Recovering the Classic: Twelfth-Century Latin Epic and the Virgilian Tradition

by

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Centre for Medieval Studies
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Abstract

This dissertation considers how ancient and medieval commentaries on the Aeneid can give us new insights into four twelfth-century Latin epics—the Ylias by Joseph of Exeter, the Alexandreis by Walter of Châtillon, the Anticlaudianus by Alan of Lille, and the Architrenius by John of Hauville. Virgil’s influence on twelfth-century Latin epic is generally thought to be limited to verbal echoes and occasional narrative episodes, but evidence is presented that more global influences have been overlooked because ancient and medieval interpretations of the Aeneid, as preserved by the commentaries, were often radically different from modern readings of the Aeneid. By explaining how to interpret the Aeneid, these commentaries directly influenced the way in which twelfth-century Latin epic imitated the Aeneid. At the same time, these Aeneid commentaries allow us a greater awareness of the generic expectations held by the original readers of twelfth-century Latin epic. Thus, this dissertation contributes to our understanding of ancient and medieval perceptions of the Aeneid while exploring the importance of commentaries in shaping poetic composition, imitation, and reading. The first chapter presents evidence that the allegorical interpretation of the Aeneid, as presented by Servius, Fulgentius, and
Bernard Silvestris, served as an important structural model for the plots of the Anticlaudianus and the Architrenius. The second chapter examines how the twelfth-century understanding of history and myth in the Aeneid influenced the Alexandreis and the Ylias. The final chapter explores how these medieval epics respond to the twelfth-century ethical reading of the Aeneid and suggests possible links to modern ‘pessimistic’ interpretations of the Aeneid, building on the work done by Craig Kallendorf in The Other Virgil and Richard Thomas in Virgil and the Augustan Reception.
Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Precedents and goals

This dissertation focuses on four of the most influential and classicizing Latin epics from the late twelfth century. Although these epics are well-known to Medieval Latinists, their importance in the history of Latin epic has not received much acknowledgement outside of specialist studies.\(^1\) Most surveys not only of Latin epic but of the entire history of epic therefore suffer from an enormous lacuna.\(^2\) It is my hope to stimulate interdisciplinary interest in these medieval epics by situating them in the historical reception of the *Aeneid*. Recently, the well-known classicist Mary Beard succinctly described the imperative of reception studies for all classicists—whether we are aware of engaging in reception studies or not:

> The study of the classics is the study of what happens in the gap between antiquity and ourselves. It is not only the dialogue that we have with the culture of the classical world; it is also the dialogue that we have with those who have gone


before us who were themselves in dialogue with the classical world (whether Dante, Raphael, William Shakespeare, Edward Gibbon, Pablo Picasso, Eugene O’Neill, or Terence Rattigan).³

Considering Virgil’s almost unparalleled influence, it should be no surprise that a large subset of classical reception focuses on the reception of Virgil. Indeed, two great monuments to the medieval conception of Virgil exist in the form of Comparetti’s *Virgilio nel medio evo* and Jan Ziolkowski and Michael Putnam’s *The Virgilian Tradition: The First Fifteen-Hundred Years*.⁴ Whereas my own study focuses on Virgil’s poetic legacy, these books are primarily concerned with tracing how Virgil, the man and his works, was perceived in the Middle Ages. Most importantly for my argument, these books reveal how much Virgil was admired in the twelfth century: consistently ranked above all pagan poets, save Homer, and presumed to have possessed deep philosophical knowledge.

The poetic reception of Virgil’s oeuvre in the Middle Ages has received less systematic treatment; most existing studies focus on instances of Virgil’s reception in vernacular poetry, not Latin. Surveys of Virgil’s reception, such as those found in the companions to Virgil published by Cambridge University Press and Blackwell, similarly ignore Latin epic composed between the fifth century and the fourteenth.⁵ This omission is all the more remarkable because once direct access to Homer’s epics was lost in the

³ “Do the Classics Have a Future,” *The New York Review of Books*, Jan. 12, 2012. Cf. Charles Martindale *Redeeming the Text: Latin Poetry and the Hermeneutics of Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 54: “Again—and this is one of the principal theses of the book—the reception of a text, including the poetic revisions it engenders, is inseparable, in ways that are often ignored, from our current readings of it; T.S. Eliot’s Virgil, for example, is in part created by his study of Dante’s, and in general, both through Eliot and in other ways, the *Comedy* has left its traces in the *Aeneid* as many read it today.”


West—as far as the majority of Western European poets were concerned, from approximately the fifth to the fifteenth century—the *Aeneid* came to define not just Latin epic, but the epic genre as a whole.\(^6\) This imbalance has resulted in scholarship which frequently assumes the “novelty” of Virgil-imitation in early modern literature, especially in epic. For example, Tobias Gregory voices a commonly held assumption when he claims that “it is the degree of formal, stylistic, and thematic imitation of classical models, the Virgilian above all, that distinguishes the epics of the Renaissance from those of the Middle Ages.”\(^7\) By placing twelfth-century Latin epic in the context of the Virgilian tradition, I hope to begin bridging this gap in Virgilian reception scholarship, at the same time linking late antique epic to early modern epic.

Besides Virgil’s unique place in the history of epic and in the twelfth-century canon, there is another reason to assume that the *Aeneid* was an important model for the four medieval epics in my study: the already documented fact that all four epics contain extensive verbal echoes of the *Aeneid*.\(^8\) Yet, the scholars who have addressed the question of Virgilian influence on twelfth-century Latin epic have concluded that Virgil’s

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\(^6\) An essentially literal Latin translation of Homer did not appear, so it seems, before Boccaccio commissioned one from Leonzio Pilato in 1360. See Agostino Pertusi, *Leonzio Pilato fra Petrarcha e Boccaccio: Le sue versioni omeriche negli autografi di Venezia e la cultura greca del primo umanesimo* (Venezia, Rome: Istituto per la collaborazione culturale, 1964). Around the same time, of course, Western scholars were beginning to study Greek, but this knowledge was not initially wide-spread. For the claim that most people even in the sixteenth century were not well acquainted with Homer, see, for example, Christiane Deloine-Louette, *Sponde: Commentateur Homère* (Paris: Champion, 2001), 43.

\(^7\) From Many Gods to One, 24-5. David Wilson-Okamura, in *Virgil in the Renaissance* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), goes against the orthodoxy in stressing that “the idea of Virgil that was current in the sixteenth century is largely the same one as was current in the fourth and fourteenth centuries” (p. 8), but he still offers suggestions for concrete ways in which readings of Virgil did, in fact, change. See especially *Virgil in the Renaissance*, 215-47.

influence (outside of verbal echoes) was minimal, or at least, much less than one would expect. Jean-Yves Tilliette maintains that “l’influence de Virgile sur l’épopée latine du XIe siècle n’est pas si considérable et exclusive qu’on ne le croit généralement: les emprunts à l’Énéide, rari nantes in gurgite vasto, sont dilués dans emprunts à d’autres ouvrages et ne fournissent de véritables mots d’écriture que sur des passages bien localisés.”

Neil Wright concludes similarly:

To an audience which has cut its teeth on the Aeneid, and the Aeneid alone, these poems [the Alexandreis, Ylias, Anticlaudianus, and Architrenius] appear pretty alien. This observation can further be reinforced by remarking on their structure: not one is divided into the conventional twelve books of Virgil’s poem. Metrically and stylistically, too, they are worlds apart from Virgil’s practice. Despite their frequent echoing of the Aeneid, our four Medieval poets in fact exhibit a quite phenomenal understanding of the verse of Ovid, Lucan and Statius, and imitate their practice in so skilful a way that it verges on the uncanny. By now then it has, I hope, become clear that, for twelfth-century epic, Virgil was only one model among very many. Hence the question-mark in the title of my paper.

Instead of Virgil’s Aeneid, recent scholarship looks to other classical models in order to understand the four twelfth-century epics treated here. Scholars today generally see Lucan’s Pharsalia as the most important classical epic model for Walter of Châtillon’s Alexandreis and for Joseph of Exeter’s Ylias, while Martianus Capella’s prosimetric De nuptiis and the satires of Juvenal are the preferred classical models, respectively, for Alan of Lille’s Anticlaudianus and John of Hauville’s Architrenius.

