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## Epic Illustrations: Vergil's Aeneid in the *Vergilius Vaticanus*

### **Abstract**

Words illuminate an idea, image, form for us. They captivately entice us and alluringly attract us to listen more, read more, and immerse ourselves more. With the invention of modern technology and innovations, words represent the simplest, purest means of expressing an image. We can formulate an idea in our mind as to the scene that the words are describing or the figures they are portraying. Scholars of ancient literature, just like modern readers, sought to bring together the worlds of literature and art by pairing word and image. A manuscript offers a wonderful medium for exploration of the word-image relationship because we find ourselves viewing the two forms of expression – literature and art – facing each other and evolving together. The manuscript tradition is neither stagnant nor isolated; it develops and evolves along with the historical conditions that surround it. So, while the material may stay the same, its artistic interpretation differs.

### **Disciplines**

Classics

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2005-2006 Penn Humanities Forum on *Word & Image*, Undergraduate Mellon Research Fellows.

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Epic Illustrations: Vergil's *Aeneid* in the  
*Vergilius Vaticanus*

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# Introduction

Words illuminate an idea, image, form for us. They captivatingly entice us and alluringly attract us to listen more, read more, and immerse ourselves more. With the invention of modern technology and innovations, words represent the simplest, purest means of expressing an image. We can formulate an idea in our mind as to the scene that the words are describing or the figures they are portraying. Scholars of ancient literature, just like modern readers, sought to bring together the worlds of literature and art by pairing word and image. A manuscript offers a wonderful medium for exploration of the word-image relationship because we find ourselves viewing the two forms of expression – literature and art – facing each other and evolving together. The manuscript tradition is neither stagnant nor isolated; it develops and evolves along with the historical conditions that surround it. So, while the material may stay the same, its artistic interpretation differs.

We are confronted with the relationship between word and image in the *Vergilius Vaticanus* manuscript of c. 400 CE, depicting the three major works of Vergil: the *Ecolgues*, *Georgics* and *Aeneid*. His *Aeneid*, the most acclaimed of his works, became an exemplar for Roman literary artistry. The *Aeneid* also made a celebrated figure out of Vergil – a man who catapulted Roman epic excellence to the highest level. With his words, Vergil enlivens the *Aeneid* with poetry that conjures up images in our minds of people, places and emotions. Aeneas escapes the burning city of Troy and wanders the seas with his Trojan comrades until they reach their resting place of Italy. The narrative is heated by themes of love, loss and war. A long line of epic poets precede Vergil; they have used the Trojan War as an inspiration and catalyst for their poetry. Homer stands out

as the most well-known great poet, composing the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Both works deal with the catastrophic effects of war; Homer humanizes war to expose the tragedy and personal suffering that follow the participants in the Trojan War.

The Romans, transforming the literary tradition from the Greeks, take particular interest in the Trojan War and the subsequent wanderings of Aeneas. The mythological tradition of the Romans claims that the Romans are descendents of Aeneas, who journeyed from Troy after the war to eventually settle on Italian soil; his offspring would ultimately establish Rome. Following his epic predecessors, Vergil reinvigorates the theme of the Trojan War with his epic poem. He weaves together his skillful rhetoric, the compelling tale, and his poetic mastery to create the most celebrated Roman epic. His literary legacy endures through the ages of antiquity and beyond. At the same time as the literary tradition of epic poetry was developing, the visual tradition was also growing and flourishing. We find independent examples of art in the sculptures, paintings and architecture that were seen throughout the classical world. But, we also find visual representations that complement literary works. Many of these reproductions surfaced on vases, wall paintings, medallions or bowls, but a common medium for production was the illuminated manuscripts. The juxtaposition of word and image in illuminated manuscripts allows the readers to follow the text while viewing its visual counterpart.

Manuscripts of classical literature have a history unto themselves. Not only do the manuscripts exhibit words and images of an ancient text, but they also reveal clues of its context. The cultural and historical context of the age of production drastically influences the work's themes, determining which manuscripts are produced as well as how they are created. In the Western paleographic tradition, the *Vergilius Vaticanus* holds a unique

position, being one of the oldest and most well-preserved manuscripts of classical literature; no books of equal quality or age survive in the history of the manuscripts.<sup>1</sup> The *Vergilius Vaticanus*, produced during the rise of Christianity and the deflation of the once expansive Roman Empire, continues the classical tradition into a new age of European history and literature. The fourth and fifth centuries can boast the survival of several biblical manuscripts, yet few lasting examples of classical literature. The *Vergilius Vaticanus* demonstrates earlier conventions while also advancing the evolution of the manuscript tradition. Steeped in classical themes and cultural mores, the *Vergilius Vaticanus* recalls the classical age, but it also epitomizes a new age of the reproduction of classical literature.

The images juxtaposed to text in the *Vergilius Vaticanus* cannot, nor do they wish to capture all the elements of the literature. Instead, the visual representations are drawing from their own tradition. The development of the manuscript tradition – both in word and in image – is a “birth process,” as Michael Weitzman notes.<sup>2</sup> The factors prior to its creation and the historical issues surrounding its growth, just like a living being, shape its form. In order to elucidate the development of the manuscript tradition, I posit a continuation of this metaphor: if the manuscript itself is a living being, then the artists and scribes that produce this codex are its parents, the history of the manuscript tradition its genes, and the historical context its childhood environment. Just like humans, manuscripts are not immune to influence or environment.

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<sup>1</sup> David H. Wright, *The Vatican Vergil: A Masterpiece of Late Antique Art*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) 1.

<sup>2</sup> Michael P. Weitzman, “The Evolution of Manuscript Tradition.” *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society: Series A (General)*, 150.4 (1987): 288.

The manuscript tradition of illumination constantly reconciles the demands of the text with the demands of the iconographic sources. Therefore, we find that the artists of the *Vergilius Vaticanus*, working over 400 years after the composition of the *Aeneid*, cannot remain true to the text set forth by Vergil. This paper seeks to look at a sampling of the surviving illustrations and analyze them for their attention to the Vergilian text as well as their dependence on iconographic models. By first analyzing the textual passages that accompany the illustrations and then examining the illustrations themselves, we can see the relationship of the written and the visual tradition. We will see from the sampling of illustration and text that the Vergilian text may not change, but the ways that it is interpreted and illuminated do. In this manuscript, just as in the manuscript tradition, we find the visual tradition has a history of its own, separate from the textual tradition.

# Chapter 1: Introduction to *Vergilius Romanus* and *Vergilius Vaticanus*

## Background

Few bodies of Roman poetry have received the acclaim that Vergil's works have found. Vergil's popularity continued past the fall of the Roman Empire and into the rise of Christianity, resulting in the production of two relatively well-preserved illuminated manuscripts. Around the same time period, in the fifth century CE, we have two Vergilian manuscripts that have survived relatively well-preserved. Though the *Vergilius Vaticanus* of about 400 CE is slightly older than the *Vergilius Romanus* of about 450 CE, they differ in their presentation. Despite their similarities in date of production, subject matter and medium, they seem to follow different iconographic models. The *Vergilius Romanus* echoes to the papyrus-style Latin scrolls.<sup>3</sup> The papyrus style evolved from the space available in the papyrus scroll. This style is characterized by columns of text mixed with blocks of illustrations on a single sheet of papyrus, which are later attached to form long rolls. The text tends to be organized in a pair of columns, and the illustrations tend to lack outer frames and background settings. The *Vergilius Vaticanus*, on the other hand, contains illustrations with distinct borders, attempts at landscape painting, and spatial perspective. Amongst many similarities in surroundings, two different styles of representation have developed.

In order to understand the evolution of the *Vergilius Vaticanus*, it is advantageous to look back at the evolution of the manuscript tradition from its conception. Prior to the

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<sup>3</sup> David H. Wright, "The Inheritance of the Papyrus Style of Illustration in Early Latin Literary Codices." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 50 (1996): 199.



development of the written tradition, the oral tradition flourished in ancient cultural history. The oral recitation of folklore and literature preceded written forms of expression, which can be traced as far back as the eighth century BCE with the writing of Homer's *Odyssey*. The rise in popularity of the written form created a new form of trade, the book trade. Instead of a rhapsode reciting verses to audience, the individuals in the audience, assuming their literacy, could possess the legends themselves in written form. The classical world cannot be credited with the invention of such illustrated rolls of literature. The models for book illumination emanate from the neighbors to the East. The Western book trade emerged in Greece in the middle of the fifth century BCE.<sup>4</sup> Books took the form of luxury items, to be bought and owned by the wealthy. The manuscript tradition progressed from its beginnings in the papyrus scroll of the Nile Delta to detailed manuscripts of Rome in the fifth century, where we find the *Vergilius Vaticanus*.

Greece and Rome benefited from the invention of the book and book illumination, but the origins of literary illustration in texts lay in the scriptoria of Alexandria, Egypt. The written Egyptian language of hieroglyphics offered a unique reading experience in which the words were inextricably linked with the visual impact they had. The study of Egyptian rolls could provide not only a model of illustrations for Greeks, but also an instructive tool for the production process.<sup>5</sup> The traditional Egyptian custom of aligning word and image in papyrus rolls inspired illustrated volumes of popular Greek authors.<sup>6</sup> A complex rapport between literature and art began to emerge as the book developed.

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<sup>4</sup> L.D. Reynolds, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968) 2.

<sup>5</sup> Kurt Weitzmann, "Narration in Early Christendom." *American Journal of Archaeology* 61.1 (Jan 1957): 83-84.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Stevenson, *Miniature Decoration in the Vatican Virgil: A Study in Late Antique Iconography*. (Tyubingen: Verlag E. Wasmuth, 1983) 17.

The archaic and high classical periods of Greece saw relatively few episodes of literature or mythology represented in art; the selectors seemed to favor the highly dramatic scenes, which they portrayed in individual compositions.<sup>7</sup> The organization and combination of self-contained portraits developed in architecture, where we find evidence of this innovation. Hellenistic artists arranged a series of representations, depicting a specific narrative of literature or heroic mythology, into a row of metopes or onto a frieze; the classical period featured a limited array of “cyclic narrative” of this sort.<sup>8</sup> One of the oldest pieces of evidence we have for this cyclic narrative is the Telphos frieze of the Altar of Pergamum. The Altar of Pergamum was constructed during the rule of the Attalid kings in the second and third centuries BCE, after the death of Alexander the Great. The Telphos frieze, which depicted the mythical son of Heracles and Auge, was installed along the inside walls and depicts episodes in the semi-divine Telphos’s life. The episodes in stone attempt to show landscapes and figural recession, much like painting. Therefore, we see the early evidence of continuous narrative in architecture that will later translate to bookmaking.

Greek artists of the Hellenistic period expanded the pictorial cyclic narrative to include landscapes, an innovation termed “continuous narrative.”<sup>9</sup> It is thought that these Hellenistic artists made illustrated editions of some of the popular literature of the time. However, few of these artifacts of literary illustration remain. A convincing piece of evidence though is the Megarian terra cotta bowls of the second century BCE, where we find literary text and accompanying images. Though these are on a different medium, the

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<sup>7</sup> Weitzmann, “Narration in Early Christendom” 83.

<sup>8</sup> Weitzmann, “Narration in Early Christendom” 83.

<sup>9</sup> Weitzmann, “Narration in Early Christendom” 83.

precedent for literary illustration with picture cycles is present. The additions of landscape details enhance the visual narratives, offering a complete picture. The unifying of literature and art stretches back into this time period in which Greek artists sought inspiration from literary models. The artists were not limited to a definite set of scenes to depict; in fact, the Early Hellenistic period, witness to the invention of continuous narrative, remodeled this narrative method of individual scenes. The artists instead illustrated a single episode, divided into a number of phases. With more illustrations characterizing an individual episode, the number of scenes depicted and the breadth of the picture cycles increased as they appeared in the papyrus roll. Thus, the “art of storytelling in pictures” infused the book with art and art with the book.<sup>10</sup>

The oldest surviving illustrated papyrus, however, dates back to the second century BCE and is now housed in the Louvre. This papyrus on the subject of astronomy features both information and diagrams of the constellations. Book illumination is thought to have originated in scientific treatises, like this papyrus, in order to enhance the readers’ comprehension of the principles laid out in the text. In its simplest form, book illustration featured diagrams, especially in mathematical treatises; this practice dated back to pre-Hellenistic times with Hippocrates of Chios’ geometrical treatise in the fifth century BCE.<sup>11</sup> Rather than providing the simplest illustration, the Louvre papyrus exceeds “diagrammatic necessity” by detailing the images with features of the Egyptian tradition; displaying a small figure of the Egyptian god Osiris in the constellation Orion as well as scarab as a symbol of the sun in a zodiac drawing, the Louvre papyrus embraces the example of Egyptian astronomical texts by copying these symbols. As Kurt

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<sup>10</sup> Weitzmann, “Narrative in Early Christendom” 83.

<sup>11</sup> Kurt Weitzmann, Ancient Book Illumination. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959) 5.

Weitzmann indicates, the Egyptian tradition of word and images plays an important role in the history of book illumination in Greece and Rome:

Here we can establish, on the basis of the pictures, a relation with the Egyptian tradition which one could not demonstrate by the text, and thus we learn that pictures can, at time, be independent supplementary evidence for the history of textual transmission. This is not the only instance of the dependence of Greek illustrators on Egyptian models, and iconographical details like these are a strong support for the thesis that Alexandria played an important role in Hellenistic book illustration.<sup>12</sup>

Not only did the Egyptian style of writing influence the modes of writing but also textual transmission itself, helping to direct the evolving literary and visual traditions of the classical age. Visuals, juxtaposed to descriptive scenes in narrative, enhanced the reading of literary manuscripts as well as scientific treatises. Kurt Weitzmann notes the tremendous impact that manuscript illumination had on the literary culture: “It is a visual aid by means of which a reader will be helped to remember certain details or whole situations described in words, and in many cases the pictures are responsible for an increased popularity of the text.”<sup>13</sup> Illustrations enhanced the reading experience by providing eye-catching and memorable images to supplement the text.

Papyrus, the material from which the scroll was made, originated in the delta of the Nile. With thin strips cut from the leathery pith of a reed that grew in the Nile delta as well as smaller centers in Babylon and Syria, two layers were pressed together to form sheets of papyrus, which was the standard writing material.<sup>14</sup> Pliny the Elder in *Naturalis Historia* gives a detailed account of the manufacture of papyrus as well as the different grades of quality, nine in total. Papyrus was not uniform, and the quality varied greatly.

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<sup>12</sup> Weitzmann, *Ancient Book Illumination* 6.

<sup>13</sup> Weitzmann, *Ancient Book Illumination* 1.

<sup>14</sup> Reynolds 3.

Pliny identifies the papyri in a hierarchical order, ranging from the best quality to the worst. The best papyrus, he says, comes from the middle of the plant, *principatus medio*, and he correlates the quality of each type to its origin on the plant itself. In order to explain the criteria he employs for scrutinization, Pliny says *praeteria spectantur in charities tenuitas, densitas, candor, levor* ('meanwhile, on the sheets the thinness, whiteness, and smoothness are inspected' XIII.78). Pliny occupies himself only with the quality of paper rather than the specific measurements; therefore, the height of the sheets of paper is debatable today, but the height measurements were presumably inconsequential to the grading process.<sup>15</sup> As Pliny demonstrates, sheets of papyrus were not identical in multiple measures of quality; they featured a healthy range of presentation, quality, and durability. It is therefore difficult, though scholars have previously argued the contrary, to classify papyrus as a categorically inferior material to its successors, namely parchment.

Papyrus did have its faults, however. The surface was slightly rough, which allowed it to absorb and hold ink well. Writing was typically done with a reed pen or calamus, with the reeds tattered at the edges to resemble small brushes.<sup>16</sup> The potential fragility of the same surface could cause the scrolls to deteriorate in quality – a deterioration which was further provoked by the constant rolling and unrolling of the material. Depending on the length of the literary work, the scroll could extend several meters. In order to reference certain, separate passages, a reader might have to roll or unroll the scroll many meters – whatever the distance that separated the passages. This

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<sup>15</sup> William A. Johnson. "Pliny the Elder and Standardized Roll Heights in the Manufacture of Papyrus" *Classical Philology* 88.1 (Jan. 1993): 49.

<sup>16</sup> Ronald Reed. *Ancient Skins, Parchments and Leathers*. (New York, Seminar Press, 1972) 3.

process is contrasted to the later parchment codex, where the *Vergilius Vaticanus* is written, which benefits from the flipping back and forth of pages rather than the rolling/unrolling process.

The scroll format, commonly used with papyrus writing material, had its own intricacies of production and usage. The length of rolls played a large part in how literary works were presented. Although the scroll could be extended indefinitely by means of the attachment of additional sheets of papyrus, scribes made concerted efforts to reduce the roll to a manageable length. Vergil's corpus – the *Eclogues*, *Georgics*, and the *Aeneid* – would not be composed in a single scroll. To reduce the length of the roll, which could accommodate a number of meters of text, scribes could separate the three different works and divide them by book.<sup>17</sup> The same convention of the scroll led to literary works like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* being divided into the book divisions that would constitute one roll each.<sup>18</sup> The oral tradition did not present formal chapters in the poetry, but the tales lent themselves to chapter divisions that survive today. This convention was not unique to the scroll form because the codex also employed arbitrary divisions to organize texts. The partitions of the scroll literally required more space, with the individual rolls occupying more space than a flat codex, and also required organization to keep the individual rolls together and in order.

Often, negotiating between rolls of text hindered the reproduction process. Accordingly, discrepancies in reproduction and quotations surfaced because of the difficulty scholars encountered in identifying and marking specific passages. As a consequence, other authors – the readers and interpreters of the texts – misquoted and

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<sup>17</sup> Wright, *The Vatican Vergil* 1.

<sup>18</sup> Reed 6.

misinterpreted the words, which spoiled authentic reproductions. Misinterpretations of the text caused an increase in the population of corrupted texts. Some scholars have argued that punctuation, accentuation and word-divisions were not included until the middle ages and therefore caused difficulty in reading, which would also explain the discrepancies in text.<sup>19</sup> This theory cannot be substantiated, however, because of the multitude of Roman inscription that plainly feature punctuation. The reasons for misinterpretation therefore come from another source.

Since there are both positive and negative qualities to the papyrus scroll, no distinct reason can be identified for the invention of the codex and its rise in popularity over the centuries. In fact, the codex seemed to materialize in the literary world much before it overtook the scroll in appreciation and with little attention or recognition. The first century CE marked this inauspicious beginning with the Roman poet Martial, who mentions a number of Saturnalia presents, which include five books in codex form. In Book I of his *Epigrams*, Martial identifies the format of his compositions:

qui tecum cupis esse meos ubicumque libellos  
et comites longae quaeris habere uiae,  
hos eme, quos artat breuibus membrana tabellis:  
scrinia da magnis, me manus una capit.  
ne tamen ignores ubi sim uenalis et erres  
urbe uagus tota, me duce certus eris:  
libertum docti Lucensis quaere Secundum  
limina post Pacis Palladiumque forum.

You who wish that my little books be with you everywhere  
And seek them as companions on a long passage,  
Buy these which parchment flattens with small sheets:  
Give your scrolls to great writers, one hand can grasp me.  
Lest you are ignorant nevertheless of where I am sold and lest you wander  
Directionless through the entire city, you will be sure with me guiding;  
Seek out Secundus, the freedman of learned Lucensis,

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<sup>19</sup> Reynolds 4.

Behind the threshold of the Temple of Peace and the Palladian Forum.

The justifications that Martial brings up in his opening poem for the use of the codex are recurring themes in the history of book illumination as well as the debate over the reasons that the parchment codex replaced the papyrus scroll. He mentions the travel convenience that the codex seems to have over the scroll – *meos ubicumque libellos/et comites longae quaeris habere viae* – as well as its storage ease: with the flattened sheets of parchment, the entire book can be held in one hand, rather than in multiple hands for multiple rolls, if necessary. Beyond the simple conveniences that Martial overtly identifies, the description of the book format carries an even greater significance, as Luke Roman notes:

[T]he metaphysical meaning we detected in 1.2, in which Martial describes the codex format of his own book, far from being an isolated instance, is a continuation of his already strong interest in the metaliterary possibilities of the physical book. Already in his earlier works Martial was using the radical denial of literary meaning as a means of producing literary meaning. The reduction of literary discourse to the mechanics of book-format paradoxically attests to the ineradicability of literary meaning where there exists literary expectation...on the one hand, [the codex format's] compact size and portability suggest light entertainment and the promotion of use-value over literary seriousness; at the same time, its interwoven, multilayered structure provides a rich metaphor for the dense interconnection of components in a literary discourse.<sup>20</sup>

Roman therefore recognizes the significance that Martial places on the physical aspects of the book to characterize the literary discourse in general. Martial's interest in the metaliterary potential of the physical book itself elevates the importance of the discussion of the history of book making and book trade in the Ancient World.

Further into Martial's writings, he continues to touch upon physical aspects of writing, specifically the writing materials involved. In Book XIV of his *Epigrams*, called

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<sup>20</sup> Luke Roman, "The Representation of Literary Materiality in Martial's 'Epigrams'" The Journal of Roman Studies, Vol. 91 (2001): 135.



the “*Apophoreta*,” Martial includes poetic couplets describing an important Roman festival, the Saturnalia, and also significant objects of everyday life. He refers to the different types of writing materials available as the daily objects of Roman life. First, he mentions the *pugillares citrei*, the tablets of citrus wood, which were highly regarded because of their inaccessibility:

Secta nisi in tenues essemus ligna tabellas,  
Essemus Libyci nobile dentis onus.

(If we were not divided into thin tablets,  
We would be the noble burden of the Libyan tusk.)

The citron wood grew on a certain type of cypress on Mount Atlas and rarely reached the size required to make a table-top; though the wood was presumably intended for table-tops, it was cut extravagantly into thin leaves.<sup>21</sup> Martial then refers to the *quinquiplices*, the five-fold tablets, which were presumably used often for political promotion because of the use of *altus honos*, yet few survive.<sup>22</sup> Unlike the previous writing material, which clearly referenced its own value, this epigram does not demonstrate the same expense, so the material was presumably economical. Martial moves on from the least expensive tablets to the most expensive of the writing materials, *pugillares eborei*, ivory tablets:

*Languida ne tristes obscurent lumina cerae  
nigra tibi niveum pingat ebur.*

(Lest the tablets obscure your tearful eyes,  
May the black letters stain for you the white ivory.)

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<sup>21</sup> Martial, *Martial Epigrammata Book XVI: The Apophoreta*. ed. T.J. Leary. (London: Duckworth, 1996) 59.

<sup>22</sup> Leary 59.  
Fergus Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World, 31BC – 337AD*. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992) 288.

This form of tablet does not appear to be as commonly used, adding to its value. The mention of *languida... lumina* recalls the importance of good eyesight in Rome. Because of the lack of optical spectacles in Rome, diminishing eyesight, the preservation of eyesight was highly valued and eyes became objects of praise and endearment.<sup>23</sup>

Along with the *triplices*, three-leaved tablets, and the *Vitelliani*, the Vitellian tablets, Martial also makes note of both materials that we have previously identified as significant in the history of book making – parchment and papyrus. He pairs the *pugillares membranei*, parchment, with a playful couplet:

*Esse puta cera, licet haec membrane vocetur;  
Delebis, quotiens scripta novare voles.*

Imagine that these are wax tablets, this material is called parchment;  
You will rub it out whenever you wish to change the writing.

Leary, in his commentary of the *Apophoreta*, identifies the juxtaposition of couplets based on value; items of higher value are placed next to items of lesser value in Martial XIV.3-6 and 10-11.<sup>24</sup> The position of this couplet indicates that its value was relatively high, presumably more costly than wax.

The papyrus, Martial identifies as *chartae maiores*, sheets of a larger type:

*Non est munera quod putes pusilla,  
Cum donat vacuas poeta chartas.*

There is not a reason why you should think that the gifts are petty  
When a poet gives you blank sheets.

Through his warning against regarding the poet's empty leaves of paper insignificant, Martial playfully implies that this material is cheap. Their true value comes from the

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<sup>23</sup> Leary 61.

<sup>24</sup> Leary 62.

scribbles on the page – the words of the poet.<sup>25</sup> This reference to papyrus predates the transition from papyrus scroll to parchment codex, and playfully pokes fun at the papyrus, obviously favoring parchment. Though Martial praised parchment and the codex format, the public did not embrace this innovation in publication. Mention of the codex vanished in Martial’s later writings, and it did not surface in the works of other classical authors. As Roberts puts it, the birth of the codex, in this instance “was still-born.”<sup>26</sup> It maintained the potential for future reproduction, yet at that time it was not ready to enter the literary world.

