THE SURVIVAL AND SUPREMACY OF ROME: THE UNITY OF THE SHIELD OF AENEAS*

By S. J. HARRISON

What is the most plausible connection which can be constructed between the various scenes from Roman history selected for depiction on the Shield of Aeneas, described in *Aeneid* 8.626–728? This question has found a variety of answers since Warde Fowler raised it in 1918,[1] but none is entirely satisfactory. The order of presentation of the individual scenes is evidently chronological, from the beginnings of Rome to the poet's own day, but the poet's own explicit programme, that the Shield contains *res Italas Romanorumque triumphos* (626), is very general, and could apply equally well to the Show of Heroes in *Aeneid* 6. The reader feels that a more specific criterion of selection is in operation — why *these* particular pieces of Roman military history?

The most significant modern proposals for such a criterion are reviewed by West in an important article.[2] For instance, Drew's argument[3] that the scenes represent the four imperial virtues of *virtus, clementia, iustitia,* and *pietas* ascribed to Augustus on the golden shield presented to him by the Senate in 27 B.C. (*Res Gestae* 34.2, *CIL* VI.876), a stone copy of which survives at Arles,[4] laudably makes the connection with a real, contemporary, and ideologically significant shield, but (as West points out) it is too schematic and does not account for all the details (how are the she-wolf and the rape of the Sabines to be accommodated under those labels?). West's own answer, that the scenes chosen are those particularly suited to depiction in plastic art, has many attractions, but it is difficult to see it as the sole criterion for selection: this is too important an ideological moment in the *Aeneid* for such a purely aesthetic explanation. The purpose of this article is to argue for a coherent pattern which holds all the elements of the Shield together and which accounts for all the details which other thematic explanations have found recalcitrant or embarassing.

As so often in Vergilian studies over the last two millennia, small advances may be made through building modern extensions onto the older edifices of others. The unifying principle of selection for the scenes on the Shield is in my view very close to the one suggested by Warde Fowler: 'we have a long list, not so much of triumphs, as of escapes from terrible perils both moral and material'.[5] The nature of these escapes may, however, be further refined and specified beyond Warde Fowler's acute but largely undeveloped insight; he spends only a page in detecting an escape for Rome in every image on the Shield, other than the problematic 652–66 (on which see 5 below). This article argues that in every instance the escape can in fact be seen as a material escape of the city-state of Rome itself from destruction or from demotion from its Italian and (later) Mediterranean hegemony. This stress on the survival and continued supremacy of the immutable sacred city of Rome fits well the context of the Shield in the *Aeneid*. Most of Book 8 takes place on the site of Rome itself; though the Shield is in fact given to Aeneas not at Rome but in a shady valley near Caere (8.597ff.), it is given to him for use in the coming war in Italy in which Rome's whole existence is at stake, and in which Aeneas will be victorious and ensure the glorious future of the city and its *imperium*.[6] The Shield represents the hard-fought but continued military success of Rome, as the

* I am most grateful to the Editorial Committee for its helpful comments and suggestions.

[1] W. Warde Fowler, *Aeneas at the Site of Rome* (1918), 103–5.

[2] David West, '*Cernere erat*: the Shield of Aeneas', *PVS* 15 (1975–6), 1–7, reprinted in S. J. Harrison (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Vergil's Aeneid* (1990), 295–304.

[3] D. L. Drew, *The Allegory of the Aeneid* (1927), 26–31.

[4] Conveniently illustrated in P. Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (1988), 95, fig.79.

[5] loc. cit. (n. 1).

[6] It is notable that this shield is later brandished by Aeneas as a token of forthcoming victory, and that it depicts Augustus victorious and *stans celsa in puppi* (8.680), the same phrase used of Aeneas as he brandishes it (10.261): for this parallelism see conveniently S. J. Harrison's commentary (1991) on *Aeneid* 10.242–3 and 10.261–2.

poet's own programme indicates, but represents it from the particular angle of the preservation of the city and/or its local or international supremacy in moments of acute danger. In what follows, much reference will be made to the early books of Livy, a useful point of comparison which helps to confirm that the historical events chosen for the Shield were perceived by contemporaries as crucial moments of escape: like Woodman, I believe that it is possible to assume that Livy's first pentad was available for the writing of *Aeneid* 8.[7]

With this thematic key in mind, we can now consider the scenes of the Shield in the order in which the poem presents them.