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Thus, even my focus on Virgil reception represents a departure from the majority of modern scholarship on twelfth-century Latin epic.

I believe that modern scholarship has failed to find strong Virgilian influence in these twelfth-century epics because few have taken into consideration how the *Aeneid* was interpreted in the twelfth century. Most scholarship concerning classical reception and *Quellenforschung* follows what might be labeled a “direct” approach to the ancient text. Such studies aspire to a direct comparison with the classical text, ignoring the way in which the original author’s (and readership’s) interpretation might differ from our current understanding of the same work. If we want to know how a medieval poet used Virgil and how that poet’s audience understood that use of Virgil, we must seek out how Virgil was interpreted at that time and place. Virgilian commentaries and interpretations available in the twelfth century reveal an understanding of the *Aeneid*, and, by extension, of Latin epic, that is often radically different from our own. It follows that any imitation of the medieval conception of the *Aeneid* may look, to our eyes, quite different from the *Aeneid* as we perceive it today. The essential argument of my thesis is that we can best understand twelfth-century imitations of Virgil by understanding twelfth-century interpretations of Virgil. Furthermore, because twelfth-century Virgilian commentary has strong late-antique roots in Servius and Fulgentius, my research shows that the Latin epic...
tradition is much more continuous and reflexive than sometimes assumed. I demonstrate over the course of the dissertation that many aspects of twelfth century Latin epic which are thought to be purely medieval or Christian in origin can be found in, if not traced back to, Servius and the ancient Virgilian commentary tradition.

Thus, my study makes an important contribution toward interpreting both ancient and medieval epic in the modern world. By reminding readers how greatly divergent past interpretations of Virgil have been from today’s, I hope that this study of twelfth-century epic and the Virgilian tradition may help defamiliarize an epic, which for many scholars is perhaps a little too familiar. We might be at first inclined to express contempt for many of these pre-modern interpretations and dismiss them as “wrong,” but if we really engage with these foreign but nonetheless widely held late antique and medieval convictions about the meaning of the Aeneid, we may be led to question our own understanding not only of Virgil, but of many other ancient and medieval poets.

Using the Virgilian commentary tradition in reception studies is a growing area of interest, but no one has systematically applied this method to a Medieval Latin epic. Craig Kallendorf, David Wilson-Okamura, Michael Murin, and others have shown that the Virgilian commentary tradition left an enormous impact on early modern epic, both in Latin and the vernacular, but medievalists have tended to focus only on the way the Virgilian commentary tradition has influenced vernacular poetry. 13 Christopher Baswell has shown just how wide-spread knowledge of Virgilian commentary was in the Middle

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Ages and how this knowledge influenced several medieval vernacular poems. Francine Mora-Lebrun and Jerome Singerman also make extensive use of the Virgilian commentary tradition in their discussions of medieval romance, proving that the commentary tradition has left its mark on poems such as the Roman d'Enées. By examining the influence of Virgilian commentary on Medieval Latin epic, my thesis builds on the work of all of these scholars and fills a major gap in our current understanding of the tradition.

In order to discover anew the influence of the Aeneid on these medieval epics, we must “recover” it in the sense of the ancient and medieval concept of integumentum, covering it again in the veils of allegory. We must also read the Aeneid through its once inescapable wrapping of Servius and myriad other works which formed the interpretative matrix of twelfth-century readings. At the same time, I will argue that the four twelfth-century epics of this study belong to the classical tradition and were intended to be classics in their own right.

The authors

I have focused my study on Joseph of Exeter’s Ylias, Walter of Châtillon’s Alexandreis, Alan of Lille’s Anticlaudianus, and John of Hauville’s Architrenius, because they have long been held to be the most classicizing and learned of all of the many

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surviving twelfth-century Latin epics, but there are also very good geographical and biographical reasons for discussing these epics as a group. Little precise information is known about Walter of Châtillon, Alan of Lille, Joseph of Exeter, and John of Hauville, but all four authors were near contemporaries from what is now Southern England and Northern France. More importantly for our purposes, all four poets studied and taught (and therefore composed their epics) in cities within a very small radius in what is now Northern France and Wallonia.

Some have made the case that Walter of Châtillon was “Anglicus,” but most scholars now agree with the medieval vitae which claim that Walter was born near Lille, also known as Rijsel, a Flemish town. In spite of the remarkably precise birth dates sometimes given, we have no evidence to indicate in exactly what year Walter was born—the dates that are usually given are extrapolations based on his assumed age at various points in his career. The medieval vitae claim that Walter of Châtillon studied in Paris under Stephen of Beauvais and possibly at Reims as well. Walter then taught in “Castellio,” probably Châtillon-sur-Marne, near Reims. Perhaps after a brief sojourn studying law in Bologna, Walter eventually became notarius or orator for William of the White Hands while he was archbishop of Reims (1176-1202). The date of Walter’s death is unknown.

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18 See Colker, Alexandreis, xii-xviii. Maura Lafferty gives an excellent outline of Walter’s biography, presenting the evidence offered by the vitae and other sources, in Walter of Châtillon’s Alexandreis, 2-12. For the most recent bibliography on the subject, see Lafferty’s “Walter of Châtillon’s Alexandreis,” in A Companion to Alexander Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. Z. David Zuwiyya (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 177-81.
Joseph of Exeter was probably born in Exeter, like his uncle, Baldwin (Archbishop of Canterbury from 1185-90), although all of the earliest witnesses identify Joseph as “Cantuariensis,” presumably through association with his uncle.\(^1\) As is true for Walter, we cannot give a precise date for Joseph’s birth. In a letter dated 1189, Joseph himself wrote that he was studying in Reims and had done so in the past on more than one occasion.\(^2\) Our last evidence for the life of Joseph is a letter dated 1194 which finds him a teacher at Jodoigne in modern-day Belgium.\(^3\)

Alan of Lille has been given thorough biographies by several modern scholars, but the evidence used to construct these biographies is in many ways just as scant as what survives about Walter and Joseph.\(^4\) James Sheridan provides a helpfully concise summary of the handful of incontrovertible facts about Alan’s life in the preface to his translation of the *Anticlaudianus*.\(^5\) Sheridan places Alan’s birth in 1116 or 1117, but he bases this on Alan’s death date of 1202/3 combined with a forensic investigation of Alan’s bones in 1960 which gave his age as 86.\(^6\) I cannot help but suspect that the age of death determined at the time of the exhumation sounds a little too precise. On the other hand, there is no reason to doubt that Alan of Lille was, indeed, born in Lille itself.\(^7\)

Alan probably received his schooling in Paris; indeed, most scholarship takes this fact for

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\(^1\) This is the logical conclusion of both A. K. Bate and Ludwig Gompf. For the evidence, see Bate, ed. and trans., *Trojan war: I-III* (Chicago: Bolchazy-Carducci, 1986), 3-4; Gompf, ed., *Joseph Iscanus: Werke und Briefe* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 6-10.

\(^2\) See Bate, *Trojan War*, 5.

\(^3\) Ibid.


\(^7\) See Bossuat, *Anticlaudianus*, 7-9.
granted, although the evidence is far from conclusive.\textsuperscript{26} Because his \textit{Contra haereticos} is dedicated to Count William VIII of Montpellier, it is likely that Alan spent some time in Montpellier, but, again, we do not know for how long or for what purpose—most assume that he taught there. Whatever Alan’s possible peregrinations, his near contemporaries most frequently associate him with Paris.\textsuperscript{27} He finally died in 1202/3, after joining the Cistercians at Cîteaux Abbey.