Unlike the Roman public, who shied away from the implementation of the codex for centuries, Christians embraced this form. Extending as far back as 100 CE, Christians preferred these book production methods, which ultimately led to the dominance of the codex in place of the roll in non-Christian literature as well.<sup>27</sup> Despite attempts to link the birth of the codex to the Four-Gospel Canon, scholars have not been able to establish a certain link. The codex offered numerous practical advantages. The efficiency of the material was an important factor; because the codex utilized both sides of the page, the number of pages needed was reduced dramatically and consequently the cost of materials decreased.<sup>28</sup> This also cut down on the space necessary. Since the front and back of each page could be used, the book would require fewer pages and therefore occupy less space on a bookshelf or in a travel case, as Martial had previously claimed. This compactness of the codex ties into a major advantage that Roberts terms its “comprehensiveness:”

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<sup>25</sup> Leary 64.

<sup>26</sup> Colin H. Roberts and T.C. Skeat, The Birth of the Codex. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) 29.

<sup>27</sup> Roberts 45.

<sup>28</sup> Roberts 46.

Comprehensiveness is here taken to mean the ability to bring together within two covers texts which had hitherto circulated separately. A comprehensive codex might consist of a single literary work extending over a number of rolls; a 'collected edition' or a representative selection of works by a single authors or on a single themes; or quite simply a miscellany.<sup>29</sup>

The comprehensiveness made the codex more complete than the roll in that the collection could include works based on the will of the editor instead of the limitations of the scroll. The codex could be structured and organized in its bound form rather than in separate rolls. The bound form could also facilitate the referencing of passages by allowing the reader to flip back and forth between passages, pages and books, which the scroll would not permit in the same way. Within this form, the text could also be paginated to aid the reading and analysis process.

The transition to parchment from papyrus marked a significant turning point in the history of book illumination and the rise of the codex. The excellence of parchment as a writing material is continually debated by scholars, with no consensus on the advantages of this material over papyrus. Although, Carl Roberts contends that parchment surpasses papyrus in quality, as "the finest writing material ever devised by man."<sup>30</sup> It is durable and flexible and age does not cause the parchment to deteriorate, and the vast surface area is still smooth and agreeable.<sup>31</sup> Adding to its appeal, parchment broadened the production area of writing material; with the production of papyrus being limited to Egypt, parchment could be made wherever the availability of sheep allowed. However, the availability of raw materials for parchment did not dramatically reduce its

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<sup>29</sup> Roberts 48.

<sup>30</sup> Roberts, *The Birth of the Codex*. 8.

<sup>31</sup> Roberts 8.

expense. In order to produce a single book, sometimes parchment required the slaughter of several hundred sheep, which only a wealthy individual could afford to do. The Codex Romanus of Vergil, in fact, demanded the skins of 205 sheep, using only the highest quality sheets.<sup>32</sup> The sheets of parchment also required a new writing tool – the split quill or feather instead of the reed brush that papyrus necessitated.<sup>33</sup>

The intricacies of preparation stifled the popularity of parchment. Although a relatively simple process, the subtle details involved took time to master. As R. Reed observes, the parchment process required artistry, coordination and skill in order to create an adequate piece of parchment:

Where the medieval parchment makers were greatly superior to their modern counterparts was in the control and modification of the ground substance in the pelt, before the latter was stretched and dried... The major point, however, which modern parchment manufacturers have not appreciated is what might be termed the integral or collective nature of the parchment process. The bases of many different effects need to be provided for *simultaneously*, in one and the same operation. The properties required in the final parchment must be catered for at the wet stage, for due to the peculiar nature of the parchment process, once the system has been dried, any after-treatments to modify the material produced are greatly restricted.<sup>34</sup>

Roberts remarks on the diligence required by this procedure, having already described the physical processes of organizing the dermal fiber network by stretching and setting the new shape by drying. Parchment production demanded the maker's full attention, requiring skill, efficiency and meticulousness. The intricacies of parchment production as well as the dominance of papyrus prevented the rise of parchment in the writing world; in

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<sup>32</sup> Wright, The Vatican Vergil 75.

<sup>33</sup> Reed 6.

<sup>34</sup> Ronald Reed 119-20.  
Roberts 9.

fact, the process lingered on for many years, perhaps centuries, until the process was strengthened and the labor force was enlarged to enable the spread of parchment.<sup>35</sup>

The preparation of parchment required soaking the skin in an alkaline bath, loosening the excess hair and fat and then scraping and stretching the skin for drying. Having been dried, the leaves of parchment were cut and gathered in groups of five, with the flesh sides touching and the hair sides touching as well. Afterward, the leaves of parchment were folded with the hair side facing out and the flesh side in the middle in order to be later organized into codices. Along with the expense incurred from gaining the raw materials – owning and slaughtering hundreds of sheep for their skin – the producers also faced the laborious process of manufacture because of the long process of preparation that parchment required.

Though the producers took great care to make a durable writing material, the paper still faced the aging process, which tended to weaken writing materials. The individual sheets of parchment – thin and polished on both the hair side and the skin side – were inclined to curl towards the hair side, eventually leading to deterioration at the edges. The deterioration that parchment faced leaves heartbreakingly few illuminated manuscripts of the classical age. The lack of surviving manuscripts is a result of both the fragility of material (whether parchment or papyrus) and the continual use of the roll in the Roman Empire.

In order to explain the maintenance of the scroll in the Roman Empire, as the parchment codex gained in popularity, Roberts points to the conservative inclinations of professional scribes:

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<sup>35</sup> Roberts 10.

Writing a codex involved a variety of problems such as calculating space ahead, laying out sheets and keeping them in the right order, which were non-existent for a scribe writing a roll. And apart from the scribes themselves, all those responsible for the production of books would be inclined to continue as they had done. Scriptoria and bureaucracies have always tended to crystallize practices, and it is significant that in the Roman Empire the papyrus roll continued to be the normal form for administrative records and accounts for centuries after the codex had replaced it in the field of literature.<sup>36</sup>

Roberts asserts that additional stresses were involved in planning a parchment codex, as opposed to the papyrus scroll. The Roman's familiarity with scroll production would support that point, but it appears unlikely that the codex presented significantly more considerations than the scroll. Scribes and artists must measure, plan and adapt to their writing material, whether using the scroll or the codex. Undoubtedly, the longstanding traditions of literary illumination seemed to prevent the codex form from immediately appealing to scribes. Rather than adapt to the codex form, the scribes adhered to their established practices of using the roll, which Roman bureaucracies maintained even after the codex's surge in popularity.

Despite the Roman Empire's resistance to the transition from the roll to the codex, the book continued to flourish. Scholars have erroneously attempted to link the growth in popularity of codices with the growing Christian population, notably G. Cavallo.<sup>37</sup> He argues that, in regard to the appeal of the codex to the Christian population, the convenience of the codex is trumped by the codex-form's nostalgic value. The Christians, belonging to a lower socio-economic class and therefore did not possess books for leisure, were most familiar with the codex-notebook, which could be used for religious

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<sup>36</sup> Roberts 52.

<sup>37</sup> Roberts 67. from G. Cavallo, Libri, Editori e Pubblico nel mondo antico: Guida storica e critica, Roma 1975, pp. xix-xxii, 83-6.

writings as well as business transactions. They associated the scroll, on the other hand, with the aristocratic elite. Associations of the scroll with the Roman aristocracy made the Christians hostile towards this more traditional form of writing. Yet, these lower classes developed into a strong middle-class, who would ultimately dictate the direction of the book-production industry, causing the former aristocratic elite to accept the codex.<sup>38</sup>

Roberts, however, dismisses this rationale by referring to Wilhelm Schubart's position that the Christians presumably came from lower classes, but this social fact would not make them favor the codex or even have the authority to decide the format of the Scriptures.<sup>39</sup> Also, he questions which form of written material – the codex or the scroll – would be the most familiar. While Christian literature might have favored the codex-form, most official documents - court, army, regional government document as well as private business transactions – would be recorded on the traditional scroll; therefore this explanation does not clarify why codex rose in popularity even beyond Christian literature. The reasons for the transition from scroll to codex in popular literature remain uncertain. The slow process was perhaps invigorated by the growth of Christianity, benefiting from the decline of the Roman Empire and its bureaucratic restrictions, though no conclusive evidence remains.

The uncertainty involving the circumstances in which the codex overtook the scroll in popularity does not produce uncertainty about the artistic impact of this form on both Christian literature and non-Christian literature. Both genres of literature, as the frequency of the codex-form increased, benefited from the artistic advantages of a

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<sup>38</sup> Roberts 68.

<sup>39</sup> Roberts 68.

from Wilhelm Schubert, Das Buch bei den Griechen und Romern, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1921, pp. 119 ff.: Der Codex, das Buch der Armeren.



manuscript format. The codex required more planning prior to the application of ink or pigment. The scribe must deliberately outline the format of the manuscript, preparing horizontal lines for writing as well as allocating page sections on which the artists could paint. The codex allowed the scribes and artists to use a firmer application of pigment, especially in decorated frames or decorated backgrounds.<sup>40</sup>

The images that accompanied the text told a story as well, as Weitzmann described. They were placed on the page, next to the text, to illuminate a certain passage, clarify a particular point or invoke a sentiment. Illustrations originally surfaced in scientific treatises for just that purpose, and the trend continued into narrative literature. In the case of book illuminations of literary works, like the *Vergilius Vaticanus*, the transition from miniature picture cycles to enduring narrative art attests to the art's impact. Narrative art of this sort in books entered the repertoire of fresco painters and artists, who used terra cotta, marble, metal and other materials to capture the same scenes. These picture cycles took on their own language, with the miniatures being copied in order to represent a famous episode from a famous literary work.<sup>41</sup> The miniature pictures that accompanied the text became recognizable archetypes of the scenes they depict, demonstrating the dependence on the miniature models for guidance. They were iconographic formulas of illustration, possibly representing a scriptorium, which in regard to the *Vergilius Vaticanus* would be occurring in the later fourth century Rome.

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<sup>40</sup> Wright, The Vatican Vergil 2.

<sup>41</sup> Weitzmann, Ancient Book Illumination 3.

## Chapter 2: Background Iconography of Trojan War To Aeneas Legend

### The Epic Cycle

Just as children have a family lineage, so does Vergil's *Aeneid* in this manuscript heritage. Following the precedent of earlier epics works, the *Aeneid* complements the "Trojan Cycle" of epic poetry, which explains the series of tragedies and triumphs that surround the Trojan War. It is therefore worthwhile to mention experiences of other classical literature in the development of the manuscript tradition in order to demonstrate how the visual tradition evolves around the classical text and also in spite of the constancy of the classical text.

Our literary record of the Trojan Cycle is clear, consisting of several epic tales that were designed to conclude the story of the heroic age that was initiated by the Homeric epics. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are often distinguished from the cyclic epic because their tales are the foundation of the Trojan Cycle rather than a contributing part. The term cyclic not only refers to the factual basis of the Cycle's poetry, but also highlights the assumed lesser poetic quality of the cyclic epic in a deprecating manner.<sup>42</sup> The poems were a part of a mythological system that sought to explain large portions of a mythical and heroic past, and the Epic Cycle represented "a literary manifestation of a longstanding notional arrangement of early Greek myth."<sup>43</sup> The desire to account for the mythical beginnings of antiquity, therefore, led to this compilation of material.

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<sup>42</sup> Malcolm Davies, *Greek Epic Cycle*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Bristol: Bristol Classical, 2001) 2.

<sup>43</sup> Jonathan S. Burgess, "The Epic Cycle and Fragments." in John Miles Foley, (Ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Epic* (New York: Blackwell Publishers, 2005) 345.

Though writers were using the Homeric epics as their starting point, it is not clear that the Epic Cycle actually took form contemporaneously. The “epic cycle,” translated from *epikos kuklos*, literally denotes artifacts of a circular shape and it also takes on the metaphorical significance that we attribute to it. In fact, the phrase “epic cycle” was not directly used until the Roman Empire, with most of the quotations referring to individual poems rather than the whole cycle. The scholia tradition, though, brings up “cyclic poetry,” so there was an awareness of this form of writing back to the Hellenistic period, and the compilation of the Epic Cycle in the form of a textual volume of related poetry was probably completed in this time.<sup>44</sup>

The Epic Cycle encompasses the epics of this genre and is divided into two sub-cycles: Trojan Cycle, which consists of eight epic poems that describe the events surrounding the Trojan War, and also the Theban Cycle, a collection of four lost epics that recount the mythical history of the city of Thebes. Of the eleven epics in the Trojan Cycle, only 2 survive – the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The Epic Cycle is completed by the post-Homeric epic poems: *Cypria*, *Aethiopis*, *Little Iliad*, *Iliupersis*, *Nostoi*, and *Telegonia*. Only fragments survive of these epics, with the most complete summary available in Proclus’ *Chrestomathy*, written in the fifth century CE. In this work, Proclus gives a detailed outline of the Epic Cycle, but the authenticity of this work was not fully accepted until the late nineteenth century. Prior to that time, German classical scholarship had been suspicious of both the dependability of Proclus’ summary and of Proclus himself; and this skepticism was only heightened by discrepancies found between Proclus

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<sup>44</sup> Burgess 347.

and fragments of the Trojan epics.<sup>45</sup> However, at the end of the nineteenth century, the missing closing to the *Bibliotheca* of Appollodorus, a mythical encyclopedia of the late first century BCE, was published, confirming the validity of Proclus's summaries.

Proclus was born near 410 CE in Constantinople as the son of a high legal official in the Byzantine Empire's court system. He studied rhetoric, mathematics and philosophy in Alexandria, Egypt. Having returned to Constantinople with the intent of holding a judicial position, he found that he preferred philosophy and departed for Alexandria and then for Athens, the center for philosophical study at the time. Proclus wrote commentaries on Plato and theological pieces, defending the Neoplatonist views of the eternal world and universe in contrast to the prevailing Christian eschatological beliefs. He also wrote extensively on mathematics and astronomy. His *Chrestomathy* provides us with fragments of the Epic Cycle. These are an invaluable resource for modern scholarship because Proclus arranges and summarizes each of the epics within this cycle. We find this summary in Photius' Epitome of the Chrestomathy in *Bibliotheca*. Photius was a saint of the Orthodox Church, born into a noble Byzantine family around 820 CE. Photius's body of writings featured the *Lexicon*, reference book for reading classical authors; the *Amphilochia*, a compilation of several hundred issues in the Scripture; and also the *Bibliotheca*, a collection of extracts and abridgements from classical authors – largely on topics of ecclesiastical history almost to the exclusion of ancient poetry and philosophy. In the codex of Photius' *Bibliotheca*, we find the commencement of the Epic Cycle commences with the introduction of the Titanomaxia, The War of the Titans:

!Arxetai me\_n o\_e)piko\_j ku/kloj e0k th=j Ou0panou=  
kai\_ Th=j muqoloyoume/vhj mi/cewj e0c h[j au)tw|= kai\_

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<sup>45</sup> Davies 7.

trei=j pai=daj e9katontaxeipaj kai\_ trei=j gennw=si  
Ku/klwpaj.

The epic cycle begins from the fabled union  
Of Heaven and Earth, by which  
They make three hundred-handed sons and three  
Cyclops to be born to him.<sup>46</sup>

The passage and the context are reminiscent of Hesiod's *Theogony*, in which he explains the mythological beginnings of the world of the gods. Hesiod, thought to have lived just after Homer around 800 BCE, serves as an important source of farming and astronomy as well as Greek mythology. The reference to Hesiod here establishes the lineage of Greek literature from which the Epic Cycle is derived. The Epic Cycle, though inspired by Homeric works, also maintains connections with other Greek authors.

Yet, Homer's writing style and content distinguishes his works from any of the other epics of the cycle. The non-Homeric poems were thought to be inferior to Homer's epics because they were formulated after Homer's time and were modeled after his work in order to fill in presumed gaps in the Trojan story. The poems were not widely read by the public that enjoyed Homer and the Greek Tragedians, but artists referred to them for themes.<sup>47</sup> The absence of mention of these poems in the works of ancient literary scholars as well as the lack of papyrus lines attributed to any of these poems led scholar Thomas Allen to term them "versified chronicles."<sup>48</sup> This phrase attests to the value in chronologically placing the events of the Trojan Cycle, and it underscores their lack of literary accomplishment and prestige. Differences in style and content are supported by the limited evidence that survives of the remaining epics. Jasper Griffin indicates several

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<sup>46</sup> Photoius, "Bibliotheca" from *The Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns and Homerica*. Trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936).

<sup>47</sup> T.W. Allen. "The Epic Cycle (Continued)" *The Classical Quarterly* 2.2 (April 1908): 89.

<sup>48</sup> Allen 89.

differences between the Homeric epics and their followers, including the presence of the supernatural, attitudes towards human life and death, and “low human types and motives.”<sup>49</sup> In the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Homer limits the presence and power of the fantastic. Homer avoids an overwhelming presence of the supernatural by both limiting his focus on exotic and fantastic types and by confirming his characters’ vulnerability; in the Book 6 of the *Iliad*, for example, Homer mentions briefly that Glaucus recalls Bellerophon’s mythical journey in his family history, but the *Aethiopsis* features foreign and fantastic characters – Memnon the Ethiop and Penthesilea the Amazon – as the central figures of the epic.<sup>50</sup> Homer also treads lightly on the subject of invulnerability. Even when describing the famous, almost impenetrable shield of Achilles, Homer refrains from calling the armor invincible, but rather calling it *w(j ou) r(hi/+di' e)sti\ qew=n e)rikude/a dw=ra / a)ndra/si ge qnhtoi=sidamh/menai ou)d' u(poei/kein* (XX.264-5 ‘not easy are the glorious gifts of the gods to mortal men to overpower nor to retire from’). Homer even avoids describing this divinely made armor as completely invulnerable, while based on the surviving fragments of the *Aethiopsis*, E. Drerup asserts that Ajax is portrayed as invulnerable.<sup>51</sup>

The second distinction – attitudes of human life and death – contrasts the Homeric view of death as inevitable and the non-Homeric acceptance of immortality. The characters in the *Iliad* accept death as a natural consequence of life, with even the most

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<sup>49</sup> Jasper Griffin. “The Epic Cycle and the Uniqueness of Homer.” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, vol. 97 (1977): 45.

This point is made by Karl Reinhardt, *Tradition und Geist: Gesammelte Essays zur Dichtung* (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960) 10.

<sup>50</sup> Homer. *Iliad* 6.196.

*Aethiopsis* 33.206.

Griffin 40.

<sup>51</sup> Griffin 40.

prominent figures like Achilles, Hector and Heracles succumbing to death. W. Schadewalt points to the conversation between Achilles and Priam in Book 24 an essential element of Homer's construction of the ideology of death, which characterizes death as a tragic and honorable event.<sup>52</sup> In the other poem of the Cycle, on the other hand, immortality is a gift more freely given by the gods to deserving men. In the *Thebian*, Athena would have given immortality to the injured Tydeus and in the *Cypria* Zeus granted immortality 'on alternate days' (p.103.16).<sup>53</sup> The Homeric and non-Homeric poetry illustrate the fundamental differences in ideology of life and death, which also surfaces in the varying portrayals of human virtue.

None of Homer's figures are overwhelmed by purely hedonistic or treacherous motives, maintaining a sense of morality throughout the epic. Griffin observes that homosexual love, traitors and cowards are written out of the epic; even Paris, who sometimes does not partake in battle, is a2lkimoj, brave, and the only reason for a hero not to fight is "heroic resentment."<sup>54</sup> Paris explains his reasons for sitting out of battle to Hector, and he quickly rejoins his fellow Trojans in the fight in Book 6:

(/ou)/ toi e)gw\ Trw/wn to/sson xo/lw| ou)de\ neme/ssi  
 h(/mhn e)n qala/mw|, e)/qelon d' a)/xei+ protrape/sqai.  
 nu=n de/ me pareipou=j' a)/loxoj malakoi=j e)pe/essin  
 o(/rmhj' e)j po/lemon: doke/ei de/ moi w(=de kai\ au)tw=|  
 lw/i+on e)/ssesqai: ni/kh d' e)pamei/betai a)/ndraj.

Believe me, not so much in rage and retribution against the Trojans

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<sup>52</sup> Griffin 42.

From Wolfgang Schadewaldt, Von Homers Welt und Werk : Aufsätze und Auslegungen zur Homerischen Frage (Stuttgart: K.F. Koehler, 1944), 261.

<sup>53</sup> Griffin 42.

<sup>54</sup> Griffin 45

Iliad 6.521.

Did I sit in my bedchamber, but I was wishing to give myself up to grief.  
And right here my wife, persuading me with gentle words,  
Urges me into battle, and it seems to me myself,  
That will be better. And victory comes in turn to men.<sup>55</sup>

Paris, previously distracted by his emotions, reconsiders and joins the Trojan effort at the urging of his wife and his brother. In contrast to the devotion to the military effort that Homer's heroes display, the heroes of the Cycle eagerly attempt to avoid military service: in the *Cypria*, Achilles hid among women and Odysseus pretended to be insane in order to avoid the army.<sup>56</sup> And the *Nostoi* includes acts of vengeance motivated by ignoble *ethos*, such as the father of Palamedes avenging his son's death by luring the Greek fleet to a disastrous homecoming on the rocks. In the *Odyssey*, Homer attributes their disastrous return to the wrath of Athena, not even mentioning Palamedes' father; noble motives seem to incite Homer's heroes, rather than treachery or revenge.<sup>57</sup> The Homeric and non-Homeric epics are therefore divided both in content and in style, and as we see the evolution of written material, we will also witness the development of a visual tradition that accompanies the Epic Cycle.

## Epic Images

The history of the Trojan Cycle is clear in the literary record. We begin to find representations of this literature early, and these illustrations grow into sequences. The presence of the similar narrative and iconography lead us to the conclusion that this comes from the same source. In order to determine the iconographic model, we must study the history of literature and its pictorial representations throughout the evolution of

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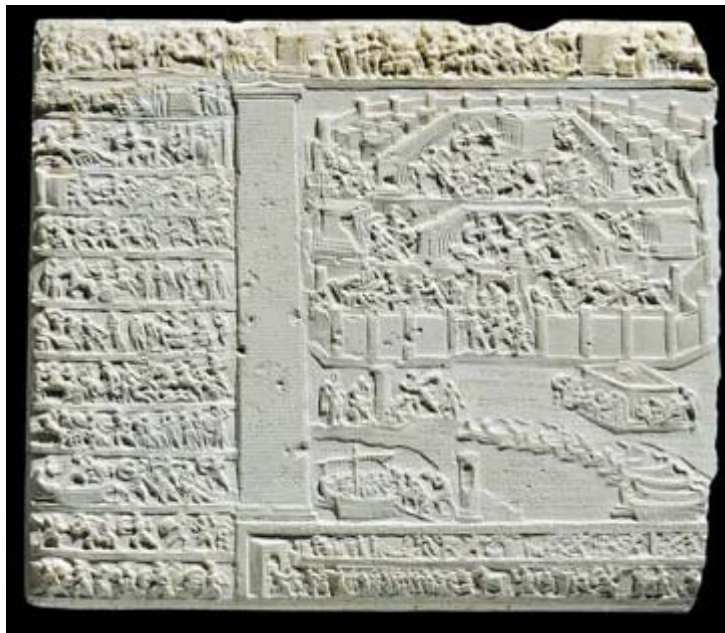
<sup>55</sup> *Iliad* 6.335-338.

<sup>56</sup> Griffin 46.

<sup>57</sup> Griffin 46.



the Trojan Cycle. The *Iliad*, and the *Odyssey*, along with the *Cypria* are of particular note in this study. Popular Greek literature can traced its written roots to the eighth century BCE, but well-preserved, surviving evidence of illumination of the *Iliad* dates back to the first century CE with a series of small tablets in *piombino*,<sup>58</sup> known as the “Iliac tablets.”<sup>59</sup> Housed in the Capitoline Museum, these tablets display all three epic poems, helping to place the poetry in the context of the Trojan War. The sequence of actions on the “Iliac tablets” places the *Cypria* as the epic describing the earliest historic events.