1. The She-wolf and the Twins (630–4)

This is clearly relevant to the survival of the city of Rome, and represents an escape from the greatest danger of all: had the exposed Romulus and Remus suffered the intended infanticide and not been found and suckled by the she-wolf, Rome would never have been founded in the first place. Characteristically, Livy presents this as a divine intervention ensuring Rome's future destiny as the greatest of imperial cities (1.4.1): 'sed debebatur, ut opinor, fatis tantae origo urbis maximique secundum deorum opes imperii principium'.

2. The Rape of the Sabines (635–41)

Once again, the survival theme is uppermost. In the traditional version of the foundation of Rome as related by Livy, the motley and disreputable male population gathered through Romulus' asylum policy (Livy 1.8.5–6) was understandably refused the right of *conubium* by the Sabines and other neighbouring nations. Drastic action was deemed necessary for the continuation of Rome and its people, which as Livy notes would otherwise have lasted only a single generation (1.9.1): 'sed peniuria mulierum hominis aetatem duratura magnitudo erat'.

3. Mettus Fufetius (642–5)

West argues against Warde Fowler that the threat posed by Mettus to the fledgling Rome was not a serious one, but this can be questioned through a reading of Livy (who calls this character Mettius). There the Alban Mettius' action in ignoring his treaty with Rome and withholding his troops from the crucial battle with Fidenae and Veii (Livy 1.27.5ff.) is more than a minor act of treachery; Mettius' withdrawn help would have reduced the risk of defeat very considerably in the toughest battle of Rome's short history: 'non alia ante Romana pugna atrocior fuit' (1.27.11). In fact, the whole context of Mettius' action in Livy is the struggle for local hegemony between Rome and Alba Longa; after winning the battle from which Mettius abstained, the Roman king Tullus Hostilius specifically states that his object is now to merge Alba with Rome (1.28.7), and Alba is levelled to the ground except for its temples, the effective removal of a real rival (Livy 1.29.6). There is little doubt that Alba would have done much the same to Rome had the struggle gone the other way; this is surely Mettius' main motivation for abstention, hoping that Rome would be humbled by Fidenae and Veii and that Alba could then assume a dominant position. Hence the seriousness of Mettius' treacherous absence from battle and his fundamental connection with the survival of early Rome as a leading city of Italy. Hence too the exemplary nature of his punishment: as with Catiline (see 6 below) and Cleopatra (see 7 below), those individuals who rashly threaten Rome's existence and status will be summarily destroyed.

[7] A. J. Woodman, 'Virgil the historian: *Aeneid* 8.626–62 and Livy', in J. Diggle, J. B. Hall, and H. D. Jocelyn (eds), *Studies in Latin Literature and its Tradition in Honour of C. O. Brink*, Cambridge Philological Society supplementary volume 15 (1989), 132–45.

4. Porsenna and the Attempted Return of the Tarquins (646–51)

Undoubtedly the most serious danger to the early Roman republic: here the danger is one of foreign domination by the Etruscan Porsenna and the non-Roman Tarquins, of Greek origin and incomers from Etruscan Tarquinii in Livy's presentation (1.34.1–2). The survival of the new Roman state in the city of Rome is clearly at risk: no doubt a restored Tarquin dynasty at Rome would have meant a Rome subject to Etruscan domination, losing its new-won independence and continuing status as a leading city of Central Italy.[8]