John of Hauville was probably born in Hauville, near Rouen, in Normandy, under the sovereignty of the King of England throughout John’s life-time.\textsuperscript{28} One glossator identifies John as “Anglicus,” but Schmidt is inclined to see this as a mistake.\textsuperscript{29} Although we know almost nothing of his early life, John of Hauville is well attested as a teacher, between 1184/5 and 1199, at the cathedral school in Rouen.\textsuperscript{30} In 1199, John’s name appears as a witness on a cathedral document, so presumably he must have died sometime after 1199 but before the publication of Gervais of Melkey’s treatise (1208-16) in which Gervais refers to his master in the past tense.\textsuperscript{31} To judge from the seemingly autobiographical journey in the \textit{Architrenius}, it is entirely likely that, before settling in Rouen, John, like his protagonist, had studied in Paris.\textsuperscript{32}

\section*{Dates of composition}

\textsuperscript{26} See Bossuat, \textit{Anticlaudianus}, 8-9, and Sheridan, \textit{Anticlaudianus}, 10-12.
\textsuperscript{27} For instance, John of Garland commemorates Alan as a teacher in Paris. See Guy Raynaud de Lage, \textit{Alain de Lille, poète du XIIe siècle} (Montreal: Institut d'études médiévales, 1951), 12.
\textsuperscript{28} For the evidence concerning John’s life and surname, see Schmidt, \textit{Architrenius}, 18-26.
\textsuperscript{29} Cited by Schmidt, 285, n. 1.
\textsuperscript{30} Schmidt, \textit{Architrenius}, 22.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 22-3.
Rouen, Reims, and Paris are within easy traveling distance of each other, so at the very least, we can say with absolute certainty that these four poets studied and taught in very close geographic proximity c.1180, the general period during which these authors must have been composing their epics. Similar geographic and temporal origins are not the only things that these four epics have in common; it has long been known that these epics are all intimately tied together by similarities in wording and themes, similarities which strongly suggest that these poets knew each other’s works.\(^{33}\)

However, and here we come to the crux of the problem, it is very difficult to determine precisely who is quoting whom. In fact, the matter of dating has become inextricably bound up with the matter of influence.\(^{34}\) The consensus for some time now has been that only the Architrenius presents us with a fixed date of publication; the other three are variously dated, largely dependent on their relative relationship to the Architrenius.

In order to date the Anticlaudianus, we must rely exclusively upon internal evidence, but the poem itself provides very little evidence which can establish, with absolute certainty, any particular date of composition. The only thing that is certain is that Alan knew the opening line of Walter’s Alexandreis, since he quotes the first three words (Gesta ducis Macedum) as an example of a mediocre modern epic.\(^{35}\) For this reason, as well as the numerous verbal similarities between the Alexandreis and Anticlaudianus, it is generally assumed that the Anticlaudianus post-dates the publication of the Alexandreis.

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\(^{33}\) For verbal parallels between the Architrenius and the other epics, especially the Anticlaudianus, see Schmidt, Architrenius, 79-86. For the Ylias, see Thomas Gärtner, Klassische Vorbilder, 10-1, especially n.8. In his index (562-80), Gärtner lists nineteen instances in the Ylias of close verbal similarities with the Anticlaudianus, fifty-six with the Alexandreis, and sixteen with the Architrenius. Christensen, on p. 166 of Das Alexanderlied, gives several verbal parallels between the Alexandreis and the Anticlaudianus.

\(^{34}\) Among the earliest and most influential of these studies is Chesley Hutchings, “L’Anticlaudianus d’Alain de Lille: étude de chronologie,” Romania 50 (1924): 1-13.

\(^{35}\) Anticlaudianus, 168-70.
The Alexandreis, taken on its own, is usually assigned a terminus post quem of 1176 because of its dedication to William of the White hands, Archbishop of Reims; William did not ascend to this position until 1176. Unfortunately for the purposes of dating the poem, William kept this position until his death in 1202, so this dedication only provides a terminus post quem. Although many other factors have been proposed to help fix the date of the Alexandreis, William’s ascension to the archiepiscopate remains the only incontrovertible internal evidence.

Ever since Hutchings’ 1924 article, the Architrenius has been cited, almost without exception, as the most indisputable terminus ante quem for both the Anticlaudianus and the Alexandreis. The completion date of the Architrenius is assumed to be secure because John dedicated his poem to Walter of Coutances while Walter was still bishop of Lincoln but already confirmed to be the future archbishop of Rouen. Walter of Countances received the pope’s approval in September or October of 1184 and was officially installed as the archbishop of Rouen on February 24th, 1185. The Architrenius is therefore assumed to have been completed between the fall of 1184 and the beginning of 1185.

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37 For a good summary of the various evidence which has been marshaled to date the Alexandreis prior to 1998, see Maura Lafferty, Walter of Châtillon’s Alexandreis, 183-9. Dionisotti, in “Walter of Châtillon and the Greeks,” argues for the earliest possible publication date in 1176, because Walter’s poem, In Domino confido, which claims fame for a poem about Alexander and contains extensive verbal parallels to the Alexandreis, was thought to date to 1174-76. Based on a re-dating of the relevant passage of In Domino confido to 1180, David Traill advocates 1178 as the publication date of the Alexandreis. See Traill, “Walter of Châtillon’s prosimetron In Domino confido (W. 3): Where and when was it performed?,” in Poesia Latina Medieval (Florence, 2005): 851-862. Neil Adkin reasonably points out that this evidence is not incompatible with his own preference for a publication date in 1180. See Adkin, “The Date of Walter of Châtillon’s Alexandreis Once Again,” in Classica et Mediaevalia 59 (2008): 201-211. Indeed, the evidence provided by the dating of In Domino confido is also not incompatible with my own argument, given below, that the Alexandreis may have been circulated/perform ed gradually over a period of years.
38 See, for instance, Sheridan, Anticlaudianus, 24-5.
39 See Schmidt, Architrenius, 14-17.
As Paul Gerhard Schmidt has shown, the Architrenius displays numerous stylistic and verbal similarities to both the Alexandreis and, especially, the Anticlaudianus; however because the Architrenius contains no explicit references to either of these poems (e.g. titles or incipits), Schmidt believes that it must remain an open question whether the Anticlaudianus postdates or antedates the Architrenius.\footnote{Ibid., 84-6. Schmidt takes it for granted that the Alexandreis is to be dated before 1182, and so he assumes the influence of the Alexandreis on the Architrenius. See Schmidt, Architrenius, 79-80.} Winthrop Wetherbee makes the case for believing that the Anticlaudianus was written first.\footnote{See Wetherbee, Architrenius, xxx-xxxii.} Wetherbee supports his claim by analyzing only two instances of common phrases—arguing that the context fits the Anticlaudianus better. This is highly subjective and selective evidence, which I find ultimately unconvincing. Still, most scholars, even long before Wetherbee made his (brief) argument for priority, have assumed, with Hutchings, that the Architrenius does indeed postdate the Anticlaudianus.

To recap, most proposed dates for the publication of the Alexandreis fall between 1176 and the supposed publication of the Architrenius in 1184/5. Since the Anticlaudianus mentions the Alexandreis, the Anticlaudianus is usually assigned a date of publication between the date of the Alexandreis and the Architrenius. Indeed, it is not uncommon to find scholarship suggesting publication dates of Alexandreis, 1181; Anticlaudianus, 1182/3; Architrenius 1184/5.\footnote{This is Sheridan’s proposal (Anticlaudianus, 25), but his view has been shared implicitly by most of those who prefer a late date for the publication of the Alexandreis.} The dubious idea that a poet could compose an entire epic in just one or two years appears to have posed little problem for many scholars.\footnote{A few notable exceptions are Hutchings, Adkin, and Tilliette, who have each advocated the possibility that Alan had begun composing his epic before the Alexandreis was published. However, even these three argue for a narrow window of time in which the Anticlaudianus was written. Adkin advocates between 3 and 4 years for the composition of the Anticlaudianus. See Adkin, “Alan of Lille on Walter of Châtillon:}
This picture is substantially complicated by Joseph of Exeter’s *Ylias*, which is dedicated to Baldwin, described as Archbishop of Canterbury. Baldwin was only the archbishop of Canterbury from 1185 until his death in 1190, so it would seem that the *Ylias* must have been completed between 1185 and 1190. There is further evidence for dating the poem later than 1185, since Joseph alludes to his future epic about the Third Crusade. Gompf argues, on the evidence of a letter dated 1188, that Joseph would not have been aware of these plans and his future commission until 1188. Therefore, in Gompf’s estimation, the poem must have been completed between 1188 and 1190.

Such a late date for the *Ylias* becomes problematic if we accept the word of one of the *Anticlaudianus*’ early glossators, generally assumed to be William of Auxerre, who identifies Alan’s lines at 1.165-6 as referring to Joseph’s *Ylias*. There are good reasons to take this identification seriously. Not only did the glossator likely live within a generation of both authors, but Alan’s phrasing could be taken as a reference to Joseph’s wording in the exordium of his epic. Moreover, we should bear in mind that 1.167-9 of the *Anticlaudianus* unquestionably refer to Walter’s *Alexandreis*, so that there can be no doubt but that Alan meant to reference another contemporary poet. Certainly, the *Ylias*’ theme could be adequately (though not perfectly) summarized as the fortunes of Priam.