Fragment of the Iliac Tablets  
1<sup>st</sup> century CE  
Marble; Capitoline Museum, Rome

On the top frieze in the Paris fragment, the tablets illustrate the very beginning of the *Iliad*, depicting Chryses beseeching Agamemnon while the ransom is being paid. However, preceding the frieze are scenes of Diomedes and Achilles sitting in the assembly, distributing spoils, and a soldier bringing chained Chryses to Agamemnon.

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<sup>58</sup> Pulverized marble.

<sup>59</sup> Weitzmann, *Ancient Book Illumination* 33.

Though the narrative of the *Cypria* does not survive, Proclus, in his “chrestomathy,” summarizes the events. Attributing the authorship to Stasinus of Cyprus, Proclus places the scenes depicted at the conclusion of the *Cypria*, which would be the commencement of the epic cycle. The artist of the “Iliac tablets” therefore used the limited surface to depict just enough details of the events to make clear the textual context of the events preceding the *Iliad*.<sup>60</sup> Although the particular episode depicted does not remain an archetype of iconography – whether because of its lack of popularity or lack of surviving reproductions – the pictorial narrative clearly situates the *Cypria* in the order of the Epic Cycle. The *Cypria*’s presence on the “Iliac tablets” attests to the power of narrative art to alter a cycle of folklore.

Continuing further in the Trojan cycle is Homer’s *Iliad*. The illuminations of the *Iliad* exemplify the close ties between manuscript illumination and the visual tradition of artwork, particularly in the close analysis of both the “Iliac tablets” of the first century and the fifth century CE Milan *Iliad*, housed in the Ambrosian Library. The Milan *Iliad* was once beautifully illustrated on an opulent parchment codex, comprising all twenty-four books in one codex, although now it is incomplete with only 58 illustrations left, scattered unevenly through twenty-four books.<sup>61</sup> The Milan *Iliad*’s surviving illustrations exhibit the typical extended cyclic narrative in which the creator divides a single episode into several stages, generating motion and fluidity from one scene to another.<sup>62</sup> The individual images and the writing columns remain separate, sectioned off by thick frames. In earlier papyrus rolls, the miniature images remained frameless, resembling of

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<sup>60</sup> Weitzmann, [Ancient Book illumination](#) 43.

<sup>61</sup> Weitzmann, [Ancient Book Illumination](#) 32-33.

<sup>62</sup> Wright, [Narration in Early Christendom](#) 86.

panel paintings or painted frescoes.<sup>63</sup> The artists of the Milan *Iliad* departed from the bland or empty background space to more ambitious landscape depictions. The greater durability of parchment and improved techniques of painting afforded them the opportunity to explore a more complex form of art in book illumination.



Achilles Sacrificing to Zeus  
Milan *Iliad*  
c. 500 CE  
Milan; Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Codex F 205

The “Iliac tablets,” depicting the same work, display an originally tripartite plaque, with each superimposed frieze held in reserve for a small number of specific illustrations from only one book in the *Iliad*.<sup>64</sup> What are most remarkable about these two forms of the *Iliad* are their similarities.

As Kurt Weitzmann indicates, both versions agree in their representations of scenes from Book 22. Both the “Iliac tablets” and the Milan *Iliad* display the climatic episode of Hector’s death. Hector is in a forward stance, bending over his spear and

<sup>63</sup> Wright, *Narration in Early Christendom* 87.

<sup>64</sup> Weitzmann, *Ancient Book Illumination* 33.

grasping a shield; progressing in time to the right, Achilles ambushes Hector and incites him to battle. The scene concludes with Achilles's chariot dragging the slain Hector around the walls of Troy. The difference in media, parchment and marble, does not obscure the basic similarities in depiction. Four centuries after the "Iliac tablets," the Milan *Iliad* is reminiscent of the model of the "Iliac tablets" in this scene in particular as well as in several other scenes.<sup>65</sup> The arrangements of the composition as well as the narrative movement the scenes capture create parallels in their depictions of this memorable episode of Ancient History and Greek legends.

The remarkable similarities suggest that there was a common archetype for the portrayal of this scene. The idea of an archetype reinforces the assertions that Kurt Weitzman stresses: "with regard to the Milan miniatures it means that their archetype is at least four centuries earlier; and, as far as the tablets are concerned, it provides corroborating evidence for their dependence upon miniature models."<sup>66</sup> As Weitzmann asserts, the manuscript and marble art were interconnected, drawing from the same pictorial sources.

Another example of narrative Iliad cycles connects the "Iliac tablets" to friezes and frescoes in Pompeian houses. A fresco from the Casa del Criptoportico displays scenes from the *Iliad*. Greek inscriptions identify the scenes, though the artists were not Greek.<sup>67</sup> The narrative scenes in the Casa del Criptoportico are lined up in a system similar to the "Iliac tablets," which indicates a connection between them – whether they both follow the same iconographic model of illustration or the Casa del Criptoportico's

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<sup>65</sup> Weitzmann, [Ancient Book Illumination](#) 35.

<sup>66</sup> Weitzmann, [Ancient Book Illumination](#) 35.

<sup>67</sup> Weitzmann, [Ancient Book Illumination](#) 37.

frescoes borrow from miniature models. Specifically, the scene in Book XXI, the killing of Lycaon, in the Casa del Criptoportico parallels the “Iliac tablets” of the Capitoline Museum.<sup>68</sup> The same episode in these two different works illustrated a supplicated Lycaon in frontal view with his arms outstretched just before Achilles grasps his left arm and proceeds to kill him. The correspondences continue in several other scenes, further suggesting a common source of inspiration or a common iconographic model. Kurt Weitzmann even goes as far as to propose that the excellent quality of the fresco “at least suggests – though this cannot be substantiated – that the first inventors of the miniature archetype were already capable of rendering the epic content more vividly and forcefully than the artistically rather weak craftsmen of the Iliac tablets.”<sup>69</sup> Whether or not this theory is true or not, this style of recension is strongly represented in these two sources of literary illumination.

The Megarian bowls demonstrate the pottery interpretation of the Epic Cycle. The Megarian bowls, produced from 250 – 100 BCE, featured figural decoration.



Megarian Bowl  
c. 2<sup>nd</sup> Century CE

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<sup>68</sup> Weitzmann, [Ancient Book Illumination](#) 38.

<sup>69</sup> Weitzmann, [Ancient Book Illumination](#) 38.

Terra-cotta ; found at Metaponto  
Institute of Classical Archaeology

These hemispherical terra cotta bowls display continuous strips of low relief figural compositions. Some of the bowls have been deemed Homeric because they depict several scenes from Homer's epics. For example, the bowls display three separate episodes from the twenty second book of the *Odyssey*. Eumaeus and Philoetius shackle the unfaithful goatherd Melanthius, chained him and then hang him upside down. In the third image Odysseus and Telemachus, protected by Athena, attack Penelope's suitors. The pictorial narrative spans only 75 verses. If the artists had distributed the images evenly across the roughly 12000 verses in the *Odyssey*, he would have produced 160 total images. These images would have lengthened the roll greatly. The artists therefore were careful and deliberate in the selection of episodes to illustrate.

Terra cotta artists were also selective in their depiction, relying on miniature models in their depiction of literary cycles, they could chose only selections from the enormous bank of miniature models, given the restrictions in space and materials that they found.<sup>70</sup> The selection of miniature models for different media is also apparent in tablets from the Rondanini collection. This collection demonstrates the Circe incident in three separate episodes, which encompass about 100 verses of Book 10. In the first scene, Hermes gives Odysseus an herb to make him immune to Circe's magic, and in the second scene Odysseus threatens to kill Circe if she refuses to remove her spell from his companions. The third episode portrays the disenchantment, in which Odysseus' companions are released from Circe's love spell. The individual scenes echo back to the

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<sup>70</sup> Weitzmann, Ancient Book Illumination 40.

specific qualities of their individual miniature models.<sup>71</sup> The interdependence of miniature models and artistic creations continue throughout this “Trojan Cycle.”

The Epic Cycle has thus far focused on the Greek literary and visual accomplishments, and this Greek legacy remains intact even as the center and focus of literature transitioned into the Roman world. Many Roman pictorial monuments reflect Greek miniature models of its epic predecessors. These Roman productions were made on Italian territory – like the “Iliac tablets,” frescoes in Pompeian houses and Roman sarcophagi – and they do not stray from their Greek models.<sup>72</sup> Literary illuminations of Roman texts, just like the pictorial monuments, continue to parallel earlier Greek works. This parallel between Greek archetypes and Roman productions surfaces vividly in the depiction of the *Aeneid*, the most famous Roman epic. Archetypes of individual episodes spill over into the visual productions of this Roman epic as well as other literary works.

The direct connections between the Epic Cycle of Greek literature and the later Roman productions are demonstrated in several places in the *Aeneid* of the *Vergilius Vaticanus*. Just as in the *Iliupersis* on the “Iliac tablets” in the Capitoline Museum, the sacking of Troy features the wooden Trojan horse on wheels resting within the city walls of Troy, with the lid recently opened and a Greek warrior climbing down the side of the horse on a double rope. Another scene of the sack of Troy portrays the slaughter of banqueting Trojans, lying on the ground in a semicircle. This depiction is reminiscent of similar depictions on Roman sarcophagi illustrating scenes from the *Little Iliad*.<sup>73</sup> These methods are referred to by scholars like Weitzmann as belonging to the “Alexandrian-

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<sup>71</sup> Weitzmann, *Ancient Book Illumination* 41.

<sup>72</sup> Weitzmann, *Ancient Book Illumination* 59.

<sup>73</sup> Weitzmann, *Ancient Book Illumination* 59.

Roman recension” of tablet recension.<sup>74</sup> The scenes previously mentioned draw parallels between the two literary and visual cultures that produced epics and their visual counterparts. We will see further in this study just how the *Vergilius Vaticanus* draws from these traditions.

## The Vergilian Chronicles

Direct comparison between the two books is complicated by differences in scenes selected for illustrations in each. Nevertheless, some basic points can be made concerning the older papyrus style and the newer codex format.

In the *Vergilius Romanus (R.)*, the paintings are always a pair of square frontispiece illustrations at the opening of each book, apparently selected from a larger repertory and removed from their textual context.<sup>75</sup> The iconographic model of *R.* seems to demonstrate the transition from the conventions of the classical age to the methods of the Byzantine age in which it was produced. The first illustration of the manuscript, which accompanies *Eclogue I*, differs from the standard iconographic model that *R.* employs.

This image lacks the frame and painted detail on the background that characterize the rest of the illustrations, which suggests that this image follows the older “papyrus style.”<sup>76</sup> It seems likely that some earlier book-roll contained this image, which developed into an iconographic archetype. The remaining illustrations appear to derive from an earlier codex that reflects similar pictorial models to the *Vergilius Vaticanus (V.)*.

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<sup>74</sup> Weitzmann, *Ancient Book Illumination* 60.

<sup>75</sup> Wright, *The Vatican Vergil* 92-93.

<sup>76</sup> Wright, *The Roman Vergil and the Origins of Medieval Book Design* 48.



The model cannot be *V.* itself because *R.* would have had the entire series of *Georgics* and *Eclogues* illustrations, on which the artists would have based their illuminations.<sup>77</sup>

David Wright asserts that the images of the *Georgics* in both texts have an improvisational quality, indicating that neither set of artists had a model to guide their depictions, and that the illustrations were invented spontaneously.<sup>78</sup>

The quality of production of the illustrations displays the range of influence. Armor appears utterly generic and clumsily drawn, while the decoration of tunics features modernized embellishment and ornamentation.<sup>79</sup> The nine illustrations of the *Aeneid* in *R.* that survive are few compared to the forty-one that survive in *V.*; the small sample size – nine illustrations – prevents an accurate comparison between the illustration styles of the two manuscripts.

One of the only illustrations in the *R.* that closely resembles one in *V.* is Folio 163r. The image depicts the unfortunate event in lines 496 – 497 of Book 7 that provokes the outbreak of fighting between the Trojans and the Latins: Ascanius shooting Lavinia's pet stag. The image accompanies the verses:

Ascanius curvo derexit specula cornu  
Nec dextrae erranti dues afuit

(Ascanius aimed his arrow with a curved bow  
Neither did the god fail to guide his wandering hand)

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<sup>77</sup> Wright, *The Roman Vergil and the Origins of Medieval Book Design* 50.

<sup>78</sup> Wright, *The Roman Vergil and the Origins of Medieval Book Design* 50.

<sup>79</sup> Wright, *The Vatican Vergil: A Masterpiece of Late Antique Art* 96.



Ascanius Shooting Sylvia's Stag  
Vergilius Romanus, Folio 163r

Plain borders, without ornate decoration, enclose the momentous scene. Ascanius stands in the foreground of the image, his arms raised and his arrow prepared to pierce the running stag. His extended arms appear stumpy in comparison to his unnaturally long, thin legs. Furthermore, his torso is of disproportionate width, perhaps in an effort to reflect his three-quarter stance. The abnormal size of his torso is juxtaposed to his slender legs as well as his narrow head. Alarming, the width of his head matches that of his upper arm. Ascanius stands in a group of four, with one companion next to him and two Trojans directly behind him. Their faces are virtually indistinguishable. Each one positions his head in a three-quarter tilt and has the same rounded faces and dark eyes. The only feature that distinguishes them is their clothing.

The artist struggles to create spatial perspective. His comrades appear stacked on top of each other, with no reduction in size or alteration of position to display their physical distance. The artist continues to struggle with perspective as he paints the battle

shields. The most prominent one, carried by the figure in the right side of the illustration, maintains the concave shape of the shield, while the shield belonging to the comrade directly behind Ascanius appears convex, with the outer edges leaning away from the body.

Also lacking in spatial perspective is the position of the ill-fated stag, who seems to be leaping in the air directly above Ascanius' other companion, to the right side of the illustration. Reduced in size, the stag is presumably a distance away, although the illustration lacks any continuous receding ground. The stricken stag's body is awkwardly rendered, resembling a playful jump rather than a frightened run. Comparing the size of Ascanius' arrow to the height of the stag, the stag appears quite small. And next to the stag are a few trees, which lack realistic size or detail. Perhaps intended to demonstrate the distance between the foreground and the background of the scene, the trees fit unnaturally into the setting. Other extremely unnatural details are the two portraits that emerge in the top left corner of the image. The portraits, each encircled by round, thick borders, face each other. This detail presumably foreshadows the confrontation that ensues from this event.

The stylistic and compositional features of *R.* establish an approximate date for the manuscript. David Wright claims that the painter's work follows well after the classical revival period around 400 but still precedes the Justinianic style of the later part of the fifth century; he strongly favors a date of the 480s, within a range from 470 – 500. He also maintains that *R.* can be placed in Rome during its production. The extraordinarily high quality of calligraphy, production and pigment indicate that the manuscript originated from a Roman workshop simply because Rome, a center of

manufacture at the time, claimed the painters and materials of highest quality.<sup>80</sup> This conclusion may not be definite because of the great availability of materials and the number of other centers of production, such as Constantinople or Milan. *R.* marks a pivotal point in the evolution of book illumination, further developing the tradition that preceded it. *V.* contained an early prototype of formal frontispiece illustration. *R.* expands this feature into a planned series of display pages.<sup>81</sup> As in the *Vaticanus*, the formal frontispiece marks the opening of the text as a whole; but in the *Romanus*, each book opens with a sequence of such illustrations. *R.* takes fuller advantage of the visually striking possibilities of the codex-form than does the *Vaticanus*. To open the *Aeneid*, *R.* displays the final verses of the *Georgics* on the left and a summary of the *Aeneid* at the right, keeping the next opening blank on both pages to produce a visual pause; an elaborate pair of frontispiece illustrations follow, with a blank verso facing the outlined image. The frames placed around the text itself, not simply the illustrations, signals another development in book design, which will continue to evolve through the ages. The stunning visual effects demonstrate the evolution of earlier forms of book illumination, like *V.*, and the innovations of the *R.* foreshadow the future improvements that the Middle Ages will bring to the codex format.<sup>82</sup>

Along with the addition of illustrations, *R.* also includes the written text by augmenting the Vergilian text with accessory verses. An *argumentum*, a four line poem, introduces each book of the *Georgics*; in addition, in the presentation of the *Aeneid*, a monostichon is placed before each book, characterizing the book, and an original ten

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<sup>80</sup> Wright, [The Roman Vergil and the Origins of Medieval Book Design](#) 62.

<sup>81</sup> Wright, [The Roman Vergil and the Origins of Medieval Book Design](#) 63.

<sup>82</sup> Wright, [The Roman Vergil and the Origins of Medieval Book Design](#) 63.

verse poem follows, summarizing the book's content, with a line separating these two sections of the introduction.<sup>83</sup> The tradition of monosticha continues into the Carolingian era of manuscripts illumination.

In style and composition, the two Vergil works differ. Both manuscripts descend from the same model of production, but they represent two different interpretations or evolutions in the manuscript tradition. Instead of appealing to the same stylistic conventions of the *Romanus*, the *Vaticanus* features careful painting with thick frames and careful backgrounds. Both features depart from the papyrus style.<sup>84</sup> David Wright credits the Trajanic era and the Column of Trajan in particular for inspiring the iconographic model of the *Vaticanus*. Wright cites the officers' uniform and armor as evidence for this assertion. *V.* depicts Aeneas in Underworld scenes and his other officers in battle scenes wearing knee breeches, *bracae*, under their skirts of armor.



Trajan and officers  
Column of Trajan  
113 CE

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<sup>83</sup> David H. Wright, Codicological Notes on the Vergilius Romanus. (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1992) 28.

<sup>84</sup> David H. Wright, "The Inheritance of the Papyrus Style of Illustration in Early Latin Literary Codices." Dumbarton Oaks Papers, vol. 50 (1996): 200.

Just as on the Column of Trajan, Trajan and his officers are seen, although not in the Arch of Trajan at Benevento.<sup>85</sup>



Arch of Trajan  
Benevento  
113 CE

Other examples of these army breeches often appear on Marcus Aurelius, though they are rarely seen on his officers. These examples help to identify the archetype of iconography that the *Vergilius Vaticanus* strives to follow. The *Vergilius Vaticanus*, as we will see, draws from Roman and Christian iconographic models to depict the scenes of the *Aeneid*. We find visual precedents present in the time of its production to indicate just how the artists went about creating the *Vergilius Vaticanus* and how they reconciled the relationship between word and image in the illuminated manuscript. The older visual model that the *Vergilius Vaticanus* strives to reproduce functions as its “father,” resembling and influencing the manuscript, and the same model works as the “grandfather” of the *Vergilius Romanus*, contributing to the later manuscript through an

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<sup>85</sup> Wright, “The Inheritance of the Papyrus Style of Illustration in Early Latin Literary Codices” 203.

intermediate generation.<sup>86</sup> Though the Codex Vaticanus is one of the oldest preserved manuscripts of this time period, it is not an anomaly in its choice of depiction. As the next chapter will explore, the subject matter of Vergil's corpus fits directly into the historical context of the late fourth and early fifth century CE.

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<sup>86</sup> Wright, The Roman Vergil and the Origins of Medieval Book Design.



## Chapter 3: Word and Image

### Introduction

The *Vergilius Vaticanus* originally contain the entire text of Vergil's three major works, the *Eclogues*, *Georgics* and the *Aeneid* as well as a number of illustrations that both correspond to and depart from the text. The surviving portion of the manuscript contains 75 surviving folios, with 50 illustrations. Originally, the manuscript would have been comprised of about 440 folios with about 280 illustrations.<sup>87</sup> At least three artists illustrated this manuscript. One of them dealt with the *Georgics* and parts of the *Eclogues*. The two others worked with the *Aeneid*. The style and ability of the individual artists are apparent in their illustrations. The first artist, illuminating the *Georgics* and *Eclogues*, demonstrates his knowledge of spatial perspective and anatomy in his illustrations. He can create distances and landscapes using this skill. We see his artistic abilities in the illustration of *Georgics* 3.327, in which the *grex* is being led to water.



*Grex* led to fountain  
Folio 6, recto, Vergilius Vaticanus

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<sup>87</sup> Wright, The Vatican Vergil: A Masterpeice of Late Antique Art. 1-2.



The artist creates a realistic spatial arrangement so that the viewer can easily distinguish the figures in the foreground from the objects in the background.

The second artist, who deals exclusively with the *Aeneid*, does not demonstrate the same familiarity with spatial perspective and anatomy that the first artist does. As we shall see in the analysis of illustrations in the *Aeneid*, the second artist's works illustrate the episodes without the emphasis on realistic space that the first artist demonstrates. We see the striking contrast most vividly when examining the **Discovery of Carthage**, which crowds the picture plane with buildings, people and mountains.

The third artist, on the other hand, does pick up on the ideas of spatial perspective and realistic space and figures in his illustrations. He displays his skill in human anatomy as well as his ability to create a realistic background space for the figures he depicts. We see his ability coming through in the **Lamentation Over Dido**, where the deceased Dido lays in repose in her ornately decorated bedchamber.

The illustrations of the *Aeneid* fit interestingly into the history of the manuscript tradition. They are an integral part of the *Vergilius Vaticanus*, with the *Aeneid* being one of Vergil's three major works. The *Aeneid* – the text and the images – are also a contributing part of the Epic Cycle. The Trojan cycle seeks to follow the poetic precedent that Homer had set and also seeks to expand upon the Trojan legacy. The *Aeneid* follows in this lineage of Trojan tales, describing the Aeneas legacy and the mythological beginnings of Rome. Along with the literary heritage, the *Aeneid*'s involvement with the Trojan Cycle also has a visual heritage. Iconography and visual models accompany the Trojan legacy. The *Aeneid*, as a part of this Epic legacy, carries into the *Vergilius Vaticanus* an interesting blend of literary history and visual history, making it separate in

history from the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*. Therefore, this paper seeks to examine only the *Aeneid* and its rich legacy in the written and iconographic traditions.

## The Discovery of Carthage

The beginning of the *Aeneid* until line is lost, so that the first illustration we find depicts Aeneas and Achates discovering the city of Carthage under construction in 1.418-429:

Corripuere viam interea, qua semita monstrat.  
Iamque ascendebant collem, qui plurimus urbi  
Imminet adversasque aspectat desuper arces.  
Miratur molem Aeneas, magalia quondam,  
Instant ardentis Tyrii: pars ducere muros  
Molirique arcem et minibus subvolvere saxa,  
Pars optare locum tecto et concludere sulco;  
Iura magistratusque legunt sanctumque senatum.  
Hic portus alii effodiunt; hic alta theatris  
Fundamenta locant alii; immanisque columnas  
Rupibus excidunr, scaenis decora alta futuris.

They climbed the path meanwhile, on which path he indicated.  
And now they ascended the large hill that  
Hangs over the city and he gazes over the citadels opposite.  
Aeneas wonders at the towers, once huts,  
And he wonders at the city-gates and the paved way.  
The fervent Tyrians stand, some construct the walls,  
Build the citadel and roll up the rocks with their hands,  
And some chose a place for shelter which they surround with a furrow.  
They compile laws and offices and an inviolable senate.  
Here others dig out the harbors; there others lay deep foundation  
For theaters, and set down immense columns with rocks,  
For grandeur of future scenes.

The illustration is placed on the page opposite to the text. This arrangement allows the reader to compare the poetry to the image. As Aeneas and Achates look on, the Carthaginians are feverishly building the physical and institutional framework of their

city. Aeneas is situated in line 421 amongst the progress of the Carthaginians and the alliteration of the letter “m” that characterizes this account: *miratur molem Aeneas, magalia quondam*. The repetition of “m” reflects the movement and progress of the city, where we can imagine workers moaning as they labor in the city.

As Vergil relates the activities of the Carthaginians, the Latin words convey this sense of progress and urgency. The repetition of the “m” sound begins in line 421 and is accompanied by a shift to a more heavily spondaic line. Whereas in line 420 the line contains two dactyls, line 421 only has one, in the fifth foot. Although this is only a slight difference, the line clearly marks a transition from the description of Aeneas to the labor-intensive improvement of Carthage. Not only in the first syllable but also the entire word, the appearance of “m” continues with *muros* (line 422), *moliri* (423), *minibus* (423), *locum* (424), *magistratusque* (425), *sanctumque senatum* (425), *fundamenta* (427), and *immanisque columnas* (line 427). This repetition of “m” unites Carthaginian progress that is occurring in various realms of city-life, and it also conveys the sense of seriousness and gravity that their activities require. The echo of “m” intersects the repetition of “s” vividly with the word *magistratus* (line 425), that carries with it both sounds. And, the “s” sound recurs with *subvolvere saxa* (423), *sulco* (424), *portus* (426), *theatris* (426), *immanisque columnas* (427), and finally *scaenis...futuris* (428). The sweeping sound of “s” also creates smoothness to their actions so that the activities are not disjointed but rather come together fluidly. It also serves to transition the account of the Carthaginians to the metaphor of the bees storing honey, with the “s” reminiscent of the buzzing sound of bees.