5. The Crisis of the 390s B.C. (652–66)

This is the most difficult section of the Shield to accommodate to any detailed scheme. But there is no doubt in general terms that this is a crucial period for Rome's survival and supremacy, especially in Livy's narrative in Book 5, and a time dominated in Livy and other sources by a single figure — Camillus. Final victory in the long and crucial war against Veii and its removal as a hegemonic rival through its capture by Camillus in 396 B.C. is succeeded by the Gallic sack of Rome in 390 and the defeat of the Gauls, again by Camillus. This is followed by the real possibility that the population of Rome might migrate to Veii following their city's physical destruction, a possibility rejected owing to Camillus' strong leadership. Thus, as Livy presents it, Camillus rescues Rome twice, firstly from the Gauls and disgrace by preventing the handing over of the gold ransom for the city and defeating the invaders (5.49.1ff.), and secondly from the possibility of moving the Roman capital to Veii (5.49.8: 'servatam deinde bello patriam iterum in pace haud dubie servavit cum prohibuit migrari Veios'). This last achievement was particularly remembered in the Augustan age, to judge by the remains of Camillus' *elogium* from the Forum Augustum: 'Veios post urbem captam commigrari passus non est' (*Insc. Ital.* 13.3, p. 38, no. 61). As we shall see, all the details included by Vergil are centred around the Gallic sack and Camillus' double rescue of Rome, clearly moments of crucial danger for the city.

Vergil deals first in 653–62 with the famous episode of Manlius' repulse of the Gauls from the Capitol, which precedes Camillus' double rescue of Rome (Livy 5.47). This scene also fits naturally into the pattern of acute danger and survival, since had Manlius not held out the unthinkable for Romans would have occurred — that every part of the sacred city of Rome, including its oldest and greatest temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitol,would have fallen into enemy hands.[9] Rome might never have continued after such a total capture. In Livy's account, the resistance of Manlius is fundamental to Rome's surviving the Gallic sack, since it is because the Romans hold out and prolong the fighting that the Gauls, suffering from hunger and disease, agree to abandon the siege of the Capitol on payment of the gold ransom (5.48.7–8). Once again the episode is chosen as an instance of the city and state of Rome surviving extreme danger, indeed danger to its physical and ideological centre, the Capitol.

Then follows the problematic passage 663–6, which depicts the dancing of the Salii and Luperci, and the parade of matrons in their carriages. This is the rock on which some previous interpretations have foundered, since these scenes on the surface look timeless, in contrast with the very specific historical references which precede them: Warde Fowler himself refers to this passage as 'an awkward interruption about religious matters', and plainly regards it as inconsistent with his scheme. However, there is a specific historical context here — still that of danger to Rome in the 390s. Soon after the fall of Veii in 396, there had been (according to Livy) popular agitation for resettling the newly-captured rich city with half the population of Rome (5.24.5); after the Gallic sack

[8] For Rome's position in Italy in this period see T. J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome* (1995), 208–14.

[9] There was indeed a tradition in which the Capitol too was said to have been captured, quite possibly recording historical reality, naturally obscured by Roman historians: cf. O. Skutsch, *The Annals of Quintus Ennius* (1985), 408.

of 390, with Rome in ruins, the migration movement became more powerful (5.24.7, 5.49.8ff.). Indeed, migration is averted (accordingly to Livy) only by the insistence of Camillus in a great speech (5.51–4) urging that Rome was the only possible location for its people, and in particular that its site was hallowed by centuries of religious practice (cf. esp.5.52.2: 'urbem auspicato inauguratoque conditam habemus; nullus locus in ea non religionum deorumque est plenus; sacrificiis sollemnibus non dies magis stati quam loca sunt in quibus fiant'). His speech finishes with a flourish which makes the point forcibly and dramatically: 'hic Vestae ignes, hic ancilia caelo demissa, hic omnes propitii manentibus vobis di' (5.54.7).

