of Greece, thy people's fall,
> and all thy wanderings.'

It is the words *insidias ... Danaum* that reveal the particular part of the Trojan story idea wants to hear first, how the Greeks deceitfully captured Troy.[39] Throughout the whole of the second book it is crucial to keep in mind that Dido is listening to the tale, that it is a person who is in the very middle of the process of building a new city who sits listening intently to the narrative of the destruction of another city, followed in book 3 by Aeneas' account of his trials in search of a new home.

Many pages could be written about the various ways in which Vergil in *Aeneid* 2 constructs and manipulates images of the city of Troy and the relationship between the city and the surrounding landscapes.[40] From Tenedos

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[39] The placing of the word in enjambement seems to operate as an element of surprise. Many readers will have interpreted initially Dido's words *a prima origine* as indicating an interest in the foundation of Troy; instead, it almost immediately becomes clear that it is instead its destruction that she wants to hear about.

[40] On the fall of Troy in Greek art and poetry see Anderson (1997).

lying 'in sight' (*in conspectu, Aen.* 2,21), to the deserted shore, the empty Greek camp and wooden horse (*Aen.* 2,28–32), to the breaking open of the city's walls to permit the entry of the horse (*dividimus muros et moenia pandimus urbis*, 2,234; cf. *muros* again at 2,237, *moenia* at 2,242, *urbi* and *urbem* at 2,240 and 2,249, the final word of the whole section) and on to its being dragged to the citadel (*sacrata sistimus arce*, 2,245), Vergil takes great care in his evocation of space and movement. It is immediately after Aeneas' vision of Hector that there comes an opportunity to gain some kind of overall impression of the chaos that ensues, once the Trojans have fallen into the trap set by the Greeks:

> *excutior somno et summi fastigia tecti*
> *ascensu supero atque arrectis auribus asto:*
> *in segetem ueluti cum flamma furentibus Austris*
> *incidit, aut rapidus montano flumine torrens*
> *sternit agros, sternit sata laeta boumque labores*
> *praecipitisque trahit siluas; stupet inscius alto*
> *accipiens sonitum saxi de uertice pastor.*
> *tum uero manifesta fides, Danaumque patescunt*
> *insidiae. iam Deiphobi dedit ampla ruinam*
> *Volcano superante domus, iam proximus ardet*
> *Vcalegon; Sigea igni freta lata relucent.*   (*Aen.* 2,302–12)

> I woke on sudden, and up-starting scaled
> the roof, the tower, then stood with listening ear:
> 't was like an harvest burning, when wild winds
> uprouse the flames; 't was like a mountain stream
> that bursts in flood and ruinously whelms
> sweet fields and farms and all the ploughman's toil,
> whirling whole groves along; while dumb with fear,
> from some far cliff the shepherd hears the sound.
> Now their Greek plot was plain, the stratagem
> at last laid bare. Deiphobus' great house
> sank vanquished in the fire. Ucalegon's
> hard by was blazing, while the waters wide
> around Sigeum gave an answering glow.

Intriguingly, Vergil uses a simile to illustrate first the sound of what is going on. When Aeneas goes out onto the roof he listens, ears pricked (*arrectis auribus asto, Aen.* 2,303). The reason is of course that it is night-time, and in the darkness he cannot see. It is only the growing fires that will eventually reveal the process of destruction that is taking place in front of him. There is thus an intense interest in visualisation in these lines, and as hearing gives way eventually to sight, it is difficult not to transfer the details from the simile back into the narrative and imagine fire sweeping through the whole city, just as flames or a river in spate destroy a cornfield.