Aeneas and Achates Discover Carthage  
Folio 13, recto  
Vergilius Vaticanus

The image attempts to capture the urgent progress and unity of the city, but the artist sacrifices style for pictorial accuracy. This is the first illustration we have of this particular artist, since the beginning of the *Aeneid* is lost. The image lacks spatial perspective. To the left of the page, close to the text, we immediately see the two Trojans standing on a cliff as they survey Carthage below. The labels above their heads assure us of their identities: Achates and Aeneas. Draping of clothing and the deterioration of the page prevent the body of Achates from being examined, but Aeneas's extended body provides material for examination. The artist's brushstrokes are smoother and thicker, causing Aeneas's anatomy to be awkwardly composed. Drapery covers his upper body, but the legs that emerge below are unnaturally positioned.

In contrast to Achates, who seems to lean back, Aeneas's body is extended in a stance that implies speech, with him stepping forward and his right hand reaching out.<sup>88</sup> This speaking stance correlates to the text in line 437, after the passage depicted and the description of the bees, in which Aeneas exclaims "Oh blessed are those whose walls already rise!" However awkward his pose and his anatomy, Aeneas stands above Carthage, surveying the activity, just as he does literally in the text. The configuration of these two figures derives from an established visual tradition that is seen on Trajan's column of 113CE as well as in nave mosaics in Santa Maria Maggiore.<sup>89</sup> This depiction characterizes Aeneas in the figure of the Emperor leading his troops, as the earlier iconography would suggest, and this style of depiction follows the Trojan leader through the manuscript.



Trajan Addressing his Troops  
Column of Trajan  
Rome, 113 CE

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<sup>88</sup> Wright, The Vatican Vergil: A Masterpiece of Late Antique Art 20.

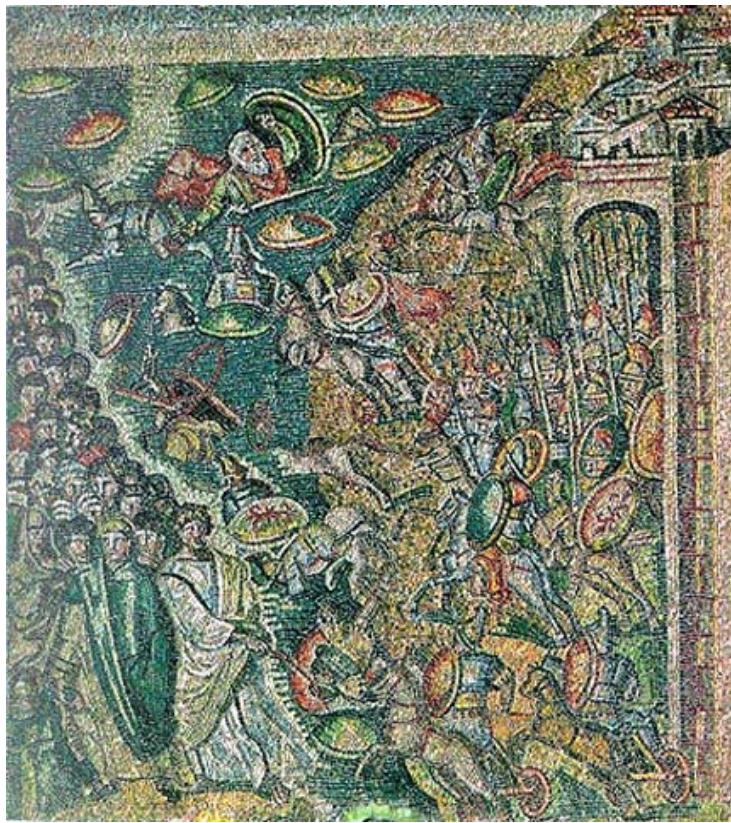
<sup>89</sup> Stevenson 40.

The space below and to the right of Aeneas, intended to depict outlying Carthage, is composed with clumsy spatial perspective, but it maintains textual accuracy. Below Aeneas is a quarry with two workers and one overseer, who extract the raw materials for construction. In the foreground and background right, there are stonemasons working with supervisors watching. In these depictions we see Vergil's description of Carthage at work. The *ardentes* Carthaginians, working feverishly to establish the city actually *ducere muros/molirique arcem et minibus subvolvere saxa*. The image is not displaying these action in progress, although we see stone arches and walls. The *muros*, presented at the foreground of the illustration, attests to the progress that the city has already made. And the workers laboring under the supervision of overseers illustrates the establishment of order and laws that Vergil describes: *iura magistratusque legunt sanctumque senatum*. The delegation of power from the nobility down to the individual workers and overseers demonstrates the stability and order for which the Carthaginians strove.

In both Vergil's description and the artist's illustration, we find that the Carthaginians are presented as similar to, if not in line with, the Roman model of polity. In contrast to the barbarianism that Rome usually associates with foreigners, the Carthaginians are remarkably Roman. They have established a senate and an effective delegation of power, as we see by the supervisor and workers at the stone quarry. In the particular image, we find the stone arch, a trademark of Roman architecture, in the foreground of the illustration. In the center of the image, we also find a supervisor in Roman dress. He wears a white toga that stands out as a Roman convention. Therefore, the image, along with the text, is displaying a very Roman depiction of the foreign nation of Carthage, a nation who will eventually go to war with Rome.



We find a similar construction of space in the mosaic of The Crossing of the Red Sea from the Santa Maria Maggiore. Just like the *Vergilius Vaticanus* illustration, the Crossing of the Red Sea is a compressed horizontal composition. The main elements are arranged vertically in the square illustration to demonstrate distance; the drowning Pharaoh, for example, is placed at the top of the image, displaying her distance. The main elements – the people, the architecture, the sea – are stacked on top of one another to create an unnatural pictorial plane.



The Crossing of the Red Sea  
432-40, Mosaic  
Sta. Maria Maggiore, Rome.

Although the depictions are accurate and reflective of the text, they lack spatial perspective. The different buildings and scenes of work seem to rest on top of one another. The two stonemasonries to the right of the image are intended to be behind one

another, yet their depictions are deficient of natural space. The artist attempted to use shades of color to suggest deep recession in space, which are seen to the right of Aeneas.<sup>90</sup> These gradations of color do not disguise the problems of perspective this image has, but the image succeeds in capturing the concepts of motion and progress that Vergil highlights.

## Meeting of Dido and Aeneas

The next illustration is of the meeting of Dido and Aeneas. In this panel, Dido is elevated on a platform and the Trojan wanderers greeting her. We see a regal Dido and a gracious Aeneas. This image combines two scenes from the text: first, Dido and Aeneas meet in lines 613-642; second, Achates heads back to the Trojan ships in lines 643-656. With a uniform light blue background color and darker highlights, the image serves as a connector between episodes. The scene follows an iconographical model of representations of an emperor greeting foreign dignitaries. We see this standard in the Christian iconography of the sarcophagus depicting *Adoration of the Magi*, in which a female dignitary, replacing the emperor, greets the bearded Joseph. The height and space limitations of a sarcophagus force the image to exclude a platform for the dignitary and to force the figures uncomfortably together.<sup>91</sup> The running position of Achates also follows a precedent in Christian iconography of the messenger. The previous image of the discovery of Carthage precedes this running action by Achates. In the earlier image, we see that Achates stands behind Aeneas, leaning back from the center of Carthage. Here, he is running away from Carthage and back to the Trojan ships. The messenger

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<sup>90</sup> Wright, The Vatican Vergil: A Masterpiece of Later Antique Art 20.

<sup>91</sup> Stevenson 97.



iconography surfaces in the 5<sup>th</sup> century Quedlinburg Itala fragment of biblical texts with *Solomon's herald to Hiram* in Itala as well as in the mosaic of *The Manor of Lord Julius* in the Bardo Museum of Tunis with a herald delivering a roll to Lord Julius.



Quedlinburg Itala fragment  
(Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Cod. theol. lat. fol. 485)  
5<sup>th</sup> Century

The main surviving precedent for this illustration is Christian, so it demonstrates the variety of iconographic sources that the artists of the *Vergilius Vaticanus* took into account. Though the *Aeneid* follows the Epic Cycle of poetry and illustration, it is not limited to those visual representations. We can see the historical context – the popularity of Christianity – at the time of the *Vergilius Vaticanus*'s production emerging in the manuscript itself.

## Venus Sends Cupid in the Guise of Ascanius

This episode is followed by Venus sending Cupid in the disguise of sleeping Ascanius. These events begin with 1.657-663, in which Venus devises her plan to enchant Dido with love for Aeneas:

At Cytherea novas artes, nova pectore versat  
consilia ut faciem mutates et ora Cupido  
pro dulci Ascanio veniat, donisque furem  
incendat reginam atque ossibus implicet ignem;  
quippe domum timet ambiguam Tyriosque bilinguis;  
urit atrox Iuno et sub noctem cura recursat.  
Ergo his aligerum dictis adfatur amorem.

But the Cytherean goddess in her heart thought of new charms  
And schemes so that Cupido should transform his appearance and face  
And come in the form of sweet Ascanius, and with gifts incite passion  
In the queen and set this flame into her bones;  
Indeed Venus feared the uncertain home and the multilingual Tyrians;  
Cruel Juno burned and revisited her concerns at night.  
Therefore with these words she spoke to Love.

In this description, we see the themes of love and passion that will emerge powerfully in Book 4. The words *pectore*, *furem ignem* and *amorem* are typical in the vocabulary of Latin love literature. Despite the powerful wording in the Vergilian passage, the image focuses on the events in 1.664-688, in which Venus places her son Cupid, who is disguised as the sleeping Ascanius, into Dido's lap, giving him instructions on how to unite Dido and Aeneas in love. The one image of two distinct scenes seems to paraphrase the events around it, as we see only the actions that directly affect the narrative. Within the image, the two scenes are separated spatially by the dark blue stream. The background follows the same form as the preceding illustrations, with a blue over wash and dark blue stream.



Venus sends Cupid in the Guise of Ascanius  
 Folio 17, recto  
 Vergilius Vaticanus

## Laocoon

The first surviving illustration of Book 2 depicts Laocoon preparing a sacrifice as two serpents emerge from the sea, attacking Laocoon and his sons. The illustration takes up the bottom half of the page, with the top half of the page containing the end of Sinon's deceitful ploy for Trojan trust, lines 2.192-198. The following page contains lines 2.199-224:

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Hic alius maius miseris multoque tremendum<br>Obicitur magis atque improvida pectora turbat.  | 200 |
| Laocoon, ductus Neptuno sorte sacerdos,<br>sollemnis taurum ingentem mactabat ad aras.<br>ecce autem gemini a Tenedo tranquilla per alta<br>(horresco referens) immensis orbibus angues<br>incumbunt pelago pariterque ad litora tendunt; | 205 |
| pectora quorum inter fluctus arrecta iubaeque<br>sanguineae superant undas, pars cetera pontum<br>pone legit sinuatque immensa uolumine terga.<br>fit sonitus spumante salo; iamque arua tenebant   |     |

ardentisque oculos suffecti sanguine et igni                    210  
sibila lambebant linguis uibrantibus ora.  
diffugimus uisu exsanguis. illi agmine certo  
Laocoonta petunt; et primum parua duorum  
corpora natorum serpens amplexus uterque  
implicat et miseros morsu depascitur artus;                    215  
post ipsum auxilio subeuntem ac tela ferentem  
corripiunt spirisque ligant ingentibus; et iam  
bis medium amplexi, bis collo squamea circum  
terga dati superant capite et ceruicibus altis.  
ille simul manibus tendit diuellere nodos                    220  
perfusus sanie uittas atroque ueneno,  
clamores simul horrendos ad sidera tollit:  
qualis mugitus, fugit cum saucius aram  
taurus et incertam excussit ceruice securim.

But there another greater trepidation  
exposed us and disturbed our not anticipating souls.  
Laocoon, the head priest of Neptune by lot  
In solemnity was sacrificing a large bull on the altars.  
Behold! The twin serpents from Tenedos over the tranquil ocean  
- I shudder to remember – with their large coils,  
They lean upon the sea alike, and they reached the shore;  
Their chests rose along the tide and their sanguine crests  
Overtopped the waves; the rest followed behind  
along the sea, and the long backs curved into coils.  
A sound arose from the foaming sea; and now they reached the coast,  
And their eyes suffused with blood and fire,  
They played upon their hissing mouths with a vibrating tongue.  
We fled, left lifeless by this sight: with certain purpose  
they were seeking Laocoon; and first around the small bodies  
of his two sons both serpents twined and entangled themselves,  
and both fed on their poor limbs with bites.  
Afterwards the father, coming in to help and carrying a spear,  
They seized, and the bound him with their immense coils; and now  
Twice wrapped around his middle and twice placed around his neck  
Their scaly backs, they overpowered him with their heads and long necks.  
At the same time, he tried to tear apart the knots with his hands,  
His headband bathed in gore and dark venom,  
And he raised his horrifying yells to the sky;  
Such bellowings as when a wounded bull flees the altar  
And he breaks from the uncertain axe at his neck.

This passage is filled with descriptive details, but the artist's rendering lacks the excitement that the text creates. If we look first at the text, we find that Vergil included

vivid imagery. Line 201 contains an introduction to Laocoon – *Laocoon ductus Neptuno sorte sacerdos* – that establishes his significance, which is further strengthened by his sacrificing *taurum ingentem*. Laocoon is presented to the reader as a pious figure, which is exemplified by his dutiful sacrifice to the gods. Laocoon’s sacrifice is quickly interrupted by Vergil’s exclamation of *ecce*, which warns of the fast-approaching serpents. The *gemini...angues* and their long coils literally enclose lines 204-205 as Vergil describes their race to the shores of Troy. This word placement reflects the snakes’ deadly attack on Laocoon. We see their impact of the serpents on Aeneas as well with his parenthetical remarks (*horresco referens*) in line 204, as the memory causes him to shudder. Vergil emphasizes the serpents’ power and size by describing the positions of the serpents’ individual body parts – *pectoral* (line 206), *iubae* (line 206) and *pars cetera* (line 207). Each body part swims through the water or overtops it without reference to resistance from the sea or Neptune, the gods of the seas, to whom Laocoon sacrifices.

As the serpents slither through the waters and onto the coast, Vergil notes the alarming hissing sound that they make: *fit sonitus spumante salo* (209). The noise emerges from the sound of the words: the line itself hisses with a repetitive “s” sounds. The assonance of the “s” continues intermittently throughout the description of the serpents, notably in line 210 with *suffecti sanguine* and line 214 with *serpens amplexus*. The eyes of the serpents, *ardentisque oculos suffecti sanguine et igni*, burning suffused with blood and fire, conveys a striking image. We can see the color, excitement and heat of the serpents that the text creates. And this bloody image is contrasted directly by the description of the lifeless Trojans who flee in disgust and fear at the sight of the

approaching serpents (212). The Trojans are *exsanguis* in the face of bloody-eyed, fiery serpents, and the fear is literally sucking the life from them.

After the snakes reach the shore and attack Laocoon's young sons and then Laocoon himself, Vergil emphasizes the tangling, suffocating effect of the serpents. The bodies of his sons are *parva*, small, (213) compared to the *spiris...ingentibus*, long coils, (217) of the serpents. Further, the word order of line 215 creates a visual effect to describe the vicious attack of the serpents. The *morsus* of the serpents literally chomp on the *miseros...artus* of the sons, separating the *miseros* from *artus*. The overwhelming strength of the serpents continues as they pursue Laocoon himself. As they attack him, the serpents overcome him (*superant*, 207). They not only bind him or subdue him, but they literally overpower him. Their source of strength in the head of the neck (*capite et cervicibus altis*, 219) contrast with Laocoon's efforts in line 216 to fight off the serpents with a spear: Laocoon seeks out a spear to aid him, the serpents only have to rely on their natural features to subdue others.

Vergil again presents a strong visual image for the reader as he describes Laocoon in his defeat. His struggle becomes vivid with the depiction in line 221 of his headband, drenched in blood and gore: *perfusus sanie vitas atroque veneno*. The serpents entwine their victims, but Laocoon puts up a desperate effort for survival. And as Laocoon faces his final moments of life, Vergil returns to the imagery of a sacrificial bull in lines 222-224:

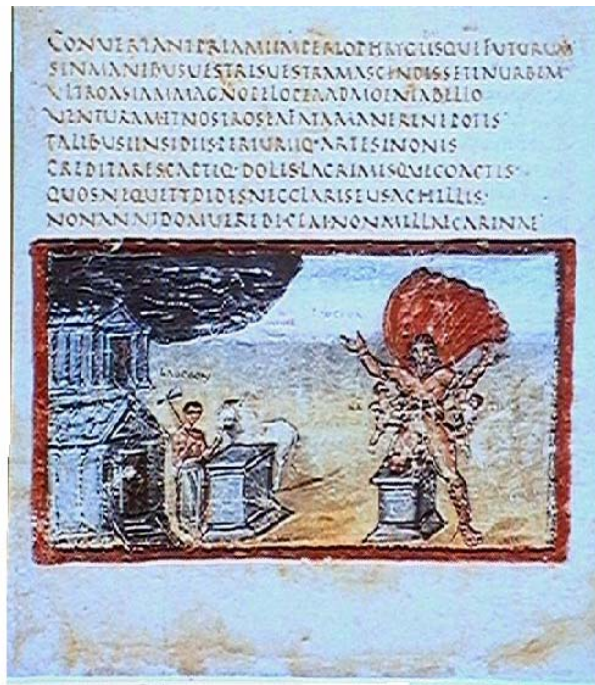
clamores simul horrendos ad sidera tollit:  
qualis mugitus, fugit cum saucius aram  
taurus et incertam excussit ceruice securim.

At the same time he raised his horrifying yells to the sky,  
Such bellowings as when a wounded bull flees the altar

And breaks from the uncertain axe at his neck.

The final phrase of this passage an element of ring-composition to the account of Laocoon. In the description of his bellowing, we can hear his moans with the recurrence of the “m,” creating a moaning or wailing quality to his cries. Just like the bull that he sacrifices to Neptune, Laocoon himself is a sacrificial victim in the greater events of the Trojan War. His death is both sacred and pivotal, sparking the acceptance of the Trojan Horse and consequently the fall of Troy.

The illustration of this episode in the manuscript is quite conservative, forgoing the gory details of Vergil’s words in favor of a simple depiction. The illustration attempts to depict two separate yet related scenes – first, Laocoon sacrificing a bull to Neptune, and second, Laocoon and his sons being smothered by the twin serpents. The two scenes appear on opposite sides of the page, divided down the middle. We can tell that these events are not simultaneous because both of the figures are labeled *LAOCOON*.





Laocoon  
Folio 18, verso  
Vergilius Vaticanus

At the left, in the earlier episode, we see a small, beardless Laocoon preparing to sacrifice a bull on the altar of Neptune. The statue of Neptune sits inside the doorway of the temple next to Laocoon. The building follows a standard structure that continues through the *Vergilius Vaticanus*, especially in scenes of Carthage, where Dido makes a sacrifice in lines 4.54-67 and also when Venus send Cupid to Dido as Ascanius in line 1.657. The structures, like this one, are rectangular and windowless with a pediment, engaged columns, and small steps.

Laocoon, in the two phases of this scene, is the only figure represented, although the text does remark about the presence of a crowd of Trojans, who flee in disgust at the sight of the slithering serpents. We first see Laocoon dressed in the attire of a *victimarius*, a long skirt and no chest covering, as he holds the axe ready to sacrifice the bull. The portrait of Laocoon sacrificing follows the traditional depiction of the clothing and accessories of a *victimarius*. We find this portrait in altar reliefs of sacrifice. In first century Roman Pompeii Forum, the altar relief of the Sanctuary of the Genius of Augustus displays the bull being led to an altar and the *victimarius*, holding the axe with which he will cut the bull's throat in lines 201-202.





Sacrifice of a Bull  
Sanctuary of the Genius of Augustus, Pompeii Forum  
Altar relief, 1<sup>st</sup> century

Looming ominously in the background of the painting are the serpents slinking through the water. Their long coils extend along the surface of the water, an image that is present in the text (206-209). The painting, just like the Vergilian text, emphasizes the size and length of the serpents as they approach the Trojan shores. This mini-scene illustrates lines 201-202 and establishes the context for the rest of the episode, yet it jumps immediately to the next phase of the scene.

On the right side of the page, Laocoon and his sons are enveloped by the vicious serpents. In this scene, Laocoon is fully nude and larger in size and muscle mass than his previous portrait to the left. His sons are indeed *parva* (213) in comparison to the snakes, but the serpents appear small and insignificant next to Laocoon's huge body.



Laocoon and His Sons

Hagesandros, Athenodoros and Polydoros of Rhodes  
c. 175-150 BCE  
Marble; Museo Pio Clementino, Vatican

The depiction of Laocoon follows an early iconographic model of this scene from Hagesandros, Athenodoros and Polydoros' marble sculpture of Laocoon and his sons.

The Hellenistic statue of c. 175-150 BCE displays an anguished Laocoon fighting off the serpents, while they entangle him and his sons. The statue has a remarkable history.

Excavated in 1506 in Rome, where it was immediately recognized as the marble sculpture that the first century CE Roman scholar Pliny the Elder described in *Natural History* 36.37-8:

The reputation of some [artists], distinguished through their work may be, has been obscured by the number of artists engaged with them on a simple task, because no individual monopolizes the credit nor again can several of them be named on equal terms. This is the case with Laocoon in palace of the Emperor Titus, a work superior to any painting and any bronze. Laocoon, his children and the wonderful coils of snakes are carved from a single block in accordance with an agreed plan, by those eminent craftsmen, Hagesander, Polydorus, and Athenodours, all of Rhodes.<sup>92</sup>

The statue was a catalyst of artistic creation in the early sixteenth century Italy, inspiring engravers, painters, and artists to recreate the stature and expressions depicted on the Rhodesian statue.<sup>93</sup> Michelangelo, present at the rediscovery of the statue, has been thought to have forged this Hellenistic statue, but he also contributed to the attention that *Laocoon* received; he concentrated on the expressiveness of Laocoon's face and body, instead of looking generally at the whole Laocoon sculpture group.<sup>94</sup> Michelangelo therefore concentrated on

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<sup>92</sup> Pliny the Elder. *Natural History* 36.37-38. trans. D.E. Eicholz. Loeb Library, vol. 10 (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), 29, 31.

<sup>93</sup> Richard Brilliant. *My Laocoon*. 5-7.

<sup>94</sup> Brilliant, *My Laocoon*. 38.

capturing the emotional state of the figures in his own sculptures, as we later see in his *Pietà* or *Moses*.

Not only did the Hellenistic sculpture influence Michelangelo in his sculptures, but it also spread across other artistic media. The Italian engraver modeled his depiction of Laocoon and his sons on the Hellenistic sculpture, displaying Laocoon's pained face and struggling sons. Dente even excludes Laocoon's right arm, the arm of the sculpture that had been damaged.



Laocoon  
Marco Dente de Ravenna  
Early 16<sup>th</sup> century, engraving.  
Harvey D. Parker Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

The Hellenistic statue vividly displays Laocoon's anguished expression and tortured body position. The depiction of Laocoon in the manuscript clearly borrows from the statue in terms of Laocoon's size and musculature as well as the positioning of the three figures and the serpents. However, the artist of the *Vergilius Vaticanus* does not tilt Laocoon's body; instead, he stands quite balanced, with his sons and the serpents hanging off him. Whereas the artists of the sculpture positioned Laocoon's left hand close to his

side and his right arm raised, the artist of the *Vergilius Vaticanus* modifies this body position.

The depiction of Laocoon in the *Vergilius Vaticanus* also finds an iconographic parallel in the Roman wall paintings. In the painting of *Baby Hercules and the Serpents* in the Villa of the Vettii, Pompeii, we see a rather muscular baby Hercules intertwined with a serpent, just as Laocoon is.