Here surely is the context for the dancing of the Salii and Luperci in Vergil: it alludes to the fact that Camillus succeeded in the object of his speech, and that Rome remained on its sacred site, with which these two religious groups were fundamentally associated. The *ancilia* or sacred shields of the Salii, tokens of divine protection traditionally modelled on a bronze original supposed to have dropped from heaven at Rome (Plutarch, *Numa* 13), are specifically mentioned twice by Livy's Camillus in his great speech as a motivation for retaining Rome on its traditional site (5.54.7 (above); 5.52.7), and this seems to lie behind Vergil's specific allusion in the Shield (664: 'lapsa ancilia caelo'). Both Salii and Luperci (though the latter and their rites do not occur at all in Camillus' speech) stand here as some of the oldest cults of Rome, with the closest of ideological and topographical links to the city which is not to be abandoned. Ideologically, both have connections with either the foundation or the supremacy of Rome: Ovid's *Fasti* in its treatment of the Lupercalia, the festival of the Luperci, connects its sacred site of the Lupercal closely with the discovery of Romulus and Remus by the she-wolf (2.381–424), looking back to the city's foundation,[10] and the same poem alludes to the *ancilia* of the Salii as *imperii pignora certa* (3.346), looking forward to Rome's imperial role. Topographically, both are linked with particular Roman locations: the Luperci and their festival were set up by Evander on the Palatine before the foundation of Rome according to Livy (1.5.1ff.), while the Salii were traditionally founded by Numa (1.20.4) and are associated with both Palatine and Quirinal.[11] In Vergil, the two cults seem to be depicted in celebratory mode; *exsultantis* at 663 seems to indicate both characteristic Salian leaping and the expression of joy. The joyous occasion is surely Rome's double deliverance under Camillus from the Gauls and from migration to Veii. Whether or not such a celebration actually took place (Livy mentions nothing of the kind), the symbolism is clear: the Salii and Luperci here indicate the reoccupation of the site of Rome in 390 and the renewing under Camillus' leadership of its ancient cults, whose temples had been destroyed by the Gauls — an aspect stressed in Livy's account (5.50.1ff.).

This leaves the depiction of the *matronae* with their carriages (665–6). Livy gives us the context for this in the events of 395, following the fall of Veii (5.25.4ff.). Camillus had vowed one-tenth of the booty from Veii to Apollo at the outset of the final phase of the war (5.21.2), and after Veii's fall this offering proved politically controversial (indeed, Camillus himself is represented as having to campaign heavily to ensure the vow's fulfilment by the state — 5.25.4). The *matronae* agreed to give their jewellery to the state to aid the offering (which was to be in the form of a gold *crater*), and were rewarded by the Senate with the privileges 'ut pilento ad sacra ludosque, carpentis festo profestoque uterentur' (5.25.9). Vergil at 8.665–6 clearly has the *matronae* in their *pilenta* and at a religious occasion, following Livy (*ducebant sacra* seems to refer to leading a religious procession, and Vergil's *sacra* may pick up Livy's); the allusion is evidently to the privilege granted in 395. But why is this put in after the events of 390? Clearly, the *matronae* too refer to Rome's deliverance by Camillus from the crisis of the 390s. The scene may also allude indirectly to another occasion of self-sacrifice by the *matronae* in 390 itself, when they again provided gold for the ransom which would have

[10] For further connections of the Lupercalia with Romulus and Remus see the interesting speculations of T. P. Wiseman, *Remus: A Roman Myth* (1995), 77–88.

[11] For the Luperci cf. G. Wissowa, *Die Religion und Kultus der Römer* (2nd edn, 1912), 559–61; for the Salii, idem, 555–9.

been paid to the Gauls had not Camillus intervened (5.50.7). Indeed, when Livy records Camillus' return to the matrons of their gold after his triumph in 389, it is not clear which of the two gifts of gold is being returned (6.4.2):[12] for Vergil, as for Livy, the gift of gold is symbolic of female patriotism at a crucial point, and linked closely to the achievements of Camillus in saving Rome in the 390s.

Indeed, the gift of jewellery in 395 can also be connected with Camillus' campaign against those urging the migration to Veii, and hence with the other saving of Rome. Those tribunes who opposed the fulfilling of Camillus' vow to Apollo were also the main advocates of the migration, and argued that Veii should be left free for colonists, not stripped of its wealth for the paying of Camillus' vows (5.25.11ff.) — hence Camillus' difficulty in getting the offering together, a difficulty solved by the matrons' self-sacrifice. Thus the matrons are clearly seen here as supporters of Camillus in maintaining Rome on its traditional site after the sack of Veii in 396, and as marking with the Salii and Luperci the achievement of this goal in 390.

