

## Echoes of Alexander

A mainstay of Vergilian scholarship has been the premise that much of his work comments on the contemporary Roman political situation and that the *Aeneid* in particular has been fertile ground for those seeking the views of 1<sup>st</sup> century Romans on the Augustan regime. Although there are many passages in the *Aeneid* that allude to Augustus, three specific passages give brief summaries of Roman history which show the glorious nature of Aeneas' offspring. In Book One (Zeus' prophecy to Venus [1.257-296]), Book Six (the underworld [6.756-886]) and also Book Eight (the shield of Aeneas [8.626-728]) Vergil lays out a plan of world conquest and the rebirth of the Golden Age that will be brought about by Aeneas' distant descendant, Augustus. This is interesting in itself and gives rise to questions about the nature of the work as a whole and the role of propaganda in Vergil's thought. Yet I am more interested in the absence of any direct mention of the one mortal who did lay claim to the title of world conqueror—Alexander the Great. Alexander was certainly on the minds of contemporary Romans, as Julius Caesar, Pompey, and Antony all welcomed direct comparisons, but he does not appear in Vergil's work. A close reading of the *Aeneid*, however, reveals allusions to Alexander; this paper explores the subtle placement of references to his exploits which suggest that Vergil uses the mystique of Alexander to promote a view of Augustus' success as the great achievement of humanity.