Baby Hercules and the Serpent  
1<sup>st</sup> century CE  
Wall Painting  
House of the Vettii, Pompeii

Although Hercules's arms are down at his sides, we see striking similarities in the body position. First of all, the serpents are coiled primarily around his limbs, just as in the *Vergilius Vaticanus*. Secondly, both Hercules and Laocoon are depicted with striking musculature; Hercules is only a child in this scene, yet his muscles are fully developed and buff, and Laocoon, juxtaposed to the portrait of him as a *victimarius*, has a remarkably sculpted physique. We also have surviving first century CE Roman wall paintings of the Laocoon scene itself, one of which is found at the House of Menander in

Pompeii. In this painting, we find Laocoon attempting to fend off the serpents, with his children lying helplessly below him.



The Death of Laocoon  
1<sup>st</sup> century CE  
Roman wall painting  
House of Menander, Pompeii

A red cape is his only piece of clothing. The ripples in the cape help to establish movement in the image. The sacrificial aspect to Laocoon's death, which appears in lines 222-224 of the text, is reflected vividly in his body positioning. His right knee rests on the altar in front of him, as if he himself were the sacrificial victim. Although the text outlines how the serpents overpower him, the snakes appear to be unsuccessful in subduing him in this depiction. They wind themselves around his limbs, but Laocoon's size almost seems to overwhelm the serpents. With no background elements besides the color gradations, Laocoon is the central presence of the right side of the painting. He is a powerful figure, who does not surrender to the strangling strength of the serpents, as the text dictates.

## The Fall of Troy

Vergil continues to outline the events following Laocoon's death and the fall of Troy for his Carthaginian audience. He describes the journey of Greek ships from Tenedos onto the Trojan shores and their infiltration of the unsuspecting city in lines 254-267:

et iam Argiua phalanx instructis nauibus ibat  
a Tenedo tacitae per amica silentia lunae                   255  
litora nota petens, flammam cum regia puppis  
extulerat, fatisque deum defensus iniquis  
inclusos utero Danaos et pinea furtim  
laxat claustra Sinon. illos patefactus ad auras  
reddit equus laetique cauo se robore promunt                   260  
Thessandrus Sthenelusque duces et dirus Vlixes,  
demissum lapsi per funem, Acamasque Thoasque  
Pelidesque Neoptolemus primusque Machaon  
et Menelaus et ipse doli fabricator Epeos.  
inuadunt urbem somno uinoque sepultam;                   265  
caeduntur uigiles, portisque patentibus omnis  
accipiunt socios atque agmina conscia iungunt.

And the Greek phalanx was already traveling on built ships  
From Tenedos through the friendly silence of the quiet night,  
Seeking our well-known shores, when the regal stern had raised the flame,  
And Sinon, protected by fate and those gods hostile to the Trojans,  
Released the Danaians enclosed in the horse's belly and secretly  
He opened the bolts of pines. Having been opened, the horse  
Returned them to the fresh-air, and they produced themselves from the hollow  
oak,  
The joyous leader Thessandrus and Sthenelus, and harsh Ulysses,  
Sliding down the released rope, and then Acamas and Thoas  
And Pelides and Neoptolemus, and noble Machaon,  
And Menelaus, and the inventor of the device himself, Epeus.  
They invaded the city slumbering because of sleep as well as wine.  
Those awake were cut down and with the gates opened,  
They welcomed all their companions and they joined in this conscious course.

This passage introduces the Greek victory over the Trojans. The ancient reader would have expected this outcome, and Vergil inserts this sense of predestination into the

text. This passage opens with *et iam*, and already, in line 254 because the Greeks had been crafting and preparing this attack plan for a long time. Vergil describes the lengths the Greeks took to infiltrate Troy silently, ensuring that the Trojans would be surprised and unprepared. In line 255, we read of the Greek phalanx sailing *a Tenedo tacitae per amica silentia lunae*, through the friendly silence of the night. This line, which is entirely dactylic, reflects quietude of night, with each little dactyl resembling a light footstep or surge of the phalanx towards Troy.

Vergil then begins an account of what transpired once the Greeks reached the Trojan shores. Sinon, the subject of the clause from line 257-259, does not appear by name in the text until the very end of the clause. Instead, Vergil calls him in line 257 *defensus*, protected, and we can see his sources of protection surrounding him literally in this line. Guarded *fatisque deum...iniquis* (257), by fate and by those gods hostile to the Trojans, Sinon is free to release his fellow Greeks from the horse, as he does in the next line. After Sinon has opened the latch, the men spill out of the confining structure, *laeti*, delighted, to be released, *demissum lapsi per funem* ('sliding down the rope, having been sent down' 2.262). Vergil catalogues the different Trojan leaders that emerge from the horse and descend the ladder in lines 261-4. The listing of individuals in this context seems to mimic the action described. One by one the leaders emerge and descend, just as in the text Vergil lists them one by one, coming out and sliding down.

The Greeks immediately invade the *urbem somno vinoque sepultam* ('the city slumbering because of sleep and wine' 2.265). Just as the walls surround the citizens of Troy, the *urbem...sepultam* surrounds the *somno...vinoque*, and the sleep and wine are plentiful in the city at that time. Once the Greeks have entered the slumbering city, they



go forth with their battle plan, joining together and destroying the city: *caeduntur vigiles, portisque patentibus omnis/accipiunt socios atque agmina conscia iugunt* ('those awake are slain, and with the gates opened, they welcome their companions and join their mindful course' line 266-267).



The Fall of Troy  
Folio 19, recto  
Vergilius Vaticanus

This passage commences just below the illustration in the *Vergilius Vaticanus*, and the artist is loyal to the Vergilian text in his depiction for the most part; his is able to capture the Trojans' surprise and lack of preparation as well as the Greek's skillful and bloody infiltration of the city. Within the red and black picture frame, we find the walls of Troy painted onto the page, surrounding the scene of a fallen Troy. Although the upper right corner of the image is lost, it probably completed the outline of the wall. This small section that the walls surround in this illustration appears to reflect the whole of Troy, not displaying the actual size of the city. In the upper left corner, where the illustration does



survive, the image offers a tiny view past the Trojan wall out to the sea shore, where the Greek ships have already arrived from Tenedos. Just as in the text, where the action was undertaken *iam* (254), “already,” the image demonstrates the same quality. In this view, the artist paints a waning crescent moon along with three stars. The reduced size of the moon contributes to the silent and stealth effect that Vergil alluded to in the text, of the Greek ships traveling softly in the night. The background of this image is distinctly darker than the previous illustrations, which had light blue over-washes. Instead, this image contains a dark blue and brown ground wash that places the setting at night.

The image also displays the Greek leaders emerging from the horse and sliding down the rope, as Vergil describes in line 262. Although the horse is disproportionately sized, appearing too small compared to the men around it, it is still the largest and most imposing figure in the painting. We can imagine the succession of Greeks emerging from inside this enormous horse. In this image, a figure peaks out from the opening as another descends the rope to the ground. And two others stand around and in front of the horse, possibly having just come out of the structure.

However, the image neglects the figure of Sinon, who plays such a pivotal role in Vergil’s account of the fall of Troy. He had earlier convinced the Trojans to accept the horse and he now enjoys the protection of fate and the gods; yet, he is absent in this image. Also notably missing from the image is the slumber of the city of Troy. Vergil makes specific note in line 265 of the text that remarks of the wine and sleepiness that have lulled the Trojans to sleep. Yet, in the illustration, the Trojans are awake, having been interrupted from their feasting, relaxation, and celebration. The round bolsters indicate that this was indeed a celebration that the Trojans were enjoying, in contrast to

the peaceful slumber that Vergil describes. The Greeks and the Trojans battle each other throughout the picture plane, but the Greeks appear better prepared for fighting. They are in battle gear, while the Trojans are not. However, the Trojan garments are difficult to identify because of their position in the illustration. The Greeks clearly dominate the Trojans, both in the Trojan War and the individual battles pictured here. Each Trojan has been subdued by his Greek counterpart in the image.

This juxtaposition of the horse and the massacre of banqueting Trojans is not unfamiliar to the visual tradition. The image in the *Vergilius Vaticanus* seems to draw from the decorative art of the *Iliupersis*, which begins with the decision to bring the horse into the city and celebrate their presumed defense of Troy, according to Proclus' *Chrestomathia*. Therefore, several visual elements are drawing from earlier precedents of depiction, rather than from the text itself. We find the same context in the visual tradition of the *Iliupersis*. An Etruscan cinerary urn of the third century BC, housed in the Museo Archeologico of Florence, displays the same juxtaposition of the horse with Trojan celebration and defeat; and a Ceramic Medallion of the *Iliupersis* in the Musée Vienne follows this precedent.<sup>95</sup>

## **The Omen of the Flames**

Later in Book 2, as the Trojans are besieged by the Greeks, the Trojans scramble to defend their city from impending destruction. Aeneas, about to rush out in battle, witnesses the appearance of flames around the head of his son, Ascanius:

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<sup>95</sup> Stevenson.102.

ecce autem complexa pedes in limine coniunx  
 haerebat, parvumque patri tendebat Iulum:  
 'si periturus abis, et nos rape in omnia tecum; 675  
 sin aliquam expertus sumptis spem ponis in armis,  
 hanc primum tutare domum. cui paruus Iulus,  
 cui pater et coniunx quondam tua dicta relinquer?'  
 Talia uociferans gemitu tectum omne replebat,  
 cum subitum dictuque oritur mirabile monstrum. 680  
 namque manus inter maestorumque ora parentum  
 ecce leuis summo de uertice uisus Iuli  
 fundere lumen apex, tactuque innoxia mollis  
 lambere flamma comas et circum tempora pasci.  
 nos pavidum trepidare metu crinemque flagrantem 685  
 excutere et sanctos restinguere fontibus ignis.  
 at pater Anchises oculos ad sidera laetus  
 extulit et caelo palmas cum uoce tetendit:  
 'Iuppiter omnipotens, precibus si flecteris ullis,  
 aspice nos, hoc tantum, et si pietate meremur, 690  
 da deinde auxilium, pater, atque haec omina firma.'

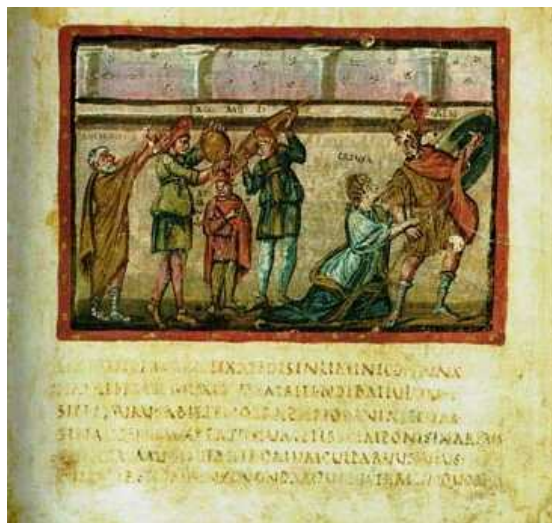
Here however my wife was clinging to my feet at the threshold  
 And she was pledging small Iulus to his father:  
 'If you, about to go away, do leave, then take us all with you;  
 If you, remaining, do no place any hope in taking up arms,  
 Save this first home. To whom is little Iulus,  
 To whom is your father and to whom ever with your words am I left?'  
 Voicing she filled the whole roof with a groan,  
 When a sight arose, sudden and miraculous to speak.  
 And for while in the hands and mouths of the despondent parents,  
 Here from the top of Iulus's head it was seen that  
 A high flame arose, and with a harmless touch gently  
 The flame met his hair and fed on his temples.  
 We were troubled with trembling fear, and his flaming hair  
 We drove out and we extinguished the sacred fires with the water fountains.  
 And my father Anchises rejoicing raised his eyes to the stars, and  
 He stretched his palms to the sky, with his voice he said:  
 'All-powerful Jupiter, if you will be affected by any prayers,  
 Look upon us: this such thing, if we are merited with piety,  
 Give us this help then, father, and this firm omen.'

In this passage, we find a desperate Creusa, wife of Aeneas, seeking his  
 protection, and also an instance of divine intervention. Creusa displays her desperation  
 with her impassioned plea to Aeneas, begging him to consider his son, his father and her

as he plans to depart for battle. In a tricolon crescendo in lines 267-268, she asks him to consider all three people he intends to abandon: *cui parvus Iulus, cui pater et coniunx quondam tua dicta relinquitur*. Creusa, Iulus and Anchises are very much the passive recipients of Aeneas's actions; therefore, Creusa's actions are only expressed in the passive voice, such as *relinquitur*.

In both Creusa's beseeching and the omen of flames, their son is a tool for negotiation. Creusa extends *parvum... patri Iulum*, extends small Iulus to his father, in order to evoke loyalty or emotion from Aeneas; and, Jupiter uses Iulus to present his omen to Aeneas and his family. The transition from one scene to another in this episode quite sudden; it is signaled in line 680: *cum subitum dictaque oritur mirabile monstrum* (when a sight, sudden and miraculous to describe). This phrase catches the reader's attention as well as the attention of the participants in the scene. Immediately, in front of the hands and faces of the home, the flame appears on Iulus' head. In describing the tip of the flame, the subject of the clause, Vergil delays the *lumen apex* until the end of the clause, prolonging the suspense of the situation. And Vergil takes great pains to downplay the danger of the fire. The fire touches Iulus *tactu... innoxia mollis* (683, 'gently with a harmless touch'). Therefore, the flames clearly suggest a sign to Aeneas and his family as Troy is being conquered around them. Vergil employs *innoxia* later in the *Aeneid* 5.92, when describing a *vulnera*, wound, as curable. This parallel in word choice that occurs later in the *Aeneid* demonstrates the innocuousness that the word suggests. The historical infinitives *trepidare*, *excutere*, and *restringere* place greater vividness on the scene. And at the end of the passage, the father Anchises beseeches

Jupiter, just as Creusa beseeched Aeneas in the beginning, and Anchises asks for a sign of ratification of this omen, the flames.



The Omen of the Flames  
Folio 22, recto  
Vergilius Vaticanus

The image is framed by text in the *Vergilius Vaticanus*. It attempts to remain closely linked to the text. We can see the individual events occurring in this one episode as Creusa pleads with Aeneas, Ascanius's head becomes enflamed, and Anchises beseeches Jupiter for a sign. The stage is quite shallow, with no spatial perspective required. A simple architectural background and small strip of ground have been added to create a space for the figures. The figural representations display traditional iconographic models. Aeneas and Creusa mirror the late antique iconography on the Contorniate

medallion of c. 350 CE, which depicts Circe and Ulysses. The figures of Aeneas and Creusa follow the model of victor and vanquished that is a traditional classical design.<sup>96</sup> The figural representation of Anchises is almost identical to the depiction of the Prayer of Samuel in the 5<sup>th</sup> century Quedlinburg Itala fragment (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Cod. theol. lat. fol. 485).<sup>97</sup>

This crowded scene, in an attempt to include all the elements of the passage, neglects Vergil's points of emphasis in the text. The omen of the flames is an important sign in the course of the epic, encouraging Aeneas to flee the city rather than die for doomed Troy. Furthermore, Ascanius is a central figure as Aeneas's son who will continue the family lineage to eventually found Rome. However, Ascanius and the flames are not central in this image; they are placed towards the left side of the painting. The flame is not clearly illustrated. The attendants in the image, who are non-existent in the text, have already extinguished the flames. What is left, therefore, is a cluster of people, all indicating different steps in the same episode.

## **The Visit of the Penates**

After departing Troy, Aeneas journeys to Italy in order for his descendents to found Rome. He has many adventures along the way. Having arrived at Pergema in Crete earlier, Aeneas and the Trojans find drought and desolation. The *penates*, whose images Aeneas carried from Troy, visit Aeneas in his sleep to persuade him to continue his journey to Italy:

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<sup>96</sup> Stevenson 48.

<sup>97</sup> Stevenson 48.

Nox erat et terris animalia somnus habebat:  
 effigies sacrae diuum Phrygiique penates,  
 quos mecum a Troia mediisque ex ignibus urbis  
 extuleram, visi ante oculos astare iacentis 150  
 in somnis multo manifesti lumine, qua se  
 plena per insertas fundebat luna fenestras;  
 tum sic adfari et curas his demere dictis:  
 'quod tibi delato Ortygiam dicturus Apollo est,  
 hic canit et tua nos en ultro ad limina mittit. 155  
 nos te Dardania incensa tuaque arma secuti,  
 nos tumidum sub te permensi classibus aequor,  
 idem uenturos tollemus in astra nepotes  
 imperiumque urbi dabimus. tu moenia magnis  
 magna para longumque fugae ne linque laborem. 160  
 mutandae sedes. non haec tibi litora suasit  
 Delius aut Cretae iussit considerare Apollo.  
 est locus, Hesperiam Grai cognomine dicunt,  
 terra antiqua, potens armis atque ubere glaebae;  
 Oenotri coluere uiri; nunc fama minores 165  
 Italiam dixisse ducis de nomine gentem.  
 hae nobis propriae sedes, hinc Dardanus ortus  
 Iasiusque pater, genus a quo principe nostrum.  
 surge age et haec laetus longaeuo dicta parenti  
 haud dubitanda refer: Corythum terrasque requirat 170  
 Ausonias; Dictaea negat tibi Iuppiter arua.',

It was night, and sleep held the living beings in the lands:  
 The sacred likeness of the gods and the Phrygian penates,  
 Whom from Troy and from the middle of the fires of the city  
 I took with me. They seemed to stand before my eyes in my lingering,  
 Sleep, clear in much light, where the full moon poured through the windows;  
 Then thus they spoke and they remove my cares with these words:  
 'What Apollo is about to say to you, having been driven away from Ortygia,  
 He speaks here melodiously and he sent us beyond to your threshold.  
 We followed you, incensed Dardanian, and your arms,  
 We came under the rising waters with you in your ships.  
 We also shall raise the coming descendents to the stars,  
 And we will give authority to the city: prepare the great walls  
 And do not abandon the long toil of fleeing,  
 Changing seats: The Delian god does not recommend this shore for you,  
 And Apollo did not order you to settle in Crete.  
 There is a land, the Greek called it Hesperia,  
 An ancient land, capable in arms and in land;  
 The Oenotiran men inhabited it; now by fame the lesser leaders  
 Called the race Italian by name:  
 These are the proper places for us; there is the Dardanian growth,

And father Iasius, from this foremost our peoples.  
Come on, rise up, and do not, being joyful, carry back to the aged parents  
Doubting words: search for Corythus and the Ausonian lands;  
Jupiter denies you of Cretan altars.

In this passage, we find a pivotal moment in which the *penates* confront Aeneas and urge him to continue his wanderings in order to eventually settle in Italy. In prefacing Aeneas's encounter with the *penates*, Vergil highlights the light that surround the household gods; they are manifested in much light, where the full moon pours through the windows: *multo manifesti lumine, qua se/plena per insertas fundebat luna fenestras* (3.151-152). The language is straight forward; the *penates* have been sent by Apollo and foretell his words to Aeneas. Vergil signals the beginning of prophesy to using the verb *canere* in line 155. Vergil employs this usage again in 6.99 when he describes the foretelling of future *horrendas ambages*, horrible wanderings, by the Cumean Sibyll. Therefore, we know that this is a prophecy of the destiny of Aeneas and the Trojans.

The *penates* first express their close ties to Aeneas, being that he carried them out of Troy and brought them along on his ships. The account of their travels with him establishes a degree of trust and comfort. Given the principles of reciprocity in the ancient world, it is not surprising that the *penates* would grant favors to Aeneas with the devotion he has showed to the household gods. As they continue in their prophecy, they give a description of the place where the Trojans will settle. They do not explain the ordeals that the Trojans will face on the way to Italy, only describing the origins and the lands and praising its fertility: *terra antiqua, potens armis atque ubere glabae* ('the ancient land, potent in arms and in the soil' 3.164).



We also find a sense of closure, with the *penates* reassuring Aeneas that there is a land for him and his fellow Trojans. Earlier in their speech, they had discouraged Aeneas from settling in his current location because he has *mutandae sedes./non haec tibi litora suasit/Delius* ('changing abodes. The Delian god do not recommend these shores for you' 3.161-2). The *non* is emphatically placed at the beginning of the new line, stressing the negativity of this statement; no, the Trojans will not settle here. Yet, 6 lines later, Aeneas finds his rightful *sedes*. Employing the same term, *sedes*, the *penates* exclaim that there is an appropriate place for the Trojans: *hae nobis propriae sedes* (3.167). The similarity in usage concludes the message of the passage quite well; the Trojans have not yet found their settling place, but there is a rightful place for the wandering Trojans.

The passage ends with words of encouragement. The *penates* tell Aeneas that he, being joyful, must not bring back doubting words to the aged parents: *haec laetus longaevo dicta parenti/haud dubitanda* (3.169-170). The use of litotes with *haud dubitanda* emphasizes the fateful future of Aeneas and the Trojans. The gods do not doubt the survival of Aeneas and the Trojans, so he should be confident as well. However, the *longaevi parentes*, aged parents, stresses the helplessness of the elderly, who must keep traveling in spite of old age and exhaustion. Aeneas is destined to land in Italy, yet Vergil makes apparent the strain that these travels cause for the Trojans.



The Visit of the Penates  
Folio 28, recto  
Vergilius Vaticanus

The image displays the *penates* in a human form, visiting a sleeping Aeneas. The layout of the room matches a previous image of Hector's ghost visiting Aeneas. The symbolic meaning is the same in both of these episodes. Aeneas must be advised through supernatural means to follow his destined path. With the visit of Hector's apparition, Aeneas is warned to flee the besieged city of Troy and begin a journey to Italy. With the visit of the *penates* also, Aeneas is told to abandon the devastated island of Crete and continue on his journey to Italy. The situations serve as a catalyst for Aeneas's movement and progress towards his fate, and they are directly connected. After Hector's urging Aeneas eventually abandoned the doomed city, taking the *penates* with him as he fled. Because of his loyalty, they remain with him during his journeys.

Both images are half-pages, with the illustration of Hector's ghost placed on the bottom half of the page and the *penates* illustration on the top half of the page.



The Apparition of Hector's Ghost  
Folio 19, verso  
Vergilius Vaticanus

The layouts of the images are quite similar. Both display Aeneas and his bed as the central point of the painting. His visitors stand around him, careful not to obstruct the reader's view of the hero. The artist uses spatial perspective and positioning in both images to ensure that Aeneas is at the forefront of the image. Hector stands to the side and slightly behind, while the *penates* lean over towards Aeneas from behind the bed. The beds, in structure and position, are almost identical. And, Aeneas's torso sits up and his legs extend horizontally, resembling the unnatural body positioning of an Etruscan sarcophagus. The *Sarcophagus of the Married Couple* of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE demonstrates this convention. As the figures sit up, their legs oddly rest along the top of the sarcophagus lid. The individual torsos and legs are positioned at right angles to one another in completely unnatural positions.



Sarcophagus of the Married Couple  
The Bandataccia Necropolis, Cerveteri  
6<sup>th</sup> century BCE

Curiously, though, in the **Apparition of the Penates**, Aeneas lets his arms rest at his side, but in the **Apparition of Hector**, he reaches out to the ghost of Hector. Perhaps, Aeneas and Hector touch because they have a mortal, familiar bond. The matter that Hector was addressing to Aeneas was emotionally significant, asking a loyal warrior to abandon his doomed city. The *penates*, on the other hand, come to Aeneas only by circumstance, by the order of Apollo, in order to speed along his fate. Therefore, the emotional significance that might trigger touching or familial closeness is absent. The two *penates* gather around Aeneas's bed, leaning into him. The god on the left with his hand outstretched and his tilted posture seems to be taking a speaker's stance. Their faces and features are indistinguishable, so only the labels above their figures identify them in the image as *penates*.

The layout of figures in the illustration recalls death scenes in which mourners stand around the deceased. The fresco of the *Death of Admetus* in the Via Latina Catacomb of Rome demonstrates this iconographic model. The Via Latina of the 4<sup>th</sup> Century CE contains numerous biblical and classical frescoes. In the *Death of Admetus*, we find mourners standing behind Admetus's deathbed, listening to the vows of his wife

and mourners.<sup>98</sup> These mourners resemble the *penates* in our *Vergilius Vaticanus* illustration.