Aeneas' reaction to this dreadful sight is to rush into battle and to make for the centre of the city (*mediaeque tenemus / urbis iter*, 2,359–60). In the darkness, chaotic fighting follows, before we have mention of the temple of Minerva (2,404–410), and from there, Aeneas says that he was called by the clamour towards Priam's house (*protinus ad sedes Priami clamore vocati*, 2,437). Once again, Aeneas makes his way to the vantage point offered by a roof-top, (*evado ad summi fastigia culminis*, 2,458; cf. 2,302–3, *summi fastigia tecti / ascensu supero*). There follows the explicit detail that on the roof stood a high watch tower, from which vantage point the whole city could be seen (*unde omnis Troia videri, Aen.* 2,461). The Trojans break it down in order to push it over on top of the attacking Greeks, and it is easy to see that the collapsing tower symbolizes the on-going destruction of the city. In a brilliant spatial transition, Vergil next transfers attention to Pyrrhus smashing his way into the very centre of Priam's palace, where he slaughters the ancient king at an altar, beside which stands an ancient laurel tree (*Aen.* 2,513). These images reach their culmination in the following section, in which an intervention by Venus directs Aeneas towards his own family and the house of Anchises. Venus describes to her son in detail how the gods are destroying Troy, and once again Vergil conjures up a vision of the city as a whole (*Aen.* 2,604–14):

> aspice (namque omnem, quae nunc obducta tuenti
> mortalis hebetat uisus tibi et umida circum
> caligat, nubem eripiam; tu ne qua parentis
> iussa time neu praeceptis parere recusa):
> hic, ubi disiectas moles auulsaque saxis
> saxa uides, mixtoque undantem puluere fumum,
> Neptunus muros magnoque emota tridenti
> fundamenta quatit totamque a sedibus urbem
> eruit. hic Iuno Scaeas saeuissima portas
> prima tenet sociumque furens a nauibus agmen
> ferro accincta uocat.

> Behold, I take away
> the barrier-cloud that dims thy mortal eye,
> with murk and mist o'er-veiling. Fear not thou
> to heed thy mother's word, nor let thy heart
> refuse obedience to her counsel given.
> 'Mid yonder trembling ruins, where thou see'st
> stone torn from stone, with dust and smoke uprolling,
> 't is Neptune strikes the wall; his trident vast
> makes her foundation tremble, and unseats
> the city from her throne. Fierce Juno leads
> resistless onset at the Scaean gate,
> and summons from the ships the league of powers,
> wearing her wrathful sword.

Almost immediately afterwards, Aeneas presents the same images in another manner, by comparing the fall of the city to the collapse of a tree:

> *Tum uero omne mihi uisum considere in ignis*
> *Ilium et ex imo uerti Neptunia Troia:*
> *ac ueluti summis antiquam in montibus ornum*
> *cum ferro accisam crebrisque bipennibus instant*
> *eruere agricolae certatim, illa usque minatur*
> *et tremefacta comam concusso uertice nutat,*
> *uulneribus donec paulatim euicta supremum*
> *congemuit traxitque iugis auulsa ruinam.*
> *descendo ac ducente deo flammam inter et hostis*
> *expedior: dant tela locum flammaeque recedunt.*　　　　　　(*Aen.* 2,624–33)

> Then loomed o'er Troy the apparition vast
> of her dread foes divine; I seemed to see
> all Ilium sink in fire, and sacred Troy,
> of Neptune's building, utterly o'erthrown.
> So some huge ash-tree on the mountain's brow
> (when rival woodmen, heaving stroke on stroke
> of two-edged axes, haste to cast her down)
> sways ominously her trembling, leafy top,
> and drops her smitten head; till by her wounds
> vanquished at last, she makes her dying groan,
> and falls in loud wreck from the cliffs uptorn.
> I left the citadel; and, led by Heaven,
> threaded the maze of deadly foes and fires,
> through spears that glanced aside and flames that fell.

These lines are recalled at the very beginning of the third book, in words which encapsulate the final result of all the terrible events of the second book and provide a final glimpse of Troy, as Aeneas and his companions sail away in search of a new home:

> *Postquam res Asiae Priamique evertere gentem*
> *immeritam visum superis, ceciditque*
> *Ilium, et omnis humo fumat Neptunia Troia,*
> ...　　　　　　(*Aen.* 3,1–3)

> When Asia's power and Priam's race and throne,
> though guiltless, were cast down by Heaven's decree,
> when Ilium proud had fallen, and Neptune's Troy
> in smouldering ash lay level with the ground,
> ...

