

False Foundations: Looking For Rome in Virgil's *Aeneid*

The proem to Virgil's *Aeneid* famously ends with the promise of Rome itself (*altae moenia Romae*, 1.7), though the poem ends hundreds of years before the city's foundation. Instead, the poem offers two glimpses of the Rome-to-come in Book 8, both during Evander's tour of the future site of Rome in Pallanteum (8.337-358) and the ekphrasis of Aeneas' shield (8.626-728). However, before he even reaches Latium, Aeneas tries and fails several times to found the fated city. The themes of foundation and colonization in the *Aeneid*, especially Book 3, have been well-documented (Horsfall 1989; Fletcher 2014; Barchiesi 2017).

This paper argues that the failed foundations during Aeneas' journey from Troy to Latium, namely in Thrace, Crete, Buthrotum, and Carthage, represent a progression from old to new and Trojan to Roman. So too does the scale of Aeneas' various cities increase. For example, in Buthrotum Aeneas finds a miniature version of Troy so small that he is able to embrace the replica of the Scaean gate (3.349-351), while in Carthage he stands in awe of the size (and Roman-ness) of the city being constructed (1.419-436).

As colonist and founder, Aeneas travels across the Mediterranean repeatedly staking his claim on various locales only to realize that they are not where he needs to be. As Barchiesi points out, the geopoetics of the *Aeneid* still acts as a historical "appropriation" of sites that's will one day be incorporated into Roman geography (Barchiesi 2017, 151). And so, while these rejected sites are not suited for the foundation of Rome, they each still contribute in valuable ways to the future geography of the Roman world while connecting it to a mythical Trojan past.

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