44 The poem also mentions the death of Prince Henry which happened in 1183. For the most thorough presentation of all the evidence for the date, see Gompf, *Joseph Iscanus*, 19-22.


46 Ibid., 10. Alan wrote: “Illic pannoso plebescit carmine noster / Ennius et Priami fortunas intonat.” The gloss reads: “NOSTER quia Latinus poeta est noster, id est contemporaneus, et significat Joseph Cantuariensem; Yliadum lacrimas etc.”

47 Compare Joseph’s self-described “plebeam...tubam” in line 11. This point is made by Adkin in “Alan of Lille on Walter of Châtillon,” 289-90.
Yet, we can never be certain that the *Ylias* was Alan’s intended target, since Alan does not quote the opening words of the *Ylias* as he does for the *Alexandreis*. What is more, the matter of Troy was an extremely popular topic and several, though far shorter, Latin hexameter poems on this topic do survive from the twelfth century.

I have attempted to outline the received opinion concerning the dating of these four epics. I have no further evidence to add to this picture, but I believe that there are several serious flaws in the premises underlying most previous attempts to date these four poems. For one thing, there is no reason to assume that the entire epic was complete and published at the same time that the dedication to each archbishop was written. Most scholars have taken it for granted that these dedications marked the completion of these epics. Yet, we can imagine with equal justification that the dedications, which appear in the *Alexandreis*, *Ylias*, and *Architrenius*, were written on the occasion of the promotions of their patrons—to be read to them immediately, while the rest of the epic was still being written. Indeed, scholars of Valerius Flaccus’ *Argonautica* tend to assume that its imperial dedication is better taken as a start date than as a date of completion (although most admit that a definitive start date is impossible to ascertain from an epic’s dedication alone). Indeed, scholars of Valerius Flaccus’ *Argonautica* tend to assume that its imperial dedication is better taken as a start date than as a date of completion (although most admit that a definitive start date is impossible to ascertain from an epic’s dedication alone).49 Certainly, we need not assume that epic poets would go back and “update” their dedications once they complete and publish their epics. That is to say, dedications neither

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48 Of course, Joseph proclaims his theme to be “*Yliadum lacrimas concessaque Pergama fatis*” (line 1). Alan is, of course, quoting Horace’s *Ars Poetica* 137, where Horace gives a sample of a hackneyed way to begin an epic as “*Fortunam Priami cantabo et nobile bellum*.”

49 For an excellent overview of the problem of dating the *Argonautica*, see Tim Stover, *Epic and Empire in Vespasianic Rome: A New Reading of Valerius Flaccus’ Argonautica* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 7-26. Stover points out on p. 25, n. 63 that only one scholar has suggested that the dedication was written after most of the epic had been composed. Stover accepts this possibility but prefers to assume that the dedication was written well before Valerius died (leaving the poem unfinished). See also Zissos, *Valerius Flaccus’ Argonautica, Book 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), xv.
prove the start date nor the completion date of an epic, and so the theories, which use the dedication date of the *Architrenius* to establish the completion date of the *Architrenius* and, by extension, those of the *Alexandreis* and *Anticlaudianus*, lose their grounding.

In Petrarch’s *Africa*, a work whose composition is much better documented than the twelfth-century epics under consideration here, we have a clear case of just how little the dedication date actually tells us. Petrarch’s letters reveal that he inserted his dedication to King Robert of Sicily into his *Africa* after he had already been working on the epic for at least two years. Indeed, the whole reason for the dedication, Petrarch says, is that the king had enjoyed hearing several passages from the still unfinished *Africa*. Yet, there is no evidence within the epic itself to suggest that Petrarch had composed any of the epic before writing the dedication, so it is the letters which allow us to assign a date to the start of the epic (and even this is not definitive). What is more, we know that King Robert died approximately two years after Petrarch wrote the dedication, but the surviving manuscripts of the *Africa* reveal that Petrarch did nothing whatsoever to change the tone of this dedication. Instead, Petrarch merely added a section near the end of his last book (9), lamenting the death of Robert. Of course, we also know that Petrarch continued to revise his epic until his death, nearly four decades later! In other words, both the dedication to King Robert and the lament for the King’s death tell us virtually nothing about the start date or the date of completion. If we did not possess so much external evidence, we can only imagine how far from the mark the *Africa* might be dated.

Perhaps the biggest flaw in the modern dating of these four epics, however, is the usual assumption that these epics must have been written and published sequentially.

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50 For this and the following discussion, see Thomas Bergin and Alice Wilson, *Petrarch’s Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), ix-xiv.
That is to say, most efforts to date these poems have assumed that influence could move in only one direction—as if each poet kept his epic hidden while he was composing it, thereby preventing any imitation before official publication of the entire epic.\textsuperscript{51} Because of the extensive imitation on display in all of these epics, a natural corollary is the assumption that no work could begin on the next epic in the series before the publication of the previous epic.

In contrast, I maintain that we have to allow for the possibility that all four of these epics were being composed with considerable chronological overlap. Multi-book classicizing epics are unlikely to have been written in just one or two years—a necessary assumption according to many chronologies. I believe that the physical proximity of these authors to each other and the short period of time in which all of these epics must have appeared (approximately between 1176 and 1190) both suggest an atmosphere where some or all of these authors were reading or listening to each other’s works while they were being composed.

We do not have any evidence for how long it took to write most of these epics, but Walter claims, in his prologue, that he spent five years actively working on his own epic.\textsuperscript{52} Of course, it is impossible to say whether Walter is telling the truth about how long it took him, but, importantly, Walter seems to think that his audience will consider this a short amount of time in which to write an epic. He asks his audience to forgive him any blemishes, bearing in mind how swiftly the work was composed (\textit{considerent arti}

\textsuperscript{51} The exceptions, as noted above, are Hutchings, Adkin, and Tilliette who at least allow for the possibility that Alan had seen or heard some of Walter’s \textit{Alexandreis} before publishing his own \textit{Anticlaudianus}. See Adkin, “Alan of Lille on Walter of Châtillon,” 312; Hutchings, “L’Anticlaudianus d’Alain de Lille”; Tilliette, “L’Alexandréide de Gautier de Châtillon,” 280, n.13.

\textsuperscript{52} “Hoc ego reueritus diu te, o mea Alexandrei, in mente habui semper supprimere et opus quinquennio laboratum aut penitus delere aut certe quoad uiaremen in occulto sepelire. Tandem apud me deliberatum est te in lucem esse proferendum ut demum auderes in publica uenire monimenta.”
temporis breuitatem qua scripsimus). Certainly, Walter and his audience would have known Servius’ report that Virgil spent more than twice as long (eleven years) on the *Aeneid*, dying before completing it.\(^{53}\) Walter and his readers also would have known that Statius claims to have taken even one more year than that (twelve years) on the *Thebaid*.\(^ {54}\) In this context, Walter’s apparently modest claim that he was rushed could easily be taken as extreme hubris.

What is more, Walter says that he hesitated for an unspecified amount of time before publishing his epic. Many scholars take Alan’s description of Walter’s “sluggish Muse” as a reference to Walter’s delay in publishing.\(^ {55}\) But, Alan seems to be describing a work which is unfinished. This is precisely how Ralph of Longchamp, a former student of Alan’s, understood Alan’s meaning. In his commentary on the *Anticlaudianus*, he does not recognize Walter behind Maevius, but instead, linking Maevius to the story of Alexander’s poet Choerilus, he tells a story about how a certain Maevius and Choerilus took money to compose an epic about Alexander which they started but never finished.\(^ {56}\)

Of course, if the *Alexandreis* had not been finished, then we must account for how Alan knew the *Alexandreis*’ incipit. To solve this problem, Hutchings assumed that Walter must have published only the first half of the *Alexandreis* at the time when Alan composed these lines. I would prefer to assume that Walter had circulated or recited passages of the *Alexandreis* before allowing it to be officially copied in a final version for

\(^{53}\) Servius’ introduction to his commentary on the *Aeneid*. Thilo and Hagen edition, 2.