The city has been uprooted and overturned, and whole site of Troy (*omnis Troia, Aen.* 2,461) has been turned into a smoking patch of earth.[41]

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[41] At book 12,830–40 Jupiter unwillingly accepts the eradication of the final traces of Trojan culture.

Having witnessed the construction of Carthage and the destruction of Troy in the first two books of the epic, Vergil's Trojan and Carthaginian audience and Roman readers turn next in the third book to the long search for a new city. Along the way, new foundations will be attempted and aborted (e.g. *moenia prima loco*, 3,16–72; *muros optatae molio urbis*, 3,132–191), existing cities visited along the way (e.g. *Apollinis urbem*, 3,79; *parvae succedimus urbi*, 3,276). Aeneas will even get to see a false Troy, a ghost of a city, when he arrives in Buthrotum (3,290–471; *falsi Simoentis*, 3,302; *parvam Troiam simulataque magnis / Pergama*, 3,349–50), the new home of Helenus and Andromache and in which they have tried to recreate Troy. The episode dominates the central section of the third book, which contains Aeneas' account of his wanderings between Troy and Carthage. Its ghostly and negative image of a phantom city underscores more clearly than anything else that Aeneas must look to the future rather than back to the past. That future lies, of course, in Italy, but before he gets there, he will turn his hand to other foundations.

At *Aeneid* 4,259–61, when Mercury is sent down to ensure his departure from Carthage, in a moment of superb irony that deliberately recalls the description of building in the first book (cf. the use of *magalia* at 4,259 and 1,421), Aeneas is actively involved in the building of Dido's city:

> *ut primum alatis tetigit magalia plantis,*
> *Aenean fundantem arces ac tecta novantem*
> *conspicit.*

> When first his winged feet
> came nigh the clay-built Punic huts, he saw
> Aeneas building at a citadel,
> and founding walls and towers;

Before long, of course, this city, as well as the city from which its overseas colonizers originally arrived, Tyre, will be imagined burning to the ground, thus recalling the fate of Troy, when this simile is used to illustrate Dido's death:

> *non aliter quam si immissis ruat hostibus omnis*
> *Karthago aut antiqua Tyros, flammaeque furentes*
> *culmina perque hominum volvantur perque deorum.*   (*Aen.* 4,669–71)

> Such were the cry
> if a besieging host should break the walls
> of Carthage or old Tyre, and wrathful flames
> o'er towers of kings and worshipped altars roll.

It is ironic that when Aeneas is next found demarcating the site of a new city (*interea Aeneas urbem designat aratro, Aen.* 5,755), it is a city for women. It is

here, in the new foundation specially created for them and named Acesta (*Aen.* 5,713–17, e.g. Segesta), that the Trojan women, and all those too old and weary to face war in Italy, are left behind, before the passage from Sicily to Italy and the final long-awaited landfall at the beginning of book 7 (*Aen.* 7,25–36).

From the mouth of the Tiber it is but a short journey up the river, at the beginning of book 8 (86–101) to the site of Rome itself. This is not the place to discuss in detail Vergil's extraordinary handling of Aeneas' visit to Evander's Pallanteum, to the very site of Rome, already occupied by a city (*urbique, Aen.* 8,101, if of a modest kind). The complex play on then and now, past and present (e.g. *nunc … tum …*; *Aen.* 8,99–100; *nunc, olim …, Aen.* 8,348), the contrast between a rustic settlement and the future location of the capital of the whole world, and Aeneas' and Evander's guided tour through the very centre of Rome have all attracted a vast amount of scholarly attention.[42] Here, we will look briefly at one small detail in the passage which functions as the climax of the eighth book, and to a certain extent of the whole poem, the description of the shield of Aeneas.[43]

The narrator introduces the shield made by Vulcan as follows:

> *illic res Italas Romanorumque triumphos*
> *haud uatum ignarus uenturique inscius aeui*
> *fecerat ignipotens, illic genus omne futurae*
> *stirpis ab Ascanio pugnataque in ordine bella.*   (*Aen.* 8,626–9)

> Thereon were seen
> Italia's story and triumphant Rome,
> wrought by the Lord of Fire, who was not blind
> to lore inspired and prophesying song,
> fore-reading things to come. He pictured there
> Iulus' destined line of glorious sons
> marshalled for many a war.

