

The Cumaean Temple of Apollo Palatinus: Examining the Augustan Architecture and  
Propaganda of *Aeneid* 6.14-37

Three main ecphrases draw the most scholarly attention in Virgil's *Aeneid*. However, the Cumaean Temple of Apollo (6.14-34) is unique to the narrative of the poem in that it does not seem to directly relate to Aeneas and Rome's past or future. Therefore, Virgil's reader experiences the same disconnect that Aeneas witnesses (Leach, 1999). Early in the poem, Aeneas is wrought with emotions as he sees scenes from the Trojan War on the Carthaginian Temple of Juno (1.453-93) – a battle where he is so urgently needed but to which he cannot return (Barchiesi, 1997; Clay, 1988). Later, before impending war erupts, Aeneas's shield evokes response from Virgil's Roman audience as the nation's past is relived (8.625-731). Virgil has proven that every word he chooses and every image he portrays is carefully calculated. Thus, the Temple of Apollo in Book 6 cannot simply be dismissed as unrelated to the happenings of Aeneas because he cannot comprehend its importance (Fowler, 2000). For example,

Structures such as the Palatine temple of Apollo and art objects such as the Augustus of Prima Porta acted as bearers of messages that reflected the highly visual aspects of Augustan society. Virgil's use of vision, therefore, ultimately signals a communication shift that the social climate of Augustan Rome had already begun to embrace (Smith, 2005).

Since ecphrasis is written, the power of rhetoric is united with the power of images. In addition, Virgil's Roman audience under Augustus likely held its mythical and historical past in the Augustan architecture of the city.

Analyzing architectural and artistic commentary in Virgil's text, this paper will demonstrate that the Cumaean Temple of Apollo is part of the Augustan program of the poem. Aeneas's landfall at Cumae would have reminded the audience of Augustus's naval success in the region, and the temple itself recalled the construction of the Temple of Apollo Palatinus, which celebrated his prior victories over Sextus Pompey and Antony (Hekster and Rich, 2006; Rea, 2007). Ultimately, the Cumaean Temple of Apollo is the Temple of Apollo Palatinus. Virgil's ekphrasis provides a deeper understanding of the Temple of Apollo Palatinus and offers a better means to reconstruct the ruins of Augustus's most intimate architectural offering to his patron deity.

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