\(^{54}\) *Thebaid*, 12.810-2.

\(^{55}\) “illīc / Mevius, in celos audens os ponere mutum, / Gesta ducis Macedum tenebrosi carminis umbra / Pingere dum temptat, in primo limine fessus / Heret et ignauam queritur torpescere musam.” (Anticlaudianus 1.166-70)

\(^{56}\) “MAEVIUS: de pravitate e imperfectione operis,” on p.73. Later on p.74, “MAEVIUS: ise et Cherillus acceperant mille talenta ut describerent facta Alexandri, qui componentes versus nihil valentes, quod acceperant reddiderunt.” The story of Choerilus is told by Horace in *Epistles* 2.1.232 and the *Ars Poetica* 357. Maevius appears in Virgil’s *Eclogue* 3.90.
posterity (i.e. the version that was copied with his prologue—a prologue which several of the earliest manuscripts do not contain). Indeed, Tilliette and Adkin also suggest that Alan must have known an unfinished version of the *Alexandreis*. They posit that fragments of the *Alexandreis* must have circulated before publication of the *Anticlaudianus*, after whose publication Walter at last officially published his own epic.57

Although almost a chronological necessity, admittedly there is no reliable evidence for the sharing of these epics before publication.58 Until a careful study is made of how epics were declaimed and shared in the twelfth century, we can only speculate. Certainly, the Virgilian precedent for public recitations would have been well known in the twelfth century. Servius (and the less well-known *vita* of Aelius Donatus) reports that Virgil read out sections of the *Aeneid*, supposedly as they still stand, long before the work as a whole was published.59 Moreover, most modern scholarship on ancient Roman epic advocates the idea that epics were written over the course of many years and gradually declaimed in public as sections were finished.60 Indeed several classical scholars have advocated for mutual influence, occurring over a period of many years, among the Flavian epics of Valerius Flaccus, Statius, and Silius.61

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58 James Sheridan suggests that this passage in Alan’s prose prologue means that Alan had sent a few draft manuscripts to select friends, but Alan’s language throughout the preface is at once so formulaic and so cryptic that I would hesitate to offer this as conclusive proof. See Sheridan, *Anticlaudianus*, 39. The passage in question is the following: “In quo lector non latratu corrixationis insaniens, uerum lima correctionis emendans, circumcidat superfluum et compleat diminutum quatenus revertatur ad limam, impolitum reducatur ad fabricam, inartificio sum suo referatur artifici, male tortum proprie reddatur incudi.”

59 For instance, Servius on *Aeneid* 4.323. This excerpt is cited and translated in Ziolkowski, *The Virgilian Tradition*, 165.


61 Zissos sums up the likely scenario in this way: “The numerous verbal reminiscences of the *Argonautica* found in Statius and Silius suggest that, at the very least, Valerius Flaccus circulated individual books as
Moreover, the textual traditions of all four epics are highly contaminated; Colker, the most recent editor of the *Alexandreis*, and Bate, the most recent editor of the *Ylias*, both suspect that multiple authorial revisions may have been released over a period of many years. That is to say, the manuscript evidence itself may suggest that there was never a *single* publication date for these epics. If this was the case for the other epics as well, then precise publication dates for any of these epics are not meaningful.

Evidence from the manuscripts of the *Anticlaudianus* may also support this conjecture. Danuta Shanzer has pointed out that the total number of lines in British manuscripts of the *Anticlaudianus* is highly variable, ranging from 4312 (Oxford, Corpus Christi Coll., MS 59) to 4348 (Cambridge, Corpus Christi Coll., MS. 406). By comparison, Bossuat’s edition of the *Anticlaudianus* is 4354 lines in length. Shanzer argues convincingly that some of the lines in Bossuat’s edition are early non-authorial interpolations, but until more (and much needed) work is done on the textual tradition of the *Anticlaudianus*, it remains possible that some of the variability in the length of the text could reflect authorial revisions and additions.

Therefore, I suggest that the similar expressions in these epics may easily be the result of mutual influence, not necessarily influence moving in a single direction. In such an environment, to take quotation as evidence for priority of publication makes little sense. My proposal, that these epics could have been written concurrently and shared (at least in part) before completion, neatly solves several vexing problems of chronology. Most importantly, it allows for the possibility that Walter did not finish his epic until

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sometime in the 1180s, by removing the need to assume that the *Anticlaudianus* and *Architrenius* were composed in just one or two years. This “crunch” of dates had been one of the chief appeals for preferring Dionisotti’s early dating for the completion of the *Alexandreis* (i.e. 1176). Yet, for many years, scholars have assumed that a date for the *Alexandreis* in the early 1180s was a better historical fit with the *Alexandreis*’ themes and episodes.

My theory certainly solves the chronological problem posed by Alan referring to Joseph’s *Ylias*. Indeed, both A. K. Bate and A. G. Rigg have pointed out that the *Ylias* must have been composed over a long a period of time. Bate presents evidence from the manuscript tradition that the text itself must have been revised by Joseph and disseminated multiple times, resulting in texts and commentaries with different numbers of lines. As Rigg emphasizes, we have no evidence for when Joseph began his epic. It could have been started even as early as the 1170s, only being *completed* in 1189 (or indeed perhaps later). Alan of Lille could easily have known about Joseph’s *Ylias* or even read or heard portions of it recited long before its completion. The fact that Alan carefully eschews giving the incipit of this new Troy epic suggests that either the (final) incipit had not been written yet, or he simply had not seen it or did not recall it. That is to say, in contrast to his citation of Walter’s incipit, “*Gesta ducis Macedum,*” Alan’s allusion to Joseph’s theme, “*Priami fortunas,*” occurs in the middle of the line and could not metrically begin a hexameter.

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65 In particular, the new king, Philip Augustus, the famous future crusader, was crowned in November of 1179.
68 Rigg, *Joseph of Exeter’s Iliad*, viii.
Dueling/dualing poets

We are now in a position to view these four epics as dynamically responding to each other rather than as a strict sequence of responses. Surely, such an environment is more in keeping with the competitive spirit seen in these works. All four of these poets actively endeavor to outdo not only each other but also their classical forbears. An anonymous thirteenth-century gloss on the *Alexandreis* suggests that Walter’s very motivation for writing the *Alexandreis* was a competition with his contemporary, Matthew of Vendôme, who is said to have composed his well-known *Tobias* as his contribution to the contest.⁶⁹

Citing the authority of Servius, Walter himself proclaims in his prologue that he is the first poet—ancient or modern—to undertake an epic about Alexander.⁷⁰ At the end of book five, Walter even boasts that his hero is greater than Lucan’s Caesar and Claudian’s Honorius; it is surely not a very great stretch to see this as direct competition with Lucan’s and Claudian’s poetry.⁷¹ Walter’s prologue does express (or at least feigns) a more humble attitude to Virgil, the only poet whose epic he claims not to be able to surpass, but Joseph of Exeter shows no such Statian reservations.⁷² Instead, Joseph boasts

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⁶⁹ See Colker, *Alexandreis*, xvi. As Maura Lafferty points out, this gloss may be fanciful, but it is surely representative of the kind of competitive atmosphere in which these poets worked. See Lafferty, Walter of Châtillon’s *Alexandreis*, 10. Lafferty suggests that the gloss may have been inspired by a couplet near the end of Matthew’s *Tobias*, 2109-10: “Vobis exametrum desit Galteridos: uti / Pentametris elegis Vindocinensis amat.”

⁷⁰ “considerent arti temporis breuitatem qua scripsumus et altitudinem materiae, quam nullus ueterum poetarum teste Seruio ausus fuit aggredi perscribendam.”

⁷¹ *Alexandreis*, 5.498-509.