This icon of the history of Italy, of Roman war and triumph and of the *gens Iulia* begins with the depiction of Romulus, Remus and the wolf:

> *fecerat et uiridi fetam Mauortis in antro*
> *procubuisse lupam, geminos huic ubera circum*
> *ludere pendentis pueros et lambere matrem*
> *impauidos, illam tereti ceruice reflexa*
> *mulcere alternos et corpora fingere lingua.*   (*Aen.* 8,630–4)

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42 On the complexities of book 8 see, for example, Binder (1971), Novara (1986).
43 From a vast bibliography, Putnam (1998) chap. 5 and Hardie (1986) chap. 8 are essential reading.

In cavern green,
haunt of the war-god, lay the mother-wolf;
the twin boy-sucklings at her udders played,
nor feared such nurse; with long neck backward thrown
she fondled each, and shaped with busy tongue
their bodies fair.

Then, intriguingly, Vergil continues with this sentence:

nec procul hinc Romam et raptas sine more Sabinas
consessu caveae, magnis Circensibus actis,
addiderat, subitoque novum consurgere bellum
Romulidis Tatioque seni Curibusque severis.   (*Aen.* 8,635–8)

Near these were pictured well
the walls of Rome and ravished Sabine wives
in the thronged theatre violently seized,
when the great games were done; then, sudden war
of Romulus against the Cures grim
and hoary Tatius;

What kind of image or images do these words refer to? Should this mention of Rome be taken in a locative sense, permitting a translation running something like 'and not far from here he had added the disgraceful rape of the Sabines at Rome and the outbreak of war ...'? Or are we to take it more literally and imagine that Vergil is really saying instead something like 'and not far from here he had added Rome and the disgraceful rape of the Sabines ...'?[44] If we accept the latter interpretation, we have to accept that the shield contained some kind of representation of the city of Rome, at a point in time very close to its foundation, that of the rape of the Sabine women and the subsequent war, which in Livy's version (1,9–10) are among the first major events in the city's history. The fact that once founded, Rome's attempt to populate itself lead to its first war (*bellum*, 8,637, at line-end), recalls the stated theme of the shield as a whole (*pugnataque in ordine bella*, 8,629). In addition to this historical aspect, it must be added that Vergil is also imitating Homer, *Iliad* 18,490–1 at this point.[45] The description of the shield of Achilles begins thus:

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44 The standard translations and commentaries offer limited help. Binder (1971) 169, without further discussion, states: 'Vergil leitet den Abschnitt ein mit dem Bild des neu gegründeten Rom'.

45 On reading the shield of Achilles see Scully (2003) especially 40–43 on its divine, synoptic perspective, which frames the two cities within a cosmic setting. This implies that we see them as clearly defined urban spaces, a detail that Apollonius and Vergil did not ignore.

ἐν δὲ δύω ποίησε πόλεις μερόπων ἀνθρώπων
καλάς. ἐν τῇ μέν ῥα γάμοι τ' ἔσαν εἰλαπίναι τε,

On it he made also two fair cities of mortal men.
In one there were marriages and feastings ...

<div align="right">(Translation by Murray/Dimock ²1995)</div>

Homer's two cities become one in Vergil, and marriage gives way to rape. In addition, Vergil also has in mind Apollonius Rhodius, who had already imitated precisely these lines of Homer in his description of the cloak of Jason at *Argonautica* 1,735–41:

Ἐν δ' ἔσαν Ἀντιόπης Ἀσωπίδος υἱέε δοιώ,
Ἀμφίων καὶ Ζῆθος: ἀπύργωτος δ' ἔτι Θήβη
κεῖτο πέλας, τῆς οἵγε νέον βάλλοντο δομαίους
ἱέμενοι. Ζῆθος μὲν ἐπωμαδὸν ἠέρταζεν
οὔρεος ἠλιβάτοιο κάρη, μογέοντι ἐοικώς:
Ἀμφίων δ' ἐπί οἳ χρυσέῃ φόρμιγγι λιγαίνων
ἤιε, δὶς τόσση δὲ μετ' ἴχνια νίσσετο πέτρη.

