Commentary

1–17 Turnus raises the standard of battle from the Laurentine citadel, and at once the assembly is incited to martial frenzy and anger in the face of the alleged Trojan invasion of Latium. Venulus is sent as an emissary to Diomedes in the south of Italy, so that the great Argive hero may learn of Aeneas' arrival, and of the state of affairs in Latinus' kingdom—and, not least, in the hope that he might send aid to the Latins in their military struggle against the Trojans. "Das Kriegsignal des Turnus" (Binder 1971, 7). On the exceptional structure (two long periods: 1–8 and 9–17), see Eden ad loc. On the place of the opening of Book 8 in the overall chronology of the epic see Mandra 1934, 167: "Third period of undetermined duration: 7.623–8.25," Crump 1920, 98 takes 7.467–8.93 as the third day of a twenty-one day war; cf. Mandra 1930, 167 ff. "The action of Book Eight takes place essentially in the space of three nights and three days" (Anderson 1969, 70). With the opening of this book we may compare Apollonius Rhodius, Arg. 4.212–240, of the awareness of Aeetes and his people of what Medea had done in support of Jason and his Argonauts; cf. Arg. 3.576–608 (see further here Nelis 2001, 327 ff.; especially 327–328 on how Virgil has transformed Apollonius' description of Medea's passion into a reflection on Turnus' amor ferri). "Praeparat octavo, bellum quos mittat in hostem" (Schol. cuiusdam poetae argumenta Aeneid. sub nomine Ovidii).

1 Vt belli signum Laurenti Turnus ab arce

Vt: The commencement of a remarkable tricolon of battle preparations, as we move from the standard of war to the rousing of horses to the clashing of arms (1 Vt ... 3 utque ... utque)—a theatrically dramatic progression and blending of visual and auditory harbingers of battle. On anaphora and effects of this sort see B. Wohl, "The Phenomenon of Sperrung in Tibullus' Elegies," in TAPA 104 (1974), 385–428, 421. "Virgil's chief contribution to the development of the Latin hexameter lay in his gradual abandoning of the single line as the unit of composition in favour of a paragraphic or periodic style in which the sense flows through a number of lines" (Gransden 1976, 45). On the "tripartite" opening of the book see Smith 2011, 131: "While the repetition of such threefold patterns serves as a structural device to unify a diverse book, the thematic significance of Virgil's repetition of triplets emerges only at the book's close."

belli signum: Cf. Silius, Pun. 11.131–132 Virrius admiscens cecinit fatale cruenti / turbatis signum belli; Tacitus, Hist. 4.58.28 signum belli Batavus dabit. This belli signum follows on 7.637 classica iamque sonant, it bello tessera signum, which comes in the wake of Juno's dramatic opening of the Belli Portae. A signum
is properly the standard or banner of a military unit; it can refer to a sign or signal, a password or watchword that is given to a body of soldiers. A parallel image to the present passage is the call to war at 11.474–475... *bello dat signum rauca cruentum / bucina*. Very different is the *signum* associated with war at 8.534–535 below; cf. also 683–684. *Signum pugnae* is Caesarian (*BC* 3.90.3.2); Nepotian (*Han*. 11.1.3); Livian (e.g., 1.23.9.1–2; 3.60.8.7; 7.32.6.1; 23.16.5.1); Tacitean (*Hist* 2.25.6; *Ann*. 2.15.1–2); cf. Silius, *Pun*. 9.32.

“A red flag (*vexillum*) was hoisted on the Capitol at Rome to call the burghers to arms in case of any sudden attack, and also used in the field as a signal for battle together with the sounding of the trumpets” (Page). “Turnus has now taken command in Latinus’ own citadel” (Fordyce). “War is his preferred world and spatial setting, and he is eager to be at its centre.” (G. Hutchinson, “Space in the *Aeneid*,” in Günther 2015, 253). “Nothing can be more spirited than this commencement of the eighth Book; this hoisting of the signal of war from the top of the citadel of Laurentum ... all the more striking when taken in contrast with the sweet, soft, and tender peacefulness of the commencement of the preceding Book. How masterly the hand which drew two pendants so different ...” (Henry).

*Laurenti Turnus*: The opening verse of the book powerfully juxtaposes the names of Laurentum and Turnus (who is implicitly presented as the defender of Laurentum in the face of Trojan invasion); images of war and military conflict (*ut belli signum; ab arce*) provide the frame.

*Laurenti*: The adjective (with *arce*) recalls 7.61–63 ... *primas cum conderet arces, / ipse ferebatur Phoebi sacrasse Latinus, / Laurentisque ab ea nomen posuisse colonis*; cf. 7.650, where Turnus is *Laurens*. For “Laurentine” see N. Horsfall, “Laurentes,” in *EV III*, 141–144; L. Fratantuono, “Laurentes and Laurentum,” in *VE II*, 734–735. The inherent allusion in the adjective is to the portentous laurel at Latinus’ palace on his citadel; *Laurens* offers a potent geographical rival to Troy (cf. 12.136–137 *prospicientes tumulo campum aspectabat et ambas / Laurentum Troumque acies urbesque Latini*, of Juno gazing at the opposed battle lines). “Laurentum is one of the more ancient Italic settlements in Latium ... It lay in the *ager Laurens*, near the west coast of Italy between the Tiber and the Numicus ... Morphologically, Laurentum is transparently the thematicization of the –nt- stem *Laurent- ... Laurens* ... serves as the local adjective to *Laurentum* and is thus virtually synonymous with *Laurentinus* ... as in: Ut belli signum ...” ... “As an –nt- stem, *Laurens* shows both i-stem and consonant stem inflection ...” (A.J. Nussbaum, “Ennian Laurentis Terra,” in *HSCP* 77 (1973), 207–215, 209). Sabbadini argues that it could be genitive of *Laurentum*, citing 1.1; certainly the rhythm parallels the description of Aeneas’ departure from the shores of Troy at the commencement of the epic. Asia and the race of Priam are men-