⁷² Walter states in his prologue: “Non enim arbitror me esse meliorem Mantuano uate, cuius opera mortali ingenio altiora carpsere obtrectantium linguae poetarum et mortuo derogare presumpserunt, quem, dum uiuueret, nemo potuit equiparare mortalium.” Cf. Statius’ explicit engagement with the *Aeneid* in the night raid at *Thebaid* 10.447-8 and in the closing farewell to his epic at 12.816-7.
in his exordium that his epic theme, since it is pure truth, surpasses both Homer’s and Virgil’s. 73 John of Hauville’s boasting is characteristically more cryptic, but anyone, who begins an epic claiming that his art can conquer nature and ends his epic bidding it last “to infinity and beyond,” is surely not a modest spirit. 74

Yet, as I argue in Chapter 3, Alan presents the *Alexandreis* and probably the *Ylias* as exempla of the failure of modern poets to live up to (or surpass) the greatest poems of antiquity. Alan refers to Walter (and probably Joseph) using the pseudonyms, Maevius and Ennius, respectively. Implicit is Alan’s own belief that he will succeed where Walter will fail. Walter is said to have replied in kind to Alan’s insult with a couplet calling him a modern day Bavius—the poet paired with Maevius in Virgil’s third *Eclogue* (jealous detractors of Virgil, according to Servius). 75 Certainly, all four poets anticipate harsh criticism from their peers in their prefaces and/or exordia and concluding verses. They all attempt to pre-empt such attacks by suggesting that these would be motivated as much by jealousy as by any faults remaining in their works. The case of Alan and Walter proves that this is not merely conventional rhetoric.

I have chosen to follow the precedent of modern scholarship in dividing these four epics between the allegorical epics by Alan and John (Chapter 1) and the historical epics by Walter and Joseph (Chapter 2). The majority of scholars, no doubt moved as

73 “Meoniumne senem mirer Latiumne Maronem / An vatem Frigium, Martem cui certior index / Explicuit presens oculus, quem fabula nescit?” (*Ylias*, 1.24-6)
74 In *Architreniue*, 1.5-6 John claims, “ingenii furor instat et invia preceps / Rumpit et artifici cedit natura labori.” In *Architrenius*, 9.480-1, John says, “Hic liber et fame veterum feliciter annos / Equet, in eternum populis dilectus et ultra!”
much by Curtius’ tidy narrative of the development of twelfth-century epic as by Alan’s probable references to the *Alexandreis* and *Ylias*, have wished to place Walter and Joseph as the first two epic writers; these epics would be followed, then, by the “new” allegorical epics by Alan and John.\(^{76}\) That is to say, previous scholarship has tended to link assumed differences in models and motivations to chronological development. In this way, the historical epics could be neatly grouped together as classicizing experiments, which collectively inspired the more creative genre of allegorical epic—or, for those critics who prefer historical epic, as the pinnacle of medieval achievement in the Latin epic genre, which was then inevitably followed by dreadful medieval allegorizing. However, as I have already argued, these epics were probably being composed largely concurrently. What is more, as I argue throughout, the historical and allegorical epics stem from the same impulse and represent two possible ways of reading and responding to the *Aeneid* in the twelfth century.

Indeed, although I have chosen to treat these epics along the axes of allegorical and historical formulations of the genre, these epics could easily be paired in another way. Walter and Alan are both poets from the vicinity of Lille, while Joseph and John are both poets from Anglo-Norman territories. There was also an age difference. Both Joseph and John devote considerable space at the beginnings of their epics to discussing their relatively young age.\(^{77}\) In contrast, Alan and Walter both seem to have written their epics towards the end of their careers; certainly both Alan and Walter had produced many other well-known works prior to writing their epics. John and Joseph both express concern that they will be unjustly dismissed as authorities because of their youth; Walter and Alan do


\(^{77}\) *Ylias*, 1.15-23; *Architrenius*, 1.65-99.
not.\footnote{Ibid.} As it turns out, John and Joseph were right to fear that their works might not be as cherished as those by their older contemporaries. The reception of these four poems clearly shows that the older authors, Walter and Alan, did indeed achieve greater popularity than their younger contemporaries. Manuscripts of the \textit{Alexandreis} and \textit{Anticlaudianus} are far more numerous than those containing the \textit{Ylias} and \textit{Architrenius}.

Manuscripts frequently contain more than one of these four epics and, in fact, support both pairings. Because of the enormous number of manuscripts of the \textit{Alexandreis} and \textit{Anticlaudianus}, it is impossible to say in absolute terms, without making a special study of all of the manuscripts, how frequently the \textit{Alexandreis} and \textit{Anticlaudianus} traveled together, but they do often appear in the same manuscript.\footnote{For instance, Christel Meier describes an important illustrated copy of the \textit{Anticlaudianus} (fol. 1r-46r) which is followed by a copy of the \textit{Alexandreis} (fol. 48r-113r) in Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare, Ms. CCLI. This important thirteenth-century manuscript does not appear in Colker’s census. For discussion, see Meier, “Rezeption des Anticlaudianus Alans von Lille,” in \textit{Text und Bild: Aspekte des Zusammenwirkens zweier Kiinstte in Mittelalter und fruher Neuzeit}, eds. Christel Meier and Uwe Ruberg (Wiesbaden: L. Reichert Verlag, 1980), 413-4.} Because of their relatively smaller numbers, the contents of the manuscripts of the \textit{Ylias} and \textit{Architrenius} have been well documented. The \textit{Architrenius} appears three times in the company of the \textit{Anticlaudianus}, but the \textit{Architrenius} was also twice grouped with the \textit{Ylias}.\footnote{See Schmidt’s description of the manuscripts of the \textit{Architrenius} and their contents in \textit{Architrenius}, 93-103. In Schmidt’s sigla, manuscripts B, C, and D also contain the \textit{Anticlaudianus}, while C and E also contain the \textit{Ylias}.} In fact, the manuscripts sometimes group the \textit{Architrenius} with purely allegorical poems, such as Bernard’s \textit{Cosmographia} and Alan’s \textit{De planctu Naturaee}, but just as often the \textit{Architrenius} appears in the company of poetry composed on historical subjects, such as anonymous poems on the Trojan War, Joseph’s \textit{Ylias}, and Peter Riga’s \textit{Aurora}.\footnote{Ibid. In Schmidt’s sigla, B, Q and V contain the \textit{Cosmographia}, H and Z contain the \textit{De planctu Naturaee}, F and H contain Troy poems, and, finally, C and E contain the \textit{Aurora}.}
Of the five surviving manuscripts containing Joseph’s *Ylias*, only four contain other works, but one of the most important manuscripts of the *Ylias* happens to contain the three other epics in this study: the *Architrenius, Alexandreis*, and *Anticlaudianus* (plus Seneca’s tragedies, Geoffrey’s *Poetria Nova*, and Bernard Silvestris’ *Cosmographia*).\(^8\) It should come as no surprise that this manuscript was produced in what is today Northern France in the thirteenth century. Another manuscript of the *Ylias* contains additionally only the *Architrenius* and *Cosmographia*, while a third manuscript sees the *Ylias* in the company of the *Alexandreis* among other, primarily religious, poetry.\(^8\) The last manuscript combines the *Ylias* not with other epics but with learned materials such as Macrobius’ commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis*.\(^8\) Thus, although the surviving sample size is admittedly small, the *Ylias* is as likely to be paired with the *Alexandreis* as with the *Architrenius*. The manuscript evidence certainly suggests that all four of the epics under consideration here were perceived to be similar works representing the pinnacle of the learning of their day.

The creation of these four epics was a literary event, whose classicizing ambition, in many ways, has its closest parallel in late first-century Rome. Like Statius’ *Thebaid* and Valerius Flaccus’ *Argonautica*, three of these works (all but the *Anticlaudianus*) were dedicated to powerful patrons, yet, none of these epics portray the lives or exploits of their patrons. Instead, like Statius and Valerius Flaccus, these late twelfth-century epic writers looked back to the ancient classical past for their themes and subject matter—at the same time imitating Virgil’s decision not to sing directly of Augustus’ achievements.

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\(^8\) See Gompf, *Joseph Iscanus*, 22-35. See also Bate, *Joseph of Exeter*, 10-13. This is manuscript C in Gompf’s sigla, but manuscript B in Schmidt’s sigla (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 406).

\(^8\) In Gompf’s sigla, O (Oxford, Bodleian, Digby 157) and A (Admont Stiftsbibliothek 128), respectively.

\(^8\) In Gompf’s sigla, P (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Lat. 15015).
What is more, some classicists have argued that the *Thebaid* and *Argonautica* show the same kind of mutual influence that I have argued for in these four twelfth-century epics.\(^{85}\)

The comparison is all the more apt when we consider the immediate reception of these four epics. Statius had claimed that his *Thebaid* was already being taught in school (certainly the *Thebaid* had become a standard part of the curriculum in the schools of late antiquity).\(^{86}\) There is strong evidence, in the form of thirteenth-century lists of canonical authors, that the *Alexandreis*, *Anticlaudianus*, and *Architrenius* were also swiftly added to school curricula.\(^{87}\) Henry of Ghent remarked that the *Alexandreis* had become so popular with the grammarians that they were neglecting the ancient authors.\(^{88}\) Expressing a sentiment rather similar to those grammarians, John of Garland commemorated Alan as “greater than Virgil and truer than Homer” (*Virgilio major et Homero certior*).\(^{89}\) Moreover, all four epics have come down to us with full sets of glosses, the earliest of which date from within a few decades of their composition.\(^{90}\) In essence, these epics became canonical “classic” works soon after being written.

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\(^{86}\) *Thebaid* 12.815.

\(^{87}\) Henri d’Andeli’s mid-thirteenth-century *Bataille des set ars* mentions these three epics as part of the contemporary school curriculum. Eberhard’s *Laborintus* (written after 1212, before 1280) lists standard curriculum authors, among which the *Alexandreis*, *Architrenius*, and *Anticlaudianus* are named. Eberhard also lists “Dares,” which, since this was the usual title of Joseph of Exeter’s *Ylias*, may refer either to the prose Dares or to Joseph’s poem. I am inclined to believe the latter because the immediate context is a list of epic poetry. For discussion of Eberhard’s *auctores*, see Curtius, *European Literature*, 50-51.

\(^{88}\) “*Alexandreis in scholis grammaticorum tantae dignitatis est hodie ut prae ipsa ueterum poetarum lectio negligatur.*” This is quoted in Colker, *Alexandreis*, xx. Colker cites *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis* 20, ed. A Miraeus, *Bibliotheca ecclesiastica* I (Antwerp 1639), 165.

\(^{89}\) Quoted by Raynaud de Lage, *Alain de Lille*, 12.


What I propose, then, is that we see an especially vibrant Latin literary community in the vicinity of Rouen, Paris, and Rheims in c.1180, where our epic writers strove against each other in competing with their shared classical past to become new classic auctores. Over the many years during which they were composing their magna opera, they must have always had an eye on the competition—perhaps attending public recitations of works in progress, circulating passages, etc. It has usually been assumed that Walter of Châtillon started this classicizing arms race in the genre of epic. Walter may well have been the first of these authors to begin work on an epic, but I doubt whether we will ever know for sure. Certainly the explosion of interest in the genre suggests that it was, so to speak, already in the air.

Chapter summaries

In my first chapter, I present evidence that the twelfth-century allegorical reading of the Aeneid served as an important structural model for the Anticlaudianus and the Architrenius. After first showing that allegorical readings of the Aeneid—especially the sixth book—were sometimes cited as structural models for allegorical poems, I suggest that the first six books of the Anticlaudianus are modeled on the allegorical interpretation of the Aeneid’s sixth book and that Books 7, 8, and 9 of the Anticlaudianus are modeled on the allegorical interpretation of the entire Aeneid. I then show how the Architrenius can be read as reflecting an allegorical reading of the sixth book of the Aeneid. In each

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case, I argue that the allegorical *Aeneid* can serve as a map to help us better interpret these somewhat cryptic epics.

In my second chapter, I examine how the *Alexandreis* and *Ylias* reflect the way that Virgil was believed, in the twelfth century, to have constructed history and myth in the *Aeneid*. I suggest that the *Alexandreis’* and the *Ylias’* special interest in historical truth accords with the way that the *Aeneid* was read in the twelfth century, as a historical text which, although often bending the historical truth, does so with conscious allusion to specific historical events or alternate historical possibilities. I then explain that myth, specifically in the form of the divine apparatus, was believed to be an essential component of the *Aeneid* in the twelfth century. What is more, I argue that the divine apparatus of the *Alexandreis* and *Ylias* make much more sense when they are understood within the context of the Virgilian divine apparatus as it was allegorically interpreted in the twelfth century.

In my final chapter, I explore how these medieval epics relate their conception of heroics to the *Aeneid*. Because even today there is dramatic disagreement in the interpretation of how Virgil portrayed Aeneas, I first establish how the moral character of Aeneas might have been interpreted by twelfth-century readers. In so doing, I find evidence that the moral character of Virgil’s Aeneas elicited a wide range of responses from *vir perfectus* to treacherous liar. I suggest that all four medieval epics can be read as responding to Aeneas’ ambiguous moral standing. This chapter, therefore, builds on the work of Richard Thomas and Craig Kallendorf who have identified evidence for
‘pessimistic’ readings of the *Aeneid*, i.e. readings of Aeneas as an imperfect hero, in
texts and translations

Because of the already large scope of this project, I have limited my discussion to
texts which exist in modern editions. A careful study of the twelfth and thirteenth century
manuscripts of these epics would no doubt yield rich rewards—especially in the area of
glosses and marginal commentary, but commentaries on three of these medieval epics
have been published in modern editions. I feel justified in limiting myself to this
published material because few studies have incorporated these already existing editions
into the wider study of twelfth century epic. For the text of the *Aeneid*, again, I would
prefer to use twelfth-century manuscript readings, but practical constraints have forced
me to use a modern edition. I have quoted from Sabbadini’s edition because he is, on the
whole, more likely to print the readings found in the manuscripts than Mynors, who often
prefers modern conjectures and other variants such as those found in Servius. Mynors’
readings might seem preferable for a thesis which touts the importance of Servius, but
Servius can be remarkably unreliable when it comes to recording a poetic text.92
Furthermore, Sabbadini’s apparatus, being much more extensive than Mynors’, contains
not only Servius’ readings but those of many other ancient witnesses as well. For the text

91 Thomas, *Virgil and the Augustan Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001);
Kallendorf, *The Other Virgil: ‘pessimistic’ Readings of the Aeneid in Early Modern Culture* (Oxford:
Oxford University Press, 2007).
92 See Justin Haynes, “Citations of Ovid in Virgil’s Ancient Commentators,” forthcoming in *Classical
Commentaries*, edited by C. Stray and C. Kraus. James Zetzel also points to many problems with Mynors’
decision to incorporate Servius’ readings in *Latin Textual Criticism in Antiquity* (New York: Arno Press,
of Servius, I have used Thilo and Hagen’s edition exclusively—not because I consider it
the best text for every book of the Aeneid, but because I want to avoid confusion by
continually switching between editions. It is not essential to my argument that each poet
and reader saw the exact words in each passage of Servius cited. Given the nature of
commentaries, which are continually being excerpted and rewritten, it is unlikely that any
one medieval person saw the text of Servius exclusive of later (and perhaps earlier)
additions and transformations. When I quote Servius, my concern is more to establish the
general parameters of thought in ancient Virgilian commentary than to prove knowledge
of the exact wording in a given text or manuscript. Finally, all translations are my own
unless stated otherwise.
Chapter 1: Allegorical Mimesis

The Allegorized Aeneid in the Anticlaudianus and Architrenius

Although there is a tendency to think of allegoresis as a medieval peculiarity, ancient commentators commonly read both Homer and Virgil through the lens of allegory. Virgilian commentary inherited allegoresis from Homeric commentary as one of many forms of exegesis necessary for a complete understanding of epic.¹ The primary sources for the allegoresis of the Aeneid in the twelfth century were Servius and Fulgentius, although Macrobius’ Saturnalia and his commentary on the Somnium Scipionis also contain some allegoresis.² Servius is full of allegorizing comments, but these are mostly aimed at explaining individual lemmata; the allegorizations only rarely add up to a single monolithic interpretation of the whole poem.³ A little more than a century after Servius, Fulgentius wrote a treatise which preserves the earliest surviving global allegoresis of the entire Aeneid, in which each book represents the stages in human moral development. Although Fulgentius was a Christian who incorporated some Biblical

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exegesis into his interpretation of Virgil, Fulgentius’ allegoresis itself is firmly rooted in the classical tradition.

Twelfth-century scholars regularly applied similar forms of allegoresis to Biblical texts, but the twelfth-century allegorical interpretation of the *Aeneid*—though surely influenced by related Biblical exegesis—descends primarily from the classical tradition. Frank Bezner has recently demonstrated that the twelfth-century allegoresis of both Biblical and classical texts owes an enormous debt directly to Fulgentius. Jean Pépin and especially Jon Whitman have also emphasized the importance of the classical tradition in shaping the twelfth-century understanding of allegory. At some point around the mid-twelfth century, an allegoresis of the first six books of the *Aeneid*, expanding on the allegories of Servius and Fulgentius, began to circulate. Although the authorship is not beyond question, Bernard Silvestris seems most likely to have been the author, either directly or indirectly via students’ classroom notes. John of Salisbury also gives a brief allegoresis of the first six books of the *Aeneid* at the end of his *Policraticus*.

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7 *Policraticus* 8.24.
The techniques of twelfth-century allegoresis have been thoroughly discussed by Bezner, Dronke, Edouard Jeaneau, and many others, so I will give only a brief overview of the elements most apposite to my argument. I have chosen to refer to the “hidden meaning” in classical texts by its modern term, allegory, but twelfth-century (and often ancient) scholars more commonly use the terminology of cloaking or covering (involucrum/integumentum). Generally, the involucrum or integumentum was thought of as the surface text which hides the true meaning from untrained eyes, but the integumentum could also be the hidden allegorical meaning itself.

In the Aeneid, Virgil was thought to have hidden profound natural and philosophic wisdom under the guise of Aeneas’ experiences. When extracting this wisdom from the text, twelfth-century scholars, following Fulgentius, rely especially on etymology in order to prove that names of individual human or divine characters also function as abstract personifications such as Virtues and Vices. These Virtues and Vices then interact as characters in a meta-narrative with a plot quite different from that of the Aeneid, yet still anchored to the text through etymology. As we shall see, the plot of the allegorized Aeneid, with its cast of personified Virtues and Vices, bears a remarkable similarity to the surface narratives of the Anticlaudianus and the Architrenius, populated almost entirely by personifications engaged in epic quests and battles. The allegorical plot of the Aeneid was not thought to be imposed on the text but rather to be an integral part of the meaning of the Aeneid, indeed its true meaning, so it follows that if a poem

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9 For an overview see Peter Dronke, “Integumenta Virgili,” in *Lectures médiévales de Virgile*), 313-29.
borrows elements from the allegorical plot of the *Aeneid*, then, for a twelfth-century audience, it is borrowing from the *Aeneid* itself.

**Virgilian allegory in the *Anticlaudianus* and *Architrenius***?

Not only have modern scholars rarely considered Alan of Lille’s *Anticlaudianus* and John of Hauville’s *Architrenius* to be Virgilian in inspiration, but most studies of these poems ignore Virgil altogether. Typical of this trend, the only monograph exclusively devoted to the *Anticlaudianus* mentions that Alan must have known the *Aeneid* but does not address his use of Virgil in any specific way.\(^{10}\) The most recent editor of the *Anticlaudianus*, Bossuat, points out a few verbal echoes of the *Aeneid* in his apparatus and introduction, but he overlooks countless Virgilian quotations and parallels.\(^{11}\) In his introduction, Bossuat devotes only one sentence to a possible structural similarity: that Alan’s battle between the Vices and Virtues might be indebted to Aeneas’ battle with Turnus.\(^{12}\)

A few hints of possible similarities to the structure of the *Aeneid* crop up in analyses of the *Anticlaudianus* by a few modern scholars, but none of these scholars does more than note certain correspondences in passing. Guy Raynaud de Lage suggests that the work falls into two parts, an Odyssean section (Books 1-6) and an Iliadic section (Books 7-9) similar to the *Aeneid*’s Books 1-6 and 7-12.\(^{13}\) This interpretation of the

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\(^{10}\) Peter Ochsenbein, *Studien zum Anticlaudianus des Alanus ab Insulis* (Bern: Herbert Lang, 1975), 30-1.

\(^{11}\) Bossuat, *Anticlaudianus*. Many of these missed quotations and allusions will be pointed out in the course of this chapter, but suffice it to demonstrate, for now, that Bossuat failed to notice a full line quotation from one of Virgil’s most famous passages, “*sed revocare gradum superasque evadere ad auras,*” *Aeneid* 6.128, quoted nearly word for word at *Anticlaudianus* 7.474.


\(^{13}\) Raynaud de Lage, *Alain de Lille*, 127.
Aeneid was well known in the Middle Ages appearing for instance in Servius (ad Aeneid 7.1) and in Macrobius’ Saturnalia 5.2.6, so Alan certainly could have had this structural imitation in mind.\(^\text{14}\) Christine Ratkowitsch notes the same structural connection, but she develops it somewhat more.\(^\text{15}\) She claims that “die Parallelisierung des Anticlaudianus mit der Aeneis, der bisher im Zusammenhang mit Aufbau und vor allem Gehalt von Alans Epos so gut wie keine Beachtung geschenkt wurde, lässt sich auch konkret nachvollziehen: der Dichter erteilt dem Leser mehrfach versteckte Hinweise, dass sein Epos auch als Auseinandersetzung mit Vergil gedacht ist.”\(^\text{16}\) Specifically, she argues that Alan’s invocation at 5.265-305 refers to Virgil’s invocation at Aeneid 7.37-45, because each occurs at the mid-point of both epics. Most suggestively, Ratkowitsch even makes a nod to a possible connection between a medieval allegorization of the Aeneid with the plot of the Anticlaudianus.\(^\text{17}\) Nevertheless, she does not present any further evidence about these potential connections between the Aeneid and Anticlaudianus. Finally, James Simpson, apparently independently of Ratkowitsch, devotes three pages to discussion of the same Virgilian parallels.\(^\text{18}\) He too mentions a possible connection between the plot of the Anticlaudianus and a medieval allegorization of the Aeneid. According to Simpson, each is “an epic story... whose natural order describes the moral and philosophical growth of the individual.”\(^\text{19}\) However, Simpson does not develop this idea further and offers only

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\(^{14}\) This information also appears in an accessus to the Ilias Latina, edited by R.B.C. Huygens in Accessus ad auctores (Brill: Leiden, 1970). Huygens’ text is reprinted with accompanying translation in Ziolkowski, The Virgilian Tradition, 705-7.


\(^{16}\) Ibid., 247.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 215 and 247.


\(^{19}\) Ibid., 286. Simpson makes the same point at Sciences and the Self, 58-9.
the same piece of structural evidence mentioned by Ratkowitsch: just as in Bernard’s allegoresis of the *Aeneid*, “so too in Alan's poem does the hero achieve the most profound philosophical understanding in Book VI of either work, in journeys to the otherworld.”

Very little modern scholarship exists on the *Architrenius*, but what little does is unanimous in claiming minimal Virgilian influence and no Virgilian structure. The *Architrenius*’ modern editor, Paul Gerhard Schmidt, notes that while there are many verbal echoes of Virgil scattered throughout the epic, such echoes are a feature common to most medieval hexameter poetry. Beyond this, Schmidt suggests only two brief episodes that he believes owe any debt to Virgil. He concludes by saying, “Über das in dieser Zeit übliche Mass geht Vergils Einfluss auf Johannes de Hauvilla nicht hinaus”.

Wetherbee (the only modern translator of the *Architrenius*) and Ratkowitsch concur. All three agree that the primary classical influence on the *Architrenius* is Juvenal, followed by Horace and Ovid. Tantalizingly, after stating that the *Architrenius* owes little to Virgil, Ratkowitsch immediately qualifies her statement by remarking on John’s possible debt to “der Nachwirkung der Unterweltsbeschreibung aus *Aen. 6.*” but she never touches on this topic in her analysis or further elaborates upon her meaning. As we shall see, John’s debt to the allegorical interpretation of the sixth book of the *Aeneid* is very great indeed.

Such scholarly dismissal of Virgilian influence may be because, insofar as the *Anticlaudianus* and *Architrenius* are read as epics, they have been seen as something

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20 Ibid., 286.
22 Ibid., 58.
23 Ibid., 58-59.
26 Ratkowitsch, *Descripito Picturae*, 270.
entirely new, breaking with the mytho-historical epic tradition.²⁷ Moreover, both works have most often been categorized simply as allegories, owing their primary literary allegiances not to epic but to earlier grand philosophical allegories such as Boethius’ *Consolatio*, Martianus’ *De Nuptiis*, and Bernard’s *Cosmographia*.²