And on it were the twin sons of Antiope, Asopus'
daughter, Amphion and Zethus. Nearby was Thebes,
still without towers, whose foundation stones they were
just now laying with great zeal. Zethus was carrying
the top of a high mountain on his shoulders, like a man
toiling hard, but after him came Amphion, playing
loudly on his golden lyre, and a boulder twice as big
followed in his footsteps.

<div align="right">(Translation by Race, 2008)</div>

Vergil's expression *nec procul hinc Romam* clearly reworks the *Argonautica*'s Θήβη / κεῖτο πέλας ('Nearby was Thebe'), more closely than it does the Iliadic 'On it he made also two fair cities ...', and it is made explicitly clear by Apollonius that the cloak carried some kind of image of a city in the process of being founded, awaiting the construction of its towers. Vergil's Rome, on the other hand, seems to be a completed city, one in which circus games can take place. It seems likely, therefore, that we really are intended to face the difficulty of imagining that Vulcan did indeed depict, in some way, an image of the nascent city of Rome on the shield, not far away from the image of Romulus, Remus and the wolf in a cave (*in antro*, *Aen.* 8,630).[46] Vergil is deliberately playing with the limits of representability here, as we saw was the case earlier with the paintings in the temple in Carthage. He is drawing attention to the distinction between image and text, even as he uses a verbal text to represent a metal

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46 On the Lupercal see Haselberger (2007) 90–1.

shield. He warns his readers right at the outset of the ekphrasis of the shield that they are dealing with 'a fabric that cannot be described' (*clipei non enarrabile textum, Aen*. 8,625), before quickly proceeding to challenge in all sorts of ways their ability to visualise what he is attempting to describe. Crucially, one of the ways in which he does so, is by choosing to give priority to the image of Rome itself, in the words, *nec procul hinc Romam ... addiderat*. The unity of the shield as a whole has been found in the survival of the city and supremacy of her power.[47] Ironically, of course, the events depicted on the shield that ensure survival and supremacy can only happen after the poem's end, outside its narrative scope. Vulcan works as a divine prophet, fully aware of the future (*haud vatum ignarus venturique inscius aevi, Aen*. 8,627). Aeneas, on the other hand, while he admires the object, is totally ignorant of its meaning. When Vergil describes him at the book's close as 'ignorant of the events' (*rerumque ignarus, Aen*. 8,730), we must think back to the beginning of the passage and take into account that Aeneas is incapable of recognising the city he sees on the shield, beside the cave. For him, Rome is a nameless urban space, an anonymous cityscape, as elusive as it has been throughout the whole poem. From high vantage points he has seen Carthage being built and Troy destroyed, and he himself has built city walls and demarcated their boundary lines. But Rome for him is like a phantom, a promised but unattainable land. In Vergil's *Aeneid*, Rome is always tantalizingly out of reach. The Augustan cityscape his Roman readers could see being constructed before their eyes during the very years in which Vergil was composing his epic (the *nunc* of the narrative present of *Aeneid* 8) remains throughout an absent presence. For some readers, this vacuum is filled by Vergil's frequent allusions to contemporary Rome, especially in the speeches of Jupiter and Anchises in books 1 and 6 and in Vulcan's shield.[48] Others prefer to focus on the gap, on 'darkness visible' and on the fact that the Roman cityscape can never be fully realized in the Homeric *Aeneid* Vergil decided to write.[49]

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47 See Harrison (1997).

48 See for example Morwood (1991), for whom Augustus as builder of Rome is one of the poem's heroes.

49 For this approach to the *Aeneid* see Johnson (1976).

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