In the passage, Aeneas describes the approach of the *penates* quite explicitly. He remarks in lines 150-152 that they appeared before his sleepy eyes with the light of the moon illuminating them: *visi ante oculos astare iacentis in somnis multo manifesti lumine, qua se plena per insertas fundebat luna fenestras*. The coloring of the image indicates that it is night. The skylight above Aeneas's bed reveals a darkened sky, lightened by faint stars and a crescent moon. The passage, however, calls for a *plena luna*, full moon (line 152). The full moon in this passage forces light into the room, illuminating the *penates* before Aeneas's eyes. But the crescent moon in the illustration does no such thing. It only provides a backdrop for the scene because the figures appear to be back-lighted, not requiring an external source of light as the Vergilian text suggests. The lightness of the inside is contrasted nicely with dark blue night that is shown behind the vaulted ceiling of Aeneas's room. The two short side walls frame the room nicely, focusing the attention on the actions of the central figures.

This image is later imitated in the work of Raphael of 15<sup>th</sup> Century Italy, in his drawing of *Il Morbetto*, depicting the plague of Phrygia.

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<sup>98</sup> Beverly Berg. "Alcestis and Hercules in the Catacomb of Via Latina." *Vigiliae Christianae* 48.3 (Sept. 1994): 221-222.



Il Morbetto (or, The Plague of Phryia) after Raphael  
Marcantonio Raimondi  
c. 1515, engraving

The engraver Marcantonio Raimondi produced a copy of the scene that Raphael envisioned. In the upper left corner, Raphael placed the scene of the *penates* visiting Aeneas in his sleep. The arrangement of the figures is slightly changed. In the *Vergilius Vaticanus* scene, the two *penates* rest on both sides of the reclining Aeneas. The *penates* themselves are again shrouded in drapery as they stand over Aeneas. They reach out to Aeneas, urging him to action. With the scene placed in the back corner of the Raphael work, it is elevated in an enclosed space that creates a dark background. The darkness matches the nighttime setting. Raphael also enhances the scene by including the external light source that Vergil describes, but the *Vaticanus* neglected. We can clearly see the faces of the *penates*, although Aeneas is still shrouded in darkness. Raphael also borrows from the text of the *Aeneid* as well. The *penates* visit Aeneas in order to encourage him to abandon the draught and plague-filled Pergamea in search of Italy. The Trojans had recently established the city, but there were unfavorable living conditions. In the foreground of the image, people and animal are strewn about, pestilence having taken hold of them.

The image in the *Vergilius Vaticanus* served as a catalyst for artistic reproductions in the Renaissance, which displayed vividly the reasons for the *penates*' visit, the image itself, however, does not refer to or allude to the purpose behind the visit of the *penates* visit. No references to Aeneas's future journeys or the grandeur of Rome are contained in this illustration. Instead, the artists focus solely on the presence of the *penates*, following an iconographic model previously set forth in the *Vergilius Vaticanus*.

## **Dido Makes a Sacrifice**

At the beginning of Book 4, we find Dido, the queen of Carthage, confessing her love for Aeneas to her sister Anna. She then offers a sacrifice to various gods in the hope of bringing about a marriage:

His dictis incensum animum inflammauit amore  
 spemque dedit dubiae menti soluitque pudorem. 55  
 principio delubra adeunt pacemque per aras  
 exquirunt; mactant lectas de more bidentis  
 legiferae Cereri Phoeboque patrique Lyaeo,  
 Iunoni ante omnis, cui uincla iugalia curae.  
 ipsa tenens dextra pateram pulcherrima Dido 60  
 candentis uaccae media inter cornua fundit,  
 aut ante ora deum pinguis spatatur ad aras,  
 instauratque diem donis, pecudumque reclusis  
 pectoribus inhians spirantia consulit exta.  
 heu, uatum ignarae mentes! quid uota furentem, 65  
 quid delubra iuuant? est mollis flamma medullas  
 interea et tacitum vivit sub pectore vulnus.

With these words, she kindled her burning soul with love,  
 And she gave hope to her doubting mind, and she loosened her modesty.  
 In the beginning, they visited the temples, and on the alters  
 They asked for peace; they sacrificed sheep chosen by will  
 To law-bearing Ceres and to Apollo and to the fatherly Bacchus,  
 To Juno before all, under whose care is the marital bond.  
 She herself, most beautiful Dido, holding in her right hand the libation-saucer,

Poured out in the middle of the horns of the glistening cow,  
And before the mouths of the gods, she proceeded to the altars full fat,  
And she ordained the day with gifts, and with their chests revealed,  
She gaping at it consults the organs of the animal, still panting.  
Alas! The unaware minds of prophets! Why do prayers help,  
Why do shrines help someone going mad? There is a soft flame in the marrows  
Meanwhile, and it lives as a quiet wound under the heart.

Vergil infuses this passage with passion and desperation. He describes the effects of her love for Aeneas in lines 54-55: *his dictis incensum animum inflammavit amore,/spemque dedit dubiae menti, solvitque pudorem* ('with these words, she kindled her inflamed soul with love, and she gave hope to a doubting mind, and she loosened her modesty'). Recurring throughout this passage is the theme of fire. Dido's soul is already *incensum*, inflamed, before she kindles it further with love, *inflammavit amore*.

After discussing the sacrifice, Vergil returns more explicitly to his description of Dido's burning love. His language in lines 66-67 recalls the love poetry of Catullus, who was a generation older than Vergil.<sup>99</sup> Catullus's passionate compositions focused on personal subjects rather than epic feats, and his words evoked emotional themes. Catullus's *Carmen* 66.23 laments: *quam penitus maestas excidit cura medullas* ('now deeply care eats away at your sorrowful marrow'). Hence, lines 66-67 of the *Aeneid* evoke these same emotions: *est mollis flamma medullas/interea et tacitum vivit sub pectore vulnus* ('there is a soft flame in her marrow meanwhile and the wound resides quickly in her chest'). The connection in style and word choice not only infuses Vergil's words with passion, but it also foreshadows Dido's unfortunate fate. Just as Catullus laments, the queen will experience tremendous grief not because of her husband's death, but because of Aeneas's deceitful departure.

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<sup>99</sup> Catullus. *Catullus*. E.T. Merrill. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983). Poem 35, line 15.



This theme is later taken up by the poet Ovid, who was at the height of his writing career at the turn of the millennium. In 3.10 of his love elegies entitled *Amores*, he employs similar wording in lines 27-28: *vidit, et ut tenerae flammam rapuere medullae, hinc pudor, ex illa parte trahebat amor* ('she saw, as soft marrow seized the flame, here modesty, and from this part love dragged her off'). Not only does Ovid use *flamma* and *medullae* in his description of lovers' lot, but he also refers to *pudor*, modesty, and *amor*, love, which are recurring themes in the specific Vergilian passage as well as the entire Dido episode of the *Aeneid*.

Dido's sacrifice scene ends with the *flamma* that is now residing in her chest. Though the sacrifice is the central action of the scenes, Vergil stresses the passion that Dido feels for Aeneas and the hope that she takes with her to the sacrifice. By undertaking this sacrifice, she specifically prays to Juno in the hopes of forming the bond of marriage with Aeneas, which again foreshadows future events for Dido. Juno ironically is the goddess who holds a bitter grudge against Aeneas, Dido's intended husband, and the Trojans.

Sadly, the illustration has been damaged by water or other, but most of the image remains for analysis. The image does not address the themes of passion and flames that surface in the text. Without a detailed landscape or a defined background space, the only detail in the background is a temple to the left side of the illustration. The image contains portraits of Dido and her party of attendants and *victimarii* as they stand around the sacrificial altar.



Dido Makes a Sacrifice  
Folio 33, verso  
Vergilius Vaticanus

The format of the illustration, instead of being driven by the impassioned language of the Vergilian text, follows the iconographic model of imperial sacrifice. Roman art expressed imperial authority in a variety of ways. The emperor was featured as a military leader or victor, a lawgiver, charity-giver, etc. Because of the importance of Roman religion in public life as well as private life, one of the emperor's most significant roles was that of *pontifex maximus*, chief priest. It can be seen most commonly in free-standing statues or in relief sculptures. The depiction of imperial sacrifice featured the emperor in a toga with a hand out-stretched holding the sacrificial dish, as we see in the *Vergilius Vaticanus*. We find evidence of this imperial tradition in the relief sculpture of *Marcus Aurelius offering a Sacrifice*, which dates back to his reign in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.



The emperor Marcus Aurelius offering a sacrifice,  
Sculpture relief, c. 176-80 CE  
Arch of Constantine

The Emperor Marcus Aurelius stands with his attendants, and he offers the sacrificial sheep. A temple serves as the backdrop of this scene. Just like Marcus Aurelius and traditional Roman imperial iconography, Dido is positioned slightly to the left of the image, accompanied by attendants and the *victimarii*. A temple also serves as the only background for her scene, and her body position mirrors Marcus Aurelius's. Draped in the layers of her toga, she outstretches her left leg forward and outstretches her right arm to touch the sacrificial dish. The other figures in the illustration are awkwardly composed. The artists composed the anatomy of the attendant to the right of the image with an unnatural stance, specifically with the positioning of his legs and his feet, which extends out diagonally.

The most striking difference between the words and the image is that the flame has been reduced in importance in the image. In the Vergilian text, on the one hand, the *flamma* plays a central role. It is a part of the process of religious sacrifice and it also symbolizes Dido's unquenched love for Aeneas. The themes of fire, love and passion are matters that Vergil stresses throughout this specific passage as well as the entire Dido episode. The image, on the other hand, only contains a small flame as a part of the sacrifice ceremony. We see nothing of the passion that Dido feels, nor the power of this symbolic flame. It is only a prop in displaying the iconographic model of Roman sacrifice. In the text, Dido is in control of the episode. Although she is consumed by her love for Aeneas, she is still the active agent in this sacrifice scene. In the image, on the other hand, Dido is a participant in the iconographic model, not the central figure.

### **Dido Sees Aeneas Sail Away**

As the epic continues, Dido becomes fully enamored with Aeneas and they commit to one another, which Juno discusses with Venus in 4.131-136. Dido and Aeneas are separated once Mercury visits Aeneas to remind him of his fate, urging him to abandon Dido (4.353-355). The next illustration directly follows the episode of Mercury's visit to Aeneas. Aeneas attempts to sail away from Carthage and Dido in secret. As the ships leave the Carthaginian harbor in almost complete darkness, a distraught Dido witnesses her pseudo-husband abandoning her and Carthage in 4.584-591:

Et iam prima novo spargebat lumine terras  
Tithoni croceum linguens Aurora cubile.  
Regina e speculis ut primum albescere lucem  
Vidit et aequatis classem procedere velis.  
Litoraque et vacuos sensit sine remige portus.

Terque quaterque manu pectus percussa decorum.  
Flaventesque abscissa comas, 'pro Jupiter, ibit  
Hic' ait 'et nostris inluserit advens regnis?'

And now Aurora was first sprinkling the lands with new light  
Leaving the golden bed of Tithonius.  
The queen, from her watchtowers, saw the first light become bright,  
And saw the fleet going forth with equal sails,  
And she sensed the shores and the empty seas – without a rower,  
And three and four times she bounded her beautiful chest with her hand,  
And she tore away at her flowing hair, "Oh Juppiter, he will go hence,"  
She said. "And this stranger will have destroyed our kingdom?"

The text outlines Dido's surprise and devastation at the departure of Aeneas.

Vergil emphasizes the lengths that Aeneas took to ensure secrecy in his departure, and he also displays Dido's upset reaction. We first find a description of the dawn's first light beginning to stretch over the land. Dawn, personified as *aurora* in line 584, is depicted as leaving the *cubile*, couch, on which she was resting. *Cubile* means couch in this instance, but it also connotes a marriage bed, as Vergil uses it earlier in 3.324 to describe a conqueror's couch. Here, we are reminded again of the commitment that Dido and Aeneas had, similar to marriage, which has now been torn apart.

Vergil describes Dido seeing Aeneas leaving, but he also infuses this account with allusions to her resulting madness. Lines 586-587 tell us that Dido saw the Trojans sailing away at the first light: *regina e speculis ut primum albescere lucem/vidit*. The language echoes a scene in Apollonius's *Argonautica*, an epic detailing Jason's search for the Golden Fleece. In particular, this phrase recalls 3.828 of the *Argonautica*, which describes the abandoned Medea, wife of Jason: (h d' e)pei\ ou)=n ta\ prw=ta faeinome/nhn i)/den h)w= parqenikh/ ('since then the virgin first saw the dawn coming to

light').<sup>100</sup> The allusion to this scene in the *Argonautica* draws a parallel between Medea and Dido, both abandoned women. This connection enhances the drama of the episode and foreshadows Dido's fate of self-destruction.<sup>101</sup>

The illustration depicts the events described in the passage without focusing on Dido's reaction, as the Vergilian text does. Given that the passage emphasizes and foreshadows the impact of Aeneas's departure on Dido, the image only devotes a small part of the picture plane to Dido and the rest to the sailing Trojan ship and the vastness of the sea.



Dido Sees Aeneas Sail Away  
Folio 39, verso  
Vergilius Vaticanus

On the left side of the illustration, we find Dido's watchtower. The architecture resembles the model set forth in **Venus Sends Cupid in Guise of Ascanius** – the rectangular shape,

<sup>100</sup> Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*. Ed. George W. Mooney. (Amsterdam: A.M. Hakkert, 1964), 3.828.

<sup>101</sup> Damien Nelis. *Vergil's Aeneid and the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius*. (Leeds: Francis Cairns, 2001): 159-166.

the semi-peripheral columns, and the tiled roof. The square stones serve as the foundation for the tower, building height for the structure. At the window, we find a small figure of Dido. Hands outstretched in her hysterical state, Dido gazes at the departing Trojan fleet. Her faint figure seems to lean out to the sea and the ships. We do not, however, see the emotions and literary allusions that Vergil makes in the text. Her emotional state can be inferred only from the accompanying text, not the image.

While the text emphasizes Dido's reaction to Aeneas's departure rather than the event itself, the illustration displays more prominently the Trojan ships and the Carthaginian shores. The entire right side of the page is occupied by the sea. The sea and the ships are of disproportionate size, shifting the focus from the distraught Dido to the Trojan fleet. The white sail of the Trojan ship serves as a striking contrast to the dark blue sea and the off-white parchment leaves.

The background color attempts to show the transition from night to day. The lighter blue of the sky contrasts nicely with the deep, dark blue of the sea, demonstrating the degree of darkness under which the Trojans depart. The faded blue sky does not display a central source of light, as Vergil's personification of *aurora* does. The personification of dawn is a literary convention of both Vergilian and Homeric poetry, but the artists do not pick up on this custom, only choosing to suggest the rising of the sun.

## **Dido on her Funeral Pyre**

Aeneas's departure leads Dido to despair. In 4.642-666, she laments his abandonment and her current situation, which drives her to self-destruction. She prepares

a funeral pyre, supposedly to burn anything that would remind her of Aeneas. She climbs on what will become her funeral pyre and convinces herself to die by Aeneas's sword:

at trepida et coeptis immanibus effera Dido  
sanguineam uoluens aciem, maculisque trementis  
interfusa genas et pallida morte futura,  
interiora domus inrumpit limina et altos                   645  
conscendit furibunda rogos ensemque recludit  
Dardanium, non hos quaesitum munus in usus.  
hic, postquam Iliacas vestis notumque cubile  
conspexit, paulum lacrimis et mente morata  
incubuitque toro dixitque nouissima uerba:                   650  
'dulces exuuiae, dum fata deusque sinebat,  
accipite hanc animam meque his exsoluite curis.  
uixi et quem dederat cursum Fortuna peregi,  
et nunc magna mei sub terras ibit imago.  
urbem praeclaram statui, mea moenia uidi,                   655  
ulta uirum poenas inimico a fratre recepi,  
felix, heu nimium felix, si litora tantum  
numquam Dardaniae tetigissent nostra carinae.'  
dixit, et os impressa toro 'moriemur inultae,  
sed moriamur' ait. 'sic, sic iuuat ire sub umbras.                   660  
hauriat hunc oculis ignem crudelis ab alto  
Dardanus, et nostrae secum ferat omina mortis.'

In trepidation, Dido having been made savage by wild deeds,  
Considering the bloody sharp edge, and with a stain of blood,  
Having infused her quivering cheeks, and colorless with approaching death,  
She burst into the interior threshold of the house, and  
She ascended the high, and she uncovered the sword  
of the Trojan, not using this in the intended function,  
after she saw the Trojan clothing and the conspicuous bed,  
lingering somewhat with tears and in her mind  
and she laid herself on the couch, and she spoke these newest words:  
'Sweet vestiges, while the fates and the god allow,  
Receive this soul, and free me from these cares.  
I lived and which course fortune had given me I finished,  
And now the great image of me will come from under the lands.  
I erected this brilliant city. I saw my city walls.  
Taken revenge on this man, I received a punishment from my hateful brother;  
Fortunate, alas too excessively fortunate, if the Dardanian keels  
Would have never touched our shores.'  
She spoke, and kissed the couch with her mouth. 'I will die un-revenged,  
But I die,' she said. 'Thus, thus, it is pleasing to go under the shades,  
May he swallow with his eyes this fire from the deep,



The cruel Dardanian, and may the sign of my death go with him.'

The passage above illustrates Dido's decision for self-destruction. Throughout the Dido episode, Vergil foreshadows her impending death, describing Dido as *moritura*, about to die (4.308; 4.415; 4.518). We see here how Dido has arranged Aeneas's belongings on her own funeral pyre. Vergil uses contrasts in color to emphasize Dido's sudden decline into madness. In her savagery, Dido *effera* – wild – is also *pallida morte futura*, pale with impending death, in line 644. *Pallida* suggests the paleness of skin as a result of love or fright. We find evidence of paleness in love in the work of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* 1.729-732: *palleat omnis amans: hic est color aptus amanti;/Hoc decet, hoc stulti non valuisse putant./Pallidus in Side silvis errabat Orion,/ Pallidus in lenta naïde Daphnis erat* (all grow pale, loving : this color is bound to the lover; this is fitting, the foolish think that they were not capable of this./Pale Orion was wandering in the Sidean forests,/Daphnis was pale for his reluctant Naiad'). In Ovid's words, we find male lovers growing pale because of love-sickness.

Vergil creates a connection between paleness, love and death. Next to this pallor, we find the bloodiness of death. Dido's pale hands stroke the *sanguineam arcem*, blood-spattered edge, in line 643, emphasizing the striking contrast between Dido's paleness and bloody death. Vergil continues to stress the elaborate ways in which Dido secretly crafts her death. In describing her means of inflicting death, Vergil describes Aeneas's sword in line 646 as *non hos quaesitum munus in usus*, a gift not sought for this purpose. In order to ensure the success and secrecy of her suicide, Dido utilizes tools not designated for her intended use. She hides her self-destruction behind the façade of

heartbreak and depression. We find references to the emotional bond she felt with Aeneas in this passionate farewell. As Dido sees the *notum cubile*, familiar couch, in line 648, we are reminded of the false marriage bonds that Dido and Aeneas formed. Vergil uses this same word to connote a conqueror's bed in Andromache's response in 3.320-324: *O felix una ante alias Priameia virgo,/hostilem ad tumulum Troiae sub moenibus altis/iussa mori, quae sortitus non pertulit ullos,/nec victoris eri tetigit captiva cubile!* ('Oh fortunate is the one virgin daughter of Priam before others, ordered to be killed at the hill of the enemy under the high walls of Troy, who did not suffer any drawings, nor touched the captive bed of the victorious master'). The connection is quite strong between the *cubile* on which Dido sits in this instance and the conqueror's bed or the marriage bed. Another mention of the marriage bed occurs in line 649 as Dido lies on the *toro*, the bridal bed, which can serve as a designation for marriage, like the *thalamus*, or a bridal bed, as Ovid displays in *Ars Amatoria* 1.487: *sive illa toro resupina feretur* ('whether she is lying down on the bridal bed'). Therefore, our view of marriage and love in this passage is strengthened.

At the conclusion of this passage, Dido speaks her final soliloquy in lines 651-658, expressing her despair and heartbreak. She laments her fate, asking for a release from her worldly concerns. Along with her pleas to be taken from this life, she mentions her great accomplishments – escaping her violent brother in order to found the city of Carthage. One of her final couplets echoes the poetry of both Catullus and Apollonius. Dido wishes that she had been lucky enough that the Trojans had never come to her shores: *felix, heu nimium felix, si litora tantum/numquam Dardaniae tetigissent nostra carinae*. Dido believes that the arrival of the Trojan fleet marked doom for Dido and her

Carthaginian city. We find a parallel in Catullus's *Carmina* 64.171, in which he describes the marriage of Peleus and Thetis:

*Iuppiter omnipotens, utinam ne tempore primo  
Gnosia Cecropiae tetigissent litora puppes.*

All powerful Jupiter, if only in the beginning  
The Cecropian sterns would have never touched the Gnosian shores.

The parallels in grammar and syntax are remarkable. Both begin with an exclamation and conclude with a past contrary to fact conditional statement, bemoaning the arrival of a certain fleet. Both phrases contain interlocking word order, interweaving the ships and the shores to display the impossibility of this request. Also, Catullus and Vergil use the same verb *tango*, to touch, in the pluperfect subjunctive form. The passages also find connections in context. Catullus's *Carmina* 64 portrayed the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, who contributed to the outbreak of the Trojan War. Because they did not invite Eris, the goddess of discord, to their ceremony, Eris left a golden apple "for the fairest," which led the goddesses of Olympus to seek out Paris to select the most beautiful goddess. Therefore, the marriage of Thetis and Peleus is directly connected to the Trojan Aeneas and his fate. Also, Catullus's poem touches on the Ariadne myth and her desertion by her pseudo-husband Theseus. The rejected Ariadne parallels Catullus, who has been spurned by his lover Lesbia, and also Dido, who has now been abandoned by her lover Aeneas.<sup>102</sup>

The other parallel is found in Apollonius's *Argonautica* 4.31-32, in which Medea is driven to madness by Jason's departure: ai)/qe se po/ntoj, cei=ne, die/rraisen, pri\n Kolxi/da gai=an i(ke/sqai ('would that the sea, oh stranger, have torn you to pieces,

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<sup>102</sup> Francis Cairns, *Virgil's Augustan Epic*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

before you came to the Colchian land’). Again, Vergil makes a connection between the circumstances in which Dido and Medea find themselves. Damien Nelis notes the connections between the two different death scenes, and he calls attention to their allusions to marriage. Just as Jason was Medea’s husband, Dido believes Aeneas to be her husband.<sup>103</sup> In both instances, just as in the case of Ariadne and Catullus, a spurned lover bemoans her fate and wishing for an impossible condition.

In her final remarks, Dido calls for death. She states emphatically in lines 659-660, *moriemur inultae, / sed moriamur* (I will die unavenged, but let me die). The use of the future indicative tense first emphasizes the certainty of her death. And, she continues after this phrase by repeating *sic, sic* in line 660. This repetition highlights and also intensifies the certainty of her actions. Though she says that her fate is un-avenged, Dido asks that her image, committing suicide on the funeral pyre, travel to Aeneas. In line 662, she asks that the news of her death haunt the living Aeneas: *nostrae secum ferat omina mortis* (‘may he bear within himself the sign of my death’). The word order that Vergil invents helps enforce the haunting effect that Dido wishes her death to have on Aeneas. *Nostrae...mortis* surround Aeneas, consuming him and his actions, just as Dido hopes news of her death will do to the Trojan. Throughout Dido’s preparation for self-destruction and final words, Vergil conveys the sense of love, heartbreak, desperation and death that characterize the Dido episode.

The image presents a spatial setting and attempts to touch upon the themes present in the Vergilian text, although the illustration does not convey the same intensity of emotion that the text describes.

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<sup>103</sup> Nelis, 171-172.



Dido on Her Funeral Pyre  
Folio 40, recto  
Vergilius Vaticanus

The illustration features a heavy application of pigment and detailed shadowing. Our artist is the third of the three total painters of the *Vergilius Vaticanus*; we can see the differences in style and skill in terms of the spatial perspective and figural depiction. The first painted the *Georgics* and presumably sections of the *Eclogues*, and the second painter used clumsy techniques and squashed spatial perspective in the earlier images. The vivid colors and improved spatial perspective reveal the quality of this artist's painting skills. The foreshortened coffered ceiling and converging sets of parallel lines decorate the room and characterizes each individual object. The background decoration is delicately painted with fine detailing. The doorway, however, appears out of place, standing out from the picture plane.