Thus it is clear that 663–6 refer in various ways to the crisis of 390, but in particular to the fact that Rome in that year survived two dangers to its existence — the Gallic sack and removal to Veii, two dangers from which it was saved by Camillus, who serves as the unifying factor here.

6. Catiline and Cato (667–70)

The representation of the Underworld seems again to take us out of the sequence of history, but chronology is preserved, though three centuries are passed over without mention, largely because those centuries are given prominence in the Show of Heroes in *Aeneid* 6.[13] The two characters chosen to stand for virtue and vice in the world below clearly allude to a definite date and event, the Catilinarian conspiracy of 63 B.C., and in particular to the version of it found in Sallust's *Catiline*, which Vergil had surely read after its publication in the 40s.[14] In Sallust's presentation (50.3–53.1) of the great debate on the Nones of December concerning the fate of the captured conspirators, it is of course Cato who urges the hard line, and succeeds in persuading the Senate to vote for execution rather than life imprisonment. Thus the juxtaposition of Cato and Catiline is not just that of stereotypical moralist and sinner; Vergil specifically characterizes Cato as delivering judgement in the Underworld (670, *dantem iura*), just as he had in effect done in life in the great debate of the Nones in Sallust's version. It is also notable that Sallust's Caesar in the Nones debate denied the existence of the Underworld (*Cat.* 51.20), and was contradicted by Cato (52.13): the fact that the Vergilian Cato is placed in the Underworld which he argued for in Sallust is surely another pointed allusion to the *Catiline*.[15] And once again there is a clear allusion to the theme of Rome's survival and of danger to the city itself: Catiline and his associates were reported to have planned fires in the city and even to have threatened to burn Rome to the ground (Cicero, *Cat.* 3.10, 3.15, 3.25, 4.11, 4.13; Sallust, *Cat.* 27.2, 31.9–32.2, 43.2), and that threat is specifically alluded to in Cato's speech in Sallust (52.24, 52.36). Once again, Rome is saved from the danger of physical destruction, once again (in Vergil's presentation) by the virtue of a great man.

[12] The point is made by C. S. Kraus, *Livy: Ab Urbe Condita Book VI* (1994), 109.

[13] J. G. Griffith, 'The Shield of Aeneas', *PVS* 7 (1967–8), 54–65. The absence of Hannibal in a list of dangers to Rome on the Shield is indeed striking, but the Punic Wars are particularly well covered in the Show of Heroes (both Scipios, Regulus, and Fabius Maximus at *Aeneid* 6.842–6).

[14] Vergil's reading of Sallust here is suggested by R. Syme, *Sallust* (1964), 286 and Woodman, op. cit. (n. 7), 145 n. 61.

[15] I owe this last point to Dr Peta Fowler, and am most grateful to her for allowing me to include it here.

7. Actium and the Triumph of Augustus (671–728)

It is quite clear that Actium, described in lines 671–713, is a moment of extreme danger averted for Rome, at least in the Augustan version of the battle which is all we find in contemporary poets and later historians. Indeed, it was a genuinely crucial moment for the city of Rome itself: Augustan poets could talk rhetorically about Cleopatra's desire to destroy Rome in physical terms (Horace, *Odes* 1.37.6–8: 'dum Capitolio / regina dementis ruinas / funus et imperio pararet'), but the real danger of an Antonian victory in 31 was the supplanting of Rome by Alexandria as the Empire's capital and the Mediterranean world's greatest city. Such a move had already been rumoured according to Suetonius in the last months of Julius Caesar's dictatorship (*Div. Jul.* 79.3), but in 31, with Antony having spent much of the preceding decade based in Alexandria with Cleopatra, it was a more realistic prospect (Cassius Dio 50.4.1).[16] As in the days of Camillus, the removal of the seat of Roman *imperium* from the sacred city of Rome itself was at issue; and as in the days of Camillus, a hero of great *pietas* prevented the transfer — Augustus, reasserting at Actium the importance of Rome and Italy against Alexandria and the Orient.[17] Actium was the highest test of Rome's destiny as the world's greatest city, especially in Augustan discourse: in Propertius' poem on Actium, Romulus' foundation on the hallowed site is worth nothing unless Augustus wins the battle (4.6.43–4 (addressed to Augustus by Apollo): 'quam [*sc.* patriam] nisi defendes, murorum Romulus augur / ire Palatinas non bene vidit avis').

