

This paper asks what assumptions we make when we map Rome's mythic landscape, what sources we accept in drawing this map, and how the map influences subsequent scholarship. The paper focuses on three particular mytho-topographic points: the cave of Cacus, the burial grounds of Remus, and the tomb of Titus Tatius. Scholarly consensus has placed all three sites on the Aventine hill (*cf. LTUR*), and the Aventine has thus become a sepulcher for the outsider and the vanquished of nascent Rome—in short, a cemetery for un-Roman losers. The location of the three mythic sites has been further used to demonstrate a stark Palatine/Aventine dichotomy both tracked in our ancient literary sources and mapped onto the Roman cultural mindset more generally. The current academic topography of early Rome's hills and valleys has, in turn, become a geographical articulation of the political and ideological divide between patrician and plebeian (Merlin, *L'Aventin*; Wiseman, *Remus*; Carandini *Remo e Romolo*). By returning to the ancient literary sources and by considering the physical geography of the ancient city, this paper argues that none of the three mythic sites was, in fact, firmly located on the Aventine.

The cave of Cacus was an integral part of the Palatine hill. The Augustan poets' relocation of Cacus to the Aventine has little to do with patrician/plebeian political and social ideology, much less the Conflict of the Orders: readings which are unnecessarily anachronistic for the Principate. The concentration of Hercules' cultic activity in the Forum Boarium grounded the hero in the valley between the Palatine and Aventine (Coarelli, *FB*). In the purification of the Augustan Palatine, the reality of Rome's physical geography – not late-Republican conceptual ideology – pushed Cacus over to the Aventine. Nor was his relocation ever fully completed. Vergil's description of the region (*Aen.* 8.190 *ff*), though vivid and evocative, remains confused and disorienting, almost irreconcilable with the actual, physical landscape. The very real and persistent presence of the *Scalae Caci* – running from the peak of the Palatine (the site of Romulus' hut) to the Forum Boarium below – further prevented Cacus' total displacement from the Palatine hill.

Only one ancient source conflates Remus' *templum augurale*, proposed city-site, and burial spot by equating all three with the Saxum of the Aventine (Plutarch, *Rom* 9.4). The debate as to where Romulus and Remus took their auspices was solved nearly half a century ago, when Otto Skutsch demonstrated that both twins were in fact located on the Aventine (Skutsch, *CQ* 1961). Only with the redrawing of contour lines and redefinition of hills was Romulus repositioned on the Palatine. The motivation was geographic clarity, not strict ideology. This paper briefly considers the role of the Aventine in the twins' augural contest, with particular reference to the recent arguments of Wiseman and Carandini, but focuses primarily on the clear distinction between the Aventine hill and Remus' burial at the Remoria.

Finally, the paper considers the death and burial of Remus' successor and Romulus' co-ruler. The assimilation of Titus Tatius' sepulcher with the Loretum, a laurel stand on the Aventine, is the product of confused and false etymologizing attested in very few authors.

Rome's mythological topography does not identify the Aventine with Rome's outsiders. The Aventine's association with both mythic losers and legendary plebeians proves to be the creation of modern scholarship. Geographical determinism defines the mythic landscape; and though this argument is unglamorous and practical, it is better grounded in the reality of Rome's landscape – both physical and conceptual – than sensationalizing and ideologically-motivated interpretations.