Dido is the only figure in image, as she is the only individual acting in the passage. Her position follows a Roman motif of eternal repose in death. The pose suggests slumber as well as lounging, and this convention can be found in the art of

antiquity and also in early Christian art in Rome. We find this pose on Roman sarcophagi, such as the *Deceased in Repose* Sarcophagus Cover of Rome. We also see similarities in the *Death of Cleopatra* fresco of the Catacombs of Via Latina in Rome. This 4<sup>th</sup> Century CE fresco depicts the Egyptian queen committing suicide, much like the Carthaginian queen.



Death of Cleopatra  
Catacombs of Via Latina, Rome, Italy  
Fresco, 4<sup>th</sup> Century CE

The bodies in repose, the outstretched right arms and the tilted heads are reminiscent of one another. Both women are the only figures in the image, captivating the attention and focus of the viewer. It is fitting that the *Vergilius Vaticanus* image would follow the iconographic model of Cleopatra because the Vergilian text seems to be influenced by Cleopatra's self-destructive fate. The two other women that Vergil models Dido after – Ariadne (in Catullus's *Carmen*) and Medea (in Apollonius's *Argonautica* – do not commit suicide like Dido does. Arthur Pease notes that Dido's character has been open to many interpretations: "an enchantress, like Calypso; a temptress, like Eve; a seducer, like Cleopatra, or a mere adventuress in wait for a marriageable and warlike

widower highly desirable for a defenceless female in the midst of barbarous neighbors.”<sup>104</sup>

Dido is in repose, but she is also elevated on the couch within the image. Unlike Cleopatra, who rests at the bottom of the fresco, Dido is truly in the center of the illustration. Dido extends her hand right into the middle of the square image. Dido’s outstretched hand suggests a speaker’s stance, where it is believable that she would be speaking her final soliloquy. In her extended right hand, Dido holds the Trojan sword, which is in the center of the image as well as the most significant tool in her self-destruction. The sword features dark outlines and shadows that distinguish it from the naturally tinted background. From the brown, ruddy background colors, the whiteness of Dido’s dress jumps out from the page, further directing the viewer’s eye. Only the white curtain in the doorway matches this brightness of color.

The artist depicts the surroundings of Dido’s self-destruction, focusing the attention solely on the doomed queen. The artist, however, cannot convey the intensity of emotions that Vergil presents in the text. Dido’s final requests – that her news of her death reach Aeneas and haunt him – are particularly powerful in the text. They draw inspiration from poetic precedents in Apollonius and Catullus, but the illustration does not convey these parallels. The illustration relies on iconographic models to portray Dido on her funeral pyre. Instead of depicting Dido as *effera* or *furibunda*, moving madly and preparing the pyre, she rests peacefully on the couch. The iconography of the deceased calls for such a peaceful depiction of the dead. And we do not find the vestiges of Aeneas and the Trojans that Vergil tell us about, which form the foundation of the funeral pyre.

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<sup>104</sup> Arthur Stanley Pease, “Some Aspects of the Character of Dido.” The Classical Journal, 22.4 (Jan., 1927): 246.

The illustration therefore only sets the stage for Dido's action in the text, and it does not seek to enhance the narrative.

## Lamentation over Dido

After Dido declares her final words and states her self-destructive intentions, she pierces herself with the Trojan blade. Vergil tells us the reactions of the Carthaginians as well as Dido's sister, Anna, in lines 4.663-674:

dixerat, atque illam media inter talia ferro  
conlapsam aspiciunt comites, ensemque cruore  
spumantem sparsasque manus. ite clamor ad alta                   665  
atria: concussam bacchatur Fama per urbem.  
Lamentis gemituque et femineo ululatu  
tectae fremunt; resonat magnis plangoribus aether,  
non aliter, quam si immissis ruat hostibus omnis  
Karthago aut antiqua Tyros, flammaeque furentes  
culmina perque hominum volvantur perque deorum.                   670  
Audiit exanimis, trepidoque exterrita cursu  
unguibus ora soror foedans et pectora pugnibus  
per medios ruit, ac morientem nomine clamat.

She had spoken, and the companions see her fallen on the iron  
In the middle of such a place and the sword foaming with blood  
And her hands strewn with blood and the scream rose to the tall  
Court and the Fame spread rapidly through the alarmed city.  
With a groan of lament and a feminine cry  
The roofs howl; the sky resounds with great lamentation,  
Only if by incoming enemies should fall  
All Carthage and ancient Tyre, the burning flames should fly  
Through the roofs of men and of gods.  
Her sister, terrified, heard this and frightened with a trembling course  
Defiling her mouth and her heart with her nails and her fist  
And she rushed through the middle, and she cried aloud to her dying sister by  
name.

Dido's horrible end resonates in the text as a powerful event, causing great emotional distress for Anna and the Carthaginians. Vergil highlights the blood from



Dido's self-infliction. Her *cruor*, blood, in line 664 spills over onto the sword as well as her hands in line 665. Along with the red blood that colors her death, loud screams accompany Dido's death scene, traveling through the Carthaginian court: *it clamor ad alta/atria...lamentis gemituque et femineo ululatu/tecta fremunt* (4.665-667 'the noise rose to the tall halls...the roofs howl with a groan of lament and a feminine cry'). Vergil displays this visually in the text with the descriptions of shouts and cries rising above the roofs, as if they cannot be contained by the architecture of the city. Not only are the cries for her death not constrained by the roof-tops, but also they reach the sky with a loud lamentation (4.668 *resonat magnis plangoribus aether*). The noisy tumult, in fact, compares to the city's response to invading foreign forces: *non aliter, quam si immissis ruat hostibus omnis Karthago aut antiqua Tyros* ('only if by incoming enemies should fall all Carthage and older Tyre'). Since Carthage is constantly threatened by its neighbors, the comparison to invaders is quite powerful, strengthening the force of the rumor.

The news of Dido's death travels through the city to the Carthaginians by rumor. Vergil personifies this rumor, as if it wanders through the city by its own volition to spread the news of her death in line 666: *concussam bacchantur Fama per urbem* ('the rumor spread rapidly through the troubled city'). *Bacchantur* also connotes a Bacchic rave, suggesting madness and wild celebration. We therefore see the madness of Dido spreading furiously throughout the city in the form of the *fama*.

The lamentation over Dido concludes with the emotional response of Anna to her sister's death. As she hears of Dido's fate, she beats her breast and tears out her golden hair in despair. Vergil describes Anna, the living sister, as *exanimis*, lifeless, in line 672,

which conveys no contrast to the deceased Dido. Instead, this adjective demonstrates how Dido's death drains the life and energy from the city of Carthage. Dido has left her city and its inhabitants in despair and literally without life.

The illustration that accompanies this passage displays the response of Dido's attendants to her death. This passage commences just below the image, beginning with *dixerat* ('she had spoken' 4.663) and emphasizing the finality of her statements.



Lamentation Over Dido  
Folio 41, recto  
Vergilius Vaticanus

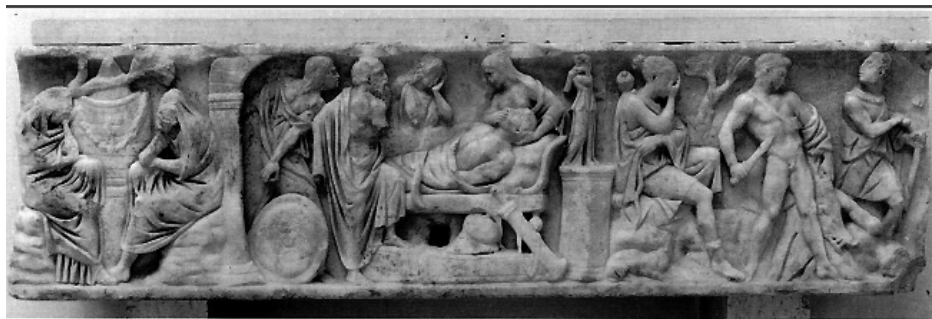
The illustration borrows the same picture format of the previous image, with the coffered ceilings, couch and reclining Dido. Instead of Dido being alone, her attendants mourn over her death which the text suggests. We find the arrangement of people around the deceased in Roman mosaics depicting the funerary banquet. From the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Centuries CE, we find a mosaic of the deceased in repose with angelic figures surrounding him.



Deceased in Repose at funerary banquet  
 Sfax, Musée; Mosaic  
 Roman; 3<sup>rd</sup> century – 4<sup>th</sup> century, Rome.

In this mosaic, the position of repose is present just as in the **Lamentation over Dido** as well as **Dido on the Funeral Pyre**. As we see here, the iconography present in the *Vergilius Vaticanus* is a Roman motif of illustration. The figures around the deceased do not obstruct the view of the deceased, only adding to the background setting.

We see this motif also in sarcophagi friezes. The scene of the *Death of Meleager* in Ostia displays the same lamentation over the dead. In this relief, we see a deceased Meleager reclining on a couch. His attendants attentively stand over his body and care for Meleager, who died on the battlefield.



The Deathbed of Meleager  
 Frieze Sarcophagus  
 Ostia, Museo

The artist demonstrates skill in painting in his variety of depictions of the anonymous attendants over Dido's funeral bed. He paints these figures with diverse stance, gesture and body positions. As is customary in the Roman iconographic model of the lamentation over the dead, the figures stand behind and to the side of the deceased, so as to avoid obstructing the vision of the viewer.

Anna stands in the right corner of the image with her hands outstretched and her head looking to the sky. These elements of her body stance suggest that she is in the process of speaking. Vergil highlights her response in her text, and the artist demonstrates Anna's importance by making her the tallest figure in the image. Although she stands behind Dido's bed, with the object blocking our whole view of Anna, her height gives her a greater presence in the illustration. In contrast to the other female attendants, who are contained in a small space, Anna's body is extended both horizontally and vertically, drawing attention to her presence.

Though the illustration displays the mourning female attendants, it does not capture the trouble and despair of the city of Carthage. In the Vergilian text, we can see the noise and rumors as they travel through the city and into the skies, taking on a life of their own. They rise above roofs in the city and in the text itself. In the image, however, only the female attendants of Dido are displayed, showing us only the micro-level at which Dido's death is operating, and the text tells us this reaction can characterize all of Carthage. Within this limited scope of Dido bedchamber, we do not see the large scale result that her self-destruction has on the city.

## The Elysian Fields

occupat Aeneas aditum corpusque recenti                   635  
spargit aqua ramumque aduerso in limine figit.  
His demum exactis, perfecto munere diuae,  
deuenero locos laetos et amoena uirecta  
fortunatorum nemorum sedesque beatas.  
largior hic campos aether et lumine uestit               640  
purpureo, solemque suum, sua sidera norunt.  
pars in gramineis exercent membra palaestris,  
contendunt ludo et fulua luctantur harena;  
pars pedibus plaudunt choreas et carmina dicunt.  
nec non Threicius longa cum ueste sacerdos             645  
obloquitur numeris septem discrimina uocum,  
iamque eadem digitis, iam pectine pulsat eburno.  
hic genus antiquum Teucris, pulcherrima proles,  
magnanimi heroes nati melioribus annis,  
Ilusque Assaracusque et Troiae Dardanus auctor.       650  
arma procul currusque uirum miratur inanis;  
stant terra defixae hastae passimque soluti  
per campum pascuntur equi. quae gratia currum  
armorumque fuit uiuis, quae cura nitentis  
pascere equos, eadem sequitur tellure repostos.         655

Aeneas takes up this approach, and his body  
He sprinkled with fresh water and in the opposing threshold he thrust the branch.  
Then with these things driven out, with the gift of the divine completed,  
They reached the pleasant places and the delightful turf  
Of the thriving groves and the blessed seat.  
Here the heavens are larger and cover the fields with purple light,  
And it came to know its sun and its stars.  
Some exercise their limbs in the grassy gymnasium,  
They contend in games and they wrestle on yellow sand,  
And some beat with their feet in dance and sing songs.  
Neither does the Thracian priest with a long garment  
Abuse the seven different tones of his voice in number,  
And now the same he beats with his fingers, now with an ivory comb.  
Here the ancient race of the Teucrians, the most prudent offspring,  
Magnanimous heroes, the children born in better years,  
Ilus and Assaracus and the Dardanian father of Troy.  
From afar he saw the arms and the empty chariots of men.  
The planted poles stand on the ground, and released in every direction  
The horses fed through the fields. What regard of the chariot  
And of arms there was among the living, what care to feed  
The thriving horses, by the same way he follows those on the earth.

Vergil presents a detailed narrative account of Aeneas's journey into the Elysian Fields. He places the golden branch at the doorway of Proserpine's palace (635-636), and he and the Sibyl enter the underworld paradise (638-639). We come to understand the special nature of the branch and the steps that Aeneas must undertake in order to enter the Underworld, which include collecting the branch and sprinkling fresh water on his body. Vergil catalogues the different groups that he sees in the Elysian Fields. Only the fortunate may reside in the Elysian Fields, the blessed place of the underworld, and as he enters, Aeneas views its inhabitants. In contrast to the unending suffering that death could cause for the shades, the Elysian Fields offer a pleasant residence for its fortunate inhabitants.

There are the those exercising, playing games and wrestling: *pars in gramineis exercent membra paleatris,/contendunt ludo et fulva luctantur harena* (642-643). Then, there were other who danced and sang in a chorus: *pars pedibus plaudunt choreas et carmina dicunt* (line 644). At 648-650, Aeneas also sees the Trojan heroes: *hic genus antiquum Teucris, pulcherrima proles,/magnanimi heroes, nati melioribus annis,/Ilusque Assaracusque et Troiae Dardanus auctor* ('here the ancient race of Teucrians, the most prudent offspring, the magnanimous heroes, the offspring born in better years, Ilus and Assaracus and the Dardanian father of Troy'). Vergil's description of the Trojan, occupying three lines of dactylic hexameter, emphasizes their presence in the Elysian Fields. This reference emphasizes Aeneas's Trojan heritage. Juxtaposed to the Trojan heroes are the *arma...currusque virum...inanes* ('the arms and empty chariots of men' 651). Because they are enjoying the afterlife, no warriors need to take up their equipment of battle and wage war. Instead, they play innocent and pleasant games in the Elysian

Fields. Aeneas also sees the horses grazing in the fields in line 652-655. They peacefully feed upon the earth, undisturbed by famine or draught as the mortal lands have been.

The image attempts to display the catalogue of figures that reside in the Elysian Fields. We find that the artists have depicted Aeneas's entrance into Elysian Fields as well as the people he encounters in one image.



The Elysian Fields  
Flio 52, recto  
Vergilius Vaticanus

The narrative has been condensed into the image. At the top left, Aeneas is planting the golden bough at the threshold of the palace of Proserpine and entering the Underworld's paradise. The disproportionate size of Aeneas and the Sibyl – in comparison to the figures in the remainder of the image – indicate that they are in a separate episode within one illustration. The brown background framing Aeneas and Sibyl draws attention to their corner of the scenes. Vergil emphasizes the steps that Aeneas must take in order to reach the Underworld and the Elysian Fields; the artist

draws the viewer's eye to Aeneas's undertakings, resulting in his entrance into the underworld paradise. The building of Proserpine's palace follows the model of architecture to which the *Vergilius Vaticanus* adheres – the tiled roof and rectangular shape. The diagonal turn of the building suggests its distance in the picture plane.

The image offers us an overview of people who populate the Elysian Fields. To the right of the palace, we see a pair of nude men, presumably the souls who exercise and wrestle on *fulva...harena*, golden sand, in lines 642-643. They, along with another pair, playfully contend in games on the golden ground of the image. To their right sits Orpheus, the representative of poetry, arts and song. Known as the Thracian priest (645), he entertains the line of dancers at the bottom of the image. The row of nude men at the bottom of the image is presumably members of the chorus that Vergil describes in line 644, who strike a beat with their feet and sing: *pars pedibus plaudunt choreas et carmina dicunt*. With garlanded heads, they walk in unison through the Elysian Fields.

Next to the chorus, we find the magnanimous Trojan heroes that Vergil describes in lines 648-650. Dressed in Phrygian clothes, they are presumably the three patriarchs Ilus, Assaracus and Dardanus. The Trojans, who were taken in battle, are far removed from the arms and chariots of men that are scattered in the Elysian Fields, which Vergil describes in line 651. Aeneas wonders at the *arma procul currusque uirum...inanis* ('from afar the arms and empty chariots of men'). The weapons of war remain on the ground unused and unneeded by the joyous men of the Elysian Fields. The equipment is almost submerged in the ground, hardly prominent in the image. The equipment is completely neglected by the residents, who are not occupied by warfare. Furthermore, the horses that would be chained to the chariots, leading men into war, are allowed to graze



in the grassy fields, as Vergil describes, and at the bottom right corner, we see the horses – free from the constraints of saddle or the chariot – grazing together, separate from the men.

With all of these elements present, the artist stays quite loyal to the text. We also find parallels to Homer's *Odyssey*. The *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* influenced Vergil's writing of the *Aeneid* as models of epic poetry, and Vergil used these sources to compose his own portrait of the Underworld. Odysseus must enter the Underworld in order to speak to the blind Theban prophet Teiresias, who tells him that he will not die prematurely; in fact, he will die by old age. While inside, Odysseus also comes upon his mother, Agamemnon, Achilles, and Ajax, who speak to him about the miserable Underworld. In contrast to Vergil's general descriptions of the inhabitants of the Underworld, Homer describes individually the people that populate Hades. And Vergil, on the other hand, takes great efforts to categorize the different areas of the Underworld, assigning each soul a specific place, like the Elysian Fields.

Though distinctions emerge between the two accounts of the Underworld, the similarities are apparent, not only in the literature but also in their visual representations. Wall paintings in the Esquiline Hills of Rome depict various landscape scenes of the *Odyssey*, including Odysseus's entry into Hades, which is similar to Aeneas's journey into the Underworld. These wall paintings display the landscapes of the Underworld that were circulating in Roman art. The *Odyssey Landscape* does not specifically portray the Elysian Fields. The distant lands and enormity of nature are apparent in these wall paintings, where we see giant rocks and bodies of water occupying the Underworld. In the *Vergilius Vaticanus* as well, we find a related depiction of the Underworld. Both

images depict an unfamiliar land of the Underworld, which appears quite different from the natural world. The space, the setting and the landscapes are large and overwhelming, and the figures that occupy the Underworld in disproportionately small.



Odysseus in the Underworld  
Odyssey Landscapes from the House on Esquiline Hill  
Wall painting  
Rome, mid-first-century BCE

Later additions to the image are worth noting as well. A French scholar at the beginning of the fifteenth century inserted two labels to the illustration.<sup>105</sup> Below the row of Trojan men, he wrote *tripudiant* (they are dancing), although this caption actually belongs with the row of nude dancers. The other caption below the horses says *pascuntur equi* (the horses graze). The additions by this French humanist demonstrate the transmission process that these manuscripts undergo. Although the image remains intact and well-reserved, scholars of different ages have attempted to enhance or gloss this illustration.

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<sup>105</sup> Wright. Vatican Vergil. 54.

## The Farewell at the Ivory Gate

After Aeneas enters the privileged area of the Underworld, the Elysian Fields, he finds Anchises and seeks his counsel. In lines 6.893-899, Anchises bids farewell to Aeneas and the Sibyl as they exit the Underworld through the ivory gate:

Sunt geminae Somni portae, quarum altera fertur  
cornea, qua ueris facilis datur exitus umbris,  
altera candenti perfecta nitens elephanto,                    895  
sed falsa ad caelum mittunt insomnia Manes.  
his ibi tum natum Anchises unaque Sibyllam  
prosequitur dictis portaque emittit eburna,  
ille uiam secat ad nauis sociosque reuisit.

There are twin gates of Sleep, of which one consists of  
Horn, where the easy departure is given by true shades;  
The other glistens with shining ivory,  
But those remaining send false dreams to the sky.  
With these words, Anchises then followed after his son and the one Sibyl  
And through the ivory gate he sends them,  
He carves his way to the ships and returns to his comrades.

After a series of prophecies of the grandeur of Rome, concluding with Augustus's reign, Anchises must leave his son and the Sibyl. This episode of the twin gates is quite controversial. Scholars agree that the departure of Aeneas through the gates of false dreams (896) holds some significance, suggestively if not directly.<sup>106</sup> The two entrances – one of *cornea*, horn, and one of *eburnea*, ivory – suggest different fates for those that walk through them. The *cornea* gate is truthful with *ueris...umbris*, true shades, in contrast to the *falsa...insomnia*, false dreams, that the *eburnea* gate sends forth. Surprisingly, after Anchises relates the future greatness of Rome, he sends Aeneas, the oldest ancestor of Rome, through the gate of false dreams, suggesting an uncertain future for Rome.

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<sup>106</sup> R.J. Tarrant, "Aeneas and the Gates of Sleep." *Classical Philology* 77.1 (Jan 1982), 52-53.

The connection between Aeneas and false dreams, no matter how strong, speaks negatively to the future of Rome; R.J. Tarrant notes that “the associations of deception, illusion and unreality are disturbing, even ominous;” the grandeur of Rome that Anchises spoke of is not permanent, and this realization of false dreams follows the somber tone that characterizes the conclusion of each book.<sup>107</sup> In contrast, Brooks Otis maintains that Vergil’s journey through the gates is only a dream and therefore unrealistic, but this view has been ruled out because Vergil had already noted that Aeneas was awake when he and the Sibyll reached the cave that they believed was the entrance to Hades (268-69).<sup>108</sup> O’Hara has recently argued that deceptive prophecies are not unusual in the *Aeneid*.<sup>109</sup> And Urania Molyviati-Toptsis expands upon O’Hara’s point to posit that:

Vergil’s intention in making Aeneas depart from the gate of the deceptive dreams is to suggest that Anchises’ purportedly prophetic speech...loaded with ambiguity and distortion of the factual truth, deludes Aeneas, depriving him of any real knowledge of the future. The dramatic function of the glamorous vision is to motivate Aeneas to continue his trip to Italy.<sup>110</sup>

Whatever the interpretation of this sign may be, the scene is important to the *Aeneid* as well as the Roman audience. Above the six lines of ambiguous text, we find the accompanying image, depicting the exit scene from the Underworld. The arches dominate the backdrop of the farewell scene. Size only slightly distinguishes the two gates with their color and structure identical. The artists have added fluted columns to the *eburnea* arch, with Corinthian decoration. The detailing of the arches was completed in dark brown with thin brushstrokes and attention to the natural shadows and highlights.

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<sup>107</sup> Tarrant 53.

<sup>108</sup> Brooks Otis, “Three Problems of Aeneid 6.” Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association 90 (1959), 176-177.

<sup>109</sup> John O’Hara, Death and the Optimistic Prophecy. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990) 171-172.

<sup>110</sup> Urania Molyviati-Toptsis, “Sed Falsa ad Caelum Mittunt Insomnia Manes (Aeneid 6.896)” The American Journal of Philology 116.4 (Winter 1995): 643.

Though Vergil emphasizes the drastic difference between the two gates – in their influence more than their appearance – they are almost identical in the illustration.

The background is filled with violent and light brown tones, far different from the natural background colors we have seen. The ground as well is tinted in purple, contrasting the white of Anchises’s garment and the cream color of the arches. Anchises, with the brightness of his clothing jumping out from the page, stands to the left side of the image, on the opposite side of the arches from Aeneas and the Sibyl. His left hand extends out as he waves goodbye. We see this iconography of the entrance into the extraterrestrial world in early Christian frescoes.<sup>111</sup> This eschatological iconography appears in the *Hypogeum of Vincentius and Vibia* in the depiction of Vibia being led into Paradise. The fresco displays Vibia entering through the archway, being bid farewell by others.



Female Figure from the Catacomb of Vibia  
4<sup>th</sup> Century CE  
Fresco; Rome

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<sup>111</sup> Stephenson 75.



Farewell at the Ivory Gate  
Folio 57, recto  
Vergilius Vaticanus

We see this same model followed in the *Vergilius Vaticanus*, with the arches of ivory and horn marking the divide between the Underworld and the natural world.

The artists depict Anchises from behind, waving with his back to the viewer and his head turned sideways. Therefore, we get the sense that he is indeed making his way back to the ships and his companions, as Vergil describes. Aeneas, at the entrance of the deceitful ivory arch, looks back at Anchises, bidding him farewell also. This portrait is not completed as successfully as the depiction of Anchises, whose stance and anatomy is believable. Instead, Aeneas stands sideways, turning his head all the way back to Anchises in an unnatural position. Although the artist does not compose complete portraits of all his figures, he can capture the moment that Vergil describes. He does however omit the significant meaning that the gates hold for the future of Rome, allowing the reader to infer this information from the text.