The depiction of Augustus' triple triumph of 29 B.C. naturally follows in Vergil (ll. 714–28), since Actium was of course one of the victories celebrated on that occasion. The reassertion of Rome's political centrality and the defeat of the Eastern adventure is marked by the stress on the city as the site of the triumph (714–15: 'at Caesar, triplici invectus Romana triumpho/moenia'); and like Camillus' re-establishment of Rome in 390, Augustus' return to the city in 29 is marked by the subsequent restoration and building of many temples (715–16; cf. *Res Gestae* 20.4).[18] The city's divinely-guaranteed supremacy is once again restored along with its shrines, and it is once again vindicated against external dangers by a great champion.[19] The temple of Actian Apollo, dedicated in 28, naturally appears (720) both as the centre-piece of this building programme and as the physical monumentalization of Actium. The external perils to Rome which Augustus has overcome are also marked in the dangerously exotic foreign tribes, 'quam variae linguis, habitu tam vestis et armis' (723), who line up to surrender to the great man — the final picture on the Shield. Most of the tribes included supported Antony's Eastern challenge to Rome's status at Actium: Nomads and North Africans, the Leleges and Carians, representing Asia Minor, wholly with Antony, and the peoples of the Euphrates and the Araxes all fit Plutarch's summary of Antony's forces.[20] The remainder represent other far-flung dangers quelled or ripe for quelling by Augustus' greatness: the Illyrian Morini were included in the triumph of 29 (Cassius Dio 51.21.6), while the Geloni, Rhine, and Dahae represent distant and hostile peoples on the borders of Roman rule, not conquered yet but seen as providing future perils and victories for Rome under Augustus' leadership, enabling it to extend its military supremacy to the global level.[21]

[16] cf. R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (1939), 305: 'When the Triumvir Antonius abode for long years in the East men might fear lest the city be dethroned from its pride of place, lest the capital of empire be transferred to other lands'.

[17] This is of course a classic example of the feature identified by Edward Saïd's *Orientalism* (1978).

[18] *Res Gestae* 20.4 states that this building programme was carried out in 28 rather than 29 B.C., but like the dedication of Palatine Apollo in 28 it was all surely part of Augustus' self-presentation on his return to Rome; in his account of the triumph, Vergil sees this and in effect collapses the events of the two years together.

[19] For the parallel between Camillus and Augustus cf. Kraus, op. cit. (n. 12), 345; one might also add that both celebrated triple triumphs (cf. Livy 6.7.4, *triplicem triumphum*; *Aeneid* 8.714, *triplici . . . triumpho*).

[20] Plutarch, *Antony* 61.2–6, mentioning North Africa, many cities of Asia Minor, the Euphrates, and Armenia (the country of the Araxes).

[21] For the Geloni cf. Horace, *Odes* 2.9.23 with the commentary of Nisbet and Hubbard (1978); for the Rhine and Germany cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 1.509, Horace, *Odes* 4.5.26; for the Dahae and the region of the Caspian cf. *Aeneid* 6.798.

The final scenes on the Shield thus present the most recent and glorious example of its central theme and principle of selection: the survival of major dangers to the city of Rome and its hegemonic role, a survival accomplished through Rome's divine destiny and the virtue of its citizens. The case made here is intended to complement the two best modern accounts of the Shield — West's well-argued view that its scenes reflect the demands of plastic art, and Hardie's rich interpretation of it as a cosmological icon.[22] But it is presented as the primary answer to the initial question, as a plausible candidate for the principle of selection and shared thematic content in these vignettes from the history of Rome.

Corpus Christi College, Oxford

[22] West, op. cit. (n. 2); Philip Hardie, *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium* (1986), 336–76.