

It has been recognized since the time of Servius that learned etymological glosses populate the *Aeneid*. These glosses are primarily confined to the Latin and Greek languages, but a handful on Punic, Gallic, and the Sabellic dialects can also be found.

I begin by reviewing two Sabellic glosses in *Aeneid* 7 that were noted already by Servius and have been brought to light again more recently by Bartelink (1965) and O'Hara (1999). At 7.517, in the phrase *sulpurea Nar albus aqua*, the adjective *sulpurea*, modifying *aqua*, translates the name of the river *Nar*, which Servius informs us is the Oscan word for sulphur. Some 150 lines later, we see a similar mechanism at work in the phrase *Hernica saxa* (7.684): here *saxa* explains the adjectival toponym *Hernica*, which is derived from Osc. *herna* 'rock'. I then present several more as-yet-unnoticed etymological glosses on Oscan and Umbrian, all of which occur in *Aeneid* 7.

The second half of this paper focuses on the function of such Sabellic glosses in the *Aeneid*—an issue that seems not to have been previously addressed. It is remarkable and undoubtedly of great significance that all of these Sabellic etymological plays are to be found in the book that opens the second 'Iliadic' half of the epic, set on Italian soil. Moreover, they are concentrated in passages where the Sabine history of Italy is openly discussed (e.g. 7.707-9), particularly in the so-called Catalogue of Italian Heroes (7.641-817). Etymologizing on Sabellic should, I argue, be understood as another manifestation of Virgil's propensity for becoming "more Roman" (Horsfall 2000: 354) the closer he gets to Italy, and as forming the core of his program of localization. Far from simply heralding the erudition of the poet, or providing auditory and intellectual pleasure for the reader, the concentration of Sabellic etymological plays in *Aeneid* 7, and moreover in crucial portions of the book, serves to ground the text of this part of the narrative in the soil of Italy—soil that is to provide the stage for the events of the following five books, and is destined to become the home of the Roman race.