## A Lost Medallion

After this pivotal scene, Book 6 comes to a close with two final lines at the top of the next page:

Tum se ad Caietae recto fert litore portum.  
Ancora de prora iacitur, stant litore puppes.

Then he carries himself in a straight course to the bay of Caieta.  
An anchor holds it down from the prow, and the sterns stand on the shore.

The rest of the page is blank except for a medallion shaped image. Because of age and deterioration of material, all we have today are traces of pigment of this lost illustration. Ultraviolet light photographs have revealed a medallion shape. Scholars are relatively certain that this image is actually a portrait of Vergil. Traditionally in classical illustrated manuscripts, artists included portraits of the author in a circular frame. A variation of this custom even carried over into the *Vergilius Romanus*, where the artists have given us several images of Vergil at work in the illustrations of the *Georgics*. Although these portraits are not contained in a circular frame, they clearly communicate the tradition of author's portraits that is found in classical illuminated manuscripts. The lost medallion in the *Vergilius Vaticanus* seems to be an example of such an author portrait.



Portrait of Vergil. Sixth Eclogue.  
*Vergilius Romanus*, Folio 14r



It is interesting that the authors chose to place this author's portrait at the end of Book 6, since they were customarily placed at the start of each roll of an author's work. Perhaps, Vergil's portrait marks the middle of the epic, dividing the first half of the *Aeneid* from the second. Necessity might have called for an author's portrait to be placed in this position. If these two lines did not fit into the artist's design for the code, an extra page might have been planned in order to put together Vergil's corpus.

### **King Latinus Gives a Sign of Friendship**

After Aeneas leaves the Underworld at the conclusion of Book 6, he continues on his journey to Italy so that his descendants may found Rome. He proceeds safely past the temptress Circe's house and reaches land at the mouth of the Tiber, in the kingdom of Latinus. Aeneas sends emissaries to King Latinus, who kindly welcomes them. Latinus had received a prophecy that his only child, Lavinia, should be engaged to a foreign leader, so he eagerly responds to the Trojan's request of friendship. In 7.274-280, Vergil tells us how generously Latinus greets the Trojans, giving them horses and housing:

Haec effatus equos numero pater eligit omni  
(stabunt ter centum nitidi in praesepebus altis):  
Omnibus extemplo Teucris iubet ordine duci  
Instratos ostro alipedes pictisque tapetis  
(aurea pectoribus demissa monilia pendent,  
Tecti auro fulvum mandunt sub dentibus aurum).

Having spoken thus, the father selected horses for each one  
(three hundred were standing polished in tall stables):  
Without delay, for each of the Teucrians in order he commanded that the horses  
be led, their many feet covered in purple and embroidered garments,  
Golden collar having been let fall from their chests hang down,  
Covered in gold they chew a golden piece under their teeth.



The generosity with which Latinus meets the Trojans is remarkable. Earlier in the day, he had invited them to his palace and promised to accommodate them in his kingdom, alluding to his wish to betroth Lavinia to Aeneas. In response to his promises of support, Latinus hands out horses to all the Trojans, selecting from his three hundred horses. Vergil uses a familial term to identify Latinus, *pater* (line 274). Instead of *rex* or *Latinus*, Vergil chooses his title as father to Lavinia as his identifiable quality. Therefore, a familiarity and comfort has already been established between Latinus and the Trojan wanderers.

As Vergil describes the allocation of horses, he emphasizes how beautifully they have been maintained and decorated. Latinus house them *in praeseptibus altis*, in tall stables (line 275), in contrast to the non-existent or half-completed abodes that the Trojans are in the process of building in Italy. Not only have the horses been polished (*nitenti*, line 275), but they are outfitted in expensive and lavish accessories. They wear purple, which signifies royalty and power. The horses also are adorned with gold around their necks and in their mouths. Vergil notes the *montilia* (line 278, collars) that hang down: *aurea pectoribus demissa monilia pendent*. The gold seems to carelessly fall from their chests, instead of being cautiously placed with concern for the maintenance of this expensive piece. Also, on the bit of the bridle, where in the mouth of the horse the gold could be easily tarnished or ruined, a gold bit is still placed. Vergil highlights the abundance of gold by repeating in lines 278-279 *aurea...auro fulvum...aurum*. In just two lines, we find four different references to gold or golden material. Clearly, the opulence and generosity of King Latinus is being stressed.

In the illustration, we do not find the abundant gold that Vergil describes. However, the artist remains loyal to the Roman imperial iconography of the emperor bringing justice to Rome and the barbarians.



King Latinus Gives a Sign of Friendship  
Folio 63, recto  
Vergilius Vaticanus

The image is divided down the middle, with one side belonging to King Latinus and his attendant and the other side belonging to the Trojans. King Latinus sits comfortably on his throne, looking out at the Trojans as they stand with the horses at their sides. The arrangement of figures resembles Roman iconographic depictions of the emperor as the restorer of justice and the possessor of clemency. We find examples of this artistic model on the Arch of Constantine in the depiction of a surrendering barbarian chief. The emperor sits loftily on the throne, flanked by an attendant. The gesture of his right arm suggests his judgment of the foreigner. Although the constrained space in this panel relief forces the scene to be contained in a more squashed space than the *Vergilius*

*Vaticanus*, the emperor is clearly separated from the others, in a position of distance and authority.



A Barbarian Chief Surrenders to the Emperor  
Arch of Constantine  
c. 315 CE

In contrast to the depiction of the surrendering barbarian, the leading Trojan in the *Vergilius Vaticanus* is unrestrained and seems to respond to Latinus with his own gesture of speech. His right hand is also extended and his eyes are focused on King Latinus, in contrast to the other Trojans who look towards the horses. In addition, our emperor sits on the same level as his visitors. Instead of being elevated to a place of worship in Roman iconography, this emperor rests at the eye level of the visiting Trojans.

The image does not pick up Vergil's overt mention of gold and opulence that the horses signify. Their accessories are painted in natural, ruddy colors instead of the brilliant purple and gold that Vergil emphasizes. We do not see the *monilia*, collars, or

the golden bits that the horses chew. The artist focuses on the cordial meeting of the two nations rather than following the highlighted details of the text.

## The Wounded Stag Returns and War Begins

Latium's peaceful acceptance of Aeneas upsets Juno, who despises Aeneas and the Trojans. She asks the fury Allecto to incite war. Ascanius mistakenly shoots the pet stag of Silvia, the daughter of Latinus's gamekeeper Tyrrhus. The illustration of this crucial scene does not survive in the *Vergilius Vaticanus*, in which the momentary peacefulness that the Trojans enjoy is suddenly halted. The closest surviving illustration picks up several following episodes. The mortally wounded stag returns, moaning in pain, and then Allecto sounds the call for war. Suddenly, Trojans soldiers and Latin farmers plunge into battle.

saucius at quadrupes nota intra tecta refugit                    500  
successitque gemens stabulis, questuque cruentus  
atque imploranti similis tectum omne replebat.  
Siluia prima soror palmis percussa lacertos  
auxilium uocat et duros conclamat agrestis.  
olli (pestis enim tacitis latet aspera siluis)                    505  
improvisi adsunt, hic torre armatus obusto,  
stipitis hic grauidi nodis; quod cuique repertum  
rimanti telum ira facit. uocat agmina Tyrrhus,  
quadrifidam quercum cuneis ut forte coactis  
scindebat rapta spirans immane securi.                    510  
At saeua e speculis tempus dea nacta nocendi  
ardua tecta petit stabuli et de culmine summo  
pastorale canit signum cornuque recuruo  
Tartaream intendit uocem, qua protinus omne  
contremuit nemus et siluae insonuere profundae;                    515  
audiit et Triuiae longe lacus, audiit amnis  
sulpurea Nar albus aqua fontesque Velini,  
et trepidae matres pressere ad pectora natos.  
tum uero ad uocem celeres, qua bucina signum  
dira dedit, raptis concurrunt undique telis                    520

indomiti agricolae, nec non et Troia pubes  
 Ascanio auxilium castris effundit apertis.  
 derexere acies. non iam certamine agresti  
 stipitibus duris agitur sudibusue praeustis,  
 sed ferro ancipiti decernunt atraque late 525  
 horrescit strictis seges ensibus, aeraque fulgent  
 sole lacessita et lucem sub nubila iactant:  
 fluctus uti primo coepit cum albescere uento,  
 paulatim sese tollit mare et altius undas  
 erigit, inde imo consurgit ad aethera fundo. 530  
 hic iuuenis primam ante aciem stridente sagitta,  
 natorum Tyrrhi fuerat qui maximus, Almo,  
 sternitur; haesit enim sub gutture uulnus et udae  
 uocis iter tenuemque inclusit sanguine uitam.  
 corpora multa uirum circa seniorque Galaesus, 535  
 dum paci medium se offert, iustissimus unus  
 qui fuit Ausoniisque olim ditissimus arvis.

Wounded and on all fours, it flees back into the known roofs  
 And it entered the abode, groaning and bloody, with complaining  
 And with imploring it filled the whole roof.  
 The first sister Silvia, having beaten her breast with her hands,  
 Calls for aid and calls to arms the sturdy countrymen.  
 For this unforeseen thing – for cruel pestilence lays concealed in the quiet forests  
 This one armed with a burnt around firebrand,  
 Others loaded with a knotted stake: whatever is found for each man searching,  
 Ander shapes into a weapon. Tyrrhus calls the battle lines,  
 As he divided the oak into four parts by chance  
 With assembled wedges, raging fiercely with a swift axe.  
 And now the fierce goddess, from the watchtowers, met with injury  
 Seeks the steep roofs of the abode and from the highest summit,  
 She sings the pastoral sign and with her curved horn  
 She reaches forth her Tartarean voice, where farther on  
 The whole meadow shuddered and the vast forests resounded;  
 And far off the lake of Trivia heard, the river  
 Nar, white with sulphur water, and the Velinus fountain heard.  
 And the frightened mothers pressed their children to their hearts.  
 Then truly quickly to her voice, by which an ominous horn gave a signal,  
 From all sides, they came together with rapid weapons,  
 The wild farmers; neither did the Trojans not  
 Bring assistance to young Ascanius in the uncovered camps.  
 The battle lines had scattered. Not now in the strife of the lands  
 with hard poles or burned stakes is the battle led,  
 But they decide the battle with two-headed iron and widely the dark  
 Cornfield shudders because of the collected swords and they struck the sky  
 With sunbeam's glitter and they drive the light under the clouds.

At first the surge began to grow white with the wind,  
Gradually the sea raises itself and highly lifts the waves.  
This youth is thrown down before the first battle-line by a whizzing arrow,  
Almo, who had been the greatest of Tyrrhus's offspring;  
For the wound clung to his throat and the passage  
Of his wet voice and ended his short life with blood.  
Many bodies of men around and the elder Galesus,  
While he offers himself in peace in the middle, who was most righteous man  
And once the richest in the Ausonian lands.

These 37 lines of text offer us three different stages of consequence. First, Vergil describes the wounded stag returning to a hysterical Sylvia, and then Allecto prompts war with the sounding of the horn. Then, we hear of the battle undertaken between the rustic Latin farmers and the Trojan soldiers, resulting in the immediate death of two Trojans. The first stage sets the tone for the events to follow. The injured stag's pain is explicit by its slow journey home to Sylvia and its aching moans. Sylvia's emotional response resonates with the repetition of "p" and "s" in line 503: *Sylvia prima soror palmis percussa lacertos*. The contrast between the "s" and "p" sounds emphasizes the depth of her reaction and the passion with which she beats her chest in despair. *Percussa* (from *percutio*) means "to beat" as well as "to kill" or "to slay," and so foreshadows the events resulting from the stag's death.

Allecto plays a prominent role in the narrative. Having been sent by Juno, she is the chief instigator of war – sounding the horn of war to gather the rough Latin farmers. In lines 511-515, Vergil describes how far Allecto's voice reaches. Her voice is *tartaream*, which is fitting for one of the Furies. The deathly call also warns of the hardships that the Trojans will have to endure, battling the Latins. Her voice has the power to make to *contremisco* (line 515) the peaceful groves and cause the vast forests to *insonere* (line 515). Her tremendous voice not only incites the Latin farmers to war, but it

also disturbs the peacefulness of nature. The natural resources – the rivers, the lakes, and the fountains – all hear her call.

The farmers respond rapidly to her voice, carrying weapons for war. They do not carry unsophisticated equipment, but they carry powerful weapons that have powerful consequences for the land and the skies: *atraque late/horrescit strictis seges ensibus, aeraque fulgent/sole lacessita et lucem sub nubila iactant* (7.525-527 ‘widely the dark cornfield shudders because of the collected swords and they struck the sky with sunbeam’s glitter and they drive the light under the clouds’). This passage is reminiscent of the *Iliad* 13.339: *ε)/fricen de\ ma/xh fqisi/mbrotoj e)gxei/h|si* (but man-destroying battle shudders with spears). In both works, we are seeing war take on personal and human consequences. The *seges* and *ma/xh* are made to shudder because of the deadly weapons of war.

And in the final stage of this episode, Vergil mourns the two Latin farmers who have fallen to Trojan forces. The youth Almo does not have an opportunity to prove himself in battle, having been struck down *primam ante aciem* (7.531 ‘before the first battle-line). And the wound in his throat sucks the life from his body in line 534: *tenuemque inclusit sanguine vitam* (‘and the wound ended his short life with blood’). The other fallen warrior, Galaesus, dies *dum paci medium se offert* (7.536 ‘while he offered himself in the middle for peace’). Galaesus, who Vergil describes as the most righteous and once the richest man, is a noble figure in Vergil’s mind.



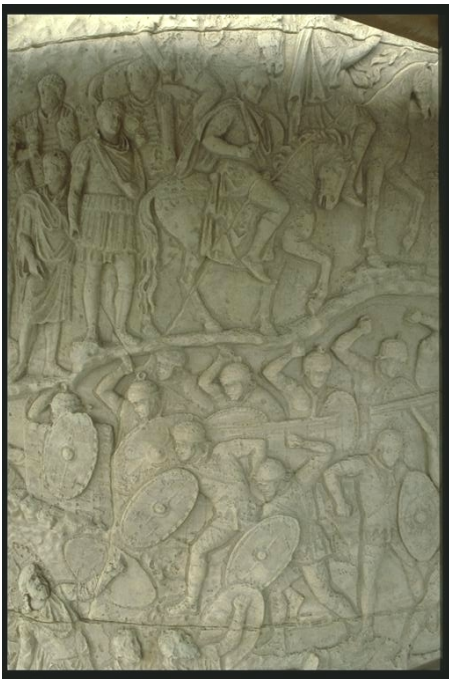
The Wounded Stag Returns and War Begins  
Folio 66, verso  
Vergilius Vaticanus

The image illustrates all three stages of this episode. The text below the illustration is lines 503-509, in which Sylvia reacts to the slaughter of her pet stag. Vergil seems to stress line 503 with his alliteration of “p” and “s” sounds, so it is fitting that the image appear just above that significant line. The wounded stag is placed in front of the barn building, touching an outstretched hand. Four centimeters are ripped off at the left side of the image, but we can guess that those centimeters contained a distraught Sylvia reaching out to her stag. The stag sits back in an awkward body position, different from the depictions of standing animals. The unnatural body position could signify the unbearable pain the stag endures. Atop the barn we find a miniscule figure of Allecto trumpeting her horn of war. Her presence – or any of her features – is barely noticeable, with her horn being taller than she is. We do not get a sense of the strength of her Tartarean voice that disrupts the peaceful meadows or the wide forests. Despite her lack



of significance in the image, we still see the immediate result of her war call in the rest of the illustration.

The fighting between the Trojans and the Latins dominate the rest of the illustration. The soldiers are divided strictly into a Trojan line and a Latin line. The line of Trojan warriors, who endured a long war, is almost perfect form – completely vertical. They all hold their shields to their bodies and extend their spears uniformly. The line of wild Latin farmers, however, is less structured – forming a zig-zag battle-line. In contrast to the formality of the Trojan battle-line and demeanor, the Latin farmers, lacking formal battle dress, wildly swing their axes. The formal battle line is common in Roman iconography, emerging in the Column of Trajan from 113 CE.



Battle and Trajan on the March  
Column of Trajan  
113 CE

The top register displays Trajan on horseback accompanied by his troops. The bottom register displays a battle scene between the Trajan's troops and the Dacians. We

see the organized dress and formation of the Roman troops as they battle enemies, a model of depiction that also occurs in our *Vergilius Vaticanus* illustration.

In the final stage of the episode, we find slain Latins in the foreground of the image. The artists identified Almo and Galaesus as two of the fallen figures. Almo rests at the front of the image, *primam ante aciem* as Vergil describes. We can see the arrow that has shot through his throat, and the red strips on the ground indicate the loss of blood that ended his life in line 534: *tenuemque inclusit sanguine vitam* ('and the wound ended his short life with blood'). A mysterious Latin lies dead in front of Galaesus, who has been clearly labeled. Right in the center of the battle-lines, as Vergil described, Galaesus's portrait does not demonstrate how he entered the middle of the fighting in search of peace. We do not see Galaesus's righteousness and opulence, so the reader would have to read the text's explanation. The image, therefore, condensing the many actions, scenes, and themes of 35 lines of text, includes the important narrative elements of the Vergilian text.

## Conclusions:

The *Vergilius Vaticanus* marks a new birth in the manuscript tradition. Just like all illuminated manuscripts of this tradition, the *Vergilius Vaticanus* is the child of the written and visual tradition. Word and image are the genetics of this creation. They shape the parents of the *Vergilius Vaticanus* as well, namely the literary and iconographic traditions. Therefore, within this one manuscript, we find that the parents, the genetics and the surroundings have molded together Vergilian text and the accompanying images into one production.

The words of the first-century Roman poet Vergil cover the pages of the codex. The text of his three major works – the *Eclogues*, *Georgics*, and *Aeneid* – serves as inspiration for the illustrations in this manuscript. The illustrations enhance the narrative, clarifying details or highlighting important episodes. Just as in the entire manuscript tradition, this fifth century CE work combines the written and visual traditions in order to create a unified whole. The *Vergilius Vaticanus* illustrates the Vergilian corpus, juxtaposing words and images. In order to compose these images, the artists of the manuscript also incorporate older iconographic models that were circulating around Rome at the time of its creation. The manuscript contains a two-fold history: the history of literature and the history of pictorial representation. We see the history of literature and book-making was developing alongside the iconographic tradition. These two traditions – literary and visual – converge and diverge in late antiquity, where we find the *Vergilius Vaticanus*.

The written literary tradition begins in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Previously, people communicated narratives orally, spreading folklore and legends throughout the ancient

world. A narrative tradition evolved into a written tradition of literature. Rhapsodes' recitations of Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* then became immortalized on paper, ushering in a new era of literature. As authors continue to compose poetry and prose, their works took to the written form. Writing made their works more permanent and unchanging. The words could no longer change at the will of the rhapsode; they have their own identity and constancy.

Once literature came to be written down, new technologies of writing developed. We see advances or changes in materials, forms, and styles. In the earlier period, the papyrus scroll was used throughout the Greek and Roman world. For uncertain reasons of convenience or durability, the parchment codex took over as the predominant text-storage medium in later antiquity. The existence of the codices stretches back to at least the first century CE. In his *Epigrams*, Martial praises the codex's convenience and ease in handling. However, after Martial we find little mention of the codex until the rise of Christianity. The codex form was a favorite among the Christians. Evidence of codices in the Christian tradition dates back to about 100 CE, and it increases in subsequent centuries. Eventually, the parchment became the normal material and the codex the preferred format for book production in the West.

We possess painfully few illuminated manuscripts of the classical age. Though the producers of manuscripts tried to ensure the durability of their work, these books deteriorated with age, whether because of the fragility of the material – both parchment and papyrus – or because of its continual use in antiquity. Once the codex became the dominant medium of writing, scrolls were copied into this new form; the papyrus rolls became outdated and therefore dispensable. However, this leaves modern scholars at a

disadvantage when they try to examine manuscripts of the classical age. The *Vergilius Vaticanus* follows in line with this manuscript tradition, but it is unique in age and durability through the ages, being one of the oldest surviving manuscripts of antiquity.

Along with the development of the literary media, literature and iconography both evolve in antiquity. Both the literate written and the artistic traditions provide the lineage of iconography for the *Vergilius Vaticanus*. One part of this lineage includes the Epic Cycle, a series of epic poems in Greek that were designed to add closure to the story of the heroic age that we find in the Homeric Epics. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are the foundational works of the Trojan Cycle. The later epics – *Cypria*, *Aethiopis*, *Little Iliad*, *Iliupersis*, *Nostoi*, and *Telegonia* – are contributing parts to this lineage, using the Homeric Epics as inspiration for writing. Vergil's *Aeneid* takes its place on the outskirts of this cycle of literature. Vergil expands upon the Trojan legacy and relates it to Rome. He uses the Trojan legacy to write a glorifying and humanizing account of Aeneas, who is the distant ancestor of his patron, the Emperor Augustus.

Accompanying the Epic Cycle are visual representations of these same narratives. We find visual narratives of these tales circulating throughout the Greek and Roman world. On tablets, bowls, architecture and vellum, the visual tradition survives. We find commonalities in depiction throughout these various media. The Epic Cycle develops a visual tradition of its own, with or without the presence of a text. The iconography developed to illustrate the Homeric Epics came to be applied to Vergil's *Aeneid* as well, and eventually became part of the *Vergilius Vaticanus*.

Therefore, we find that these separate, yet intertwined traditions intersect in the illuminated manuscript of the *Vergilius Vaticanus*. The Vergilian text remains constant,

unchanged by the 400 years difference in production. Yet, since the visual tradition was continuing to evolve, we see that the images found in this manuscript do not slavishly follow the words. Instead, as I have tried to show, we find that the images sometimes depart from the Vergilian text and from the particular emphasis that the words themselves convey.

In the episode of **Laocoon**, the images and the text seem to collide. Vergil briefly describes Laocoon's story and focuses on the graphic details of his ominous demise. The accompanying illustration condenses Laocoon's history and his fate into one image. At the left we see a young, lanky Laocoon sacrificing to Neptune, and to the right we found Laocoon with a muscular physique and long flowing hair being encircled by the serpents. The iconographic models for this illustration are clear. Young Laocoon was shown in the form of a young *victimarius*, and older Laocoon was modeled after a famous Hellenistic sculpture of this scene. The illustration does not neglect the text, though. It simply enhances the scene using earlier models for visual representation of literature as well as the present day iconography.

The **Lamentation over Dido** displays a harmonious combination between text and image. Vergil recalls Dido's final words standing on the funeral pyre and then her self-destruction. Vergil describes the grief and anguish that Dido's sister feels and the same sorrow that spreads through Carthage as a result. In the illustration, we can see the despair of the Carthaginians. The mourners stand around Dido's funeral bed sorrowfully bowing their heads. Anna's outstretched arms suggest her cries of grief for the deceased Dido, which Vergil describes as rises above the roofs in volume. The layout of the image follows the the iconographic model of the deceased in repose, which emerges in both the

Roman and the Christian visual traditions. Therefore, we see here the amalgamation of the written tradition and the visual tradition in this illustration as well as the *Vergilius Vaticanus* as a whole.

In the **Elysian Fields**, the text and images work well together. Vergil describes in detail the different people that populate this blessed area of the Underworld, and the artists illustrate Vergil's words. We find men enjoying themselves, unburdened by the unhappiness of war. Instead, men contend with each other in games and dance in a chorus. The **Elysian Fields** episode also displays the iconographic tradition of underworld illustrations. Just like the *Odyssey Landscapes* that we find in the villas of the Esquiline Hill, this image reflects the visual model that was inspired by the *Odyssey*. The *Vergilius Vaticanus* borrows this model of depiction in order to illustrate the Underworld.

The history of the manuscript tradition, therefore, draws its lineage from various sources. An illuminated manuscript is not simply connections between words and images, but rather it is a negotiation between the material, the literature itself and the artistic models. They all influence a manuscript's final form. In the *Vergilius Vaticanus*, we see these elements intersecting and interweaving. The individual scenes of the manuscript reveal how the words and images function together as well as separately. The *Vergilius Vaticanus* is a new birth in the larger manuscript tradition. It is a creation from two sets of families – the written family and the visual family – and it shows us just how the creation of an illuminated manuscript is influenced by its family, ancestry and surroundings to form its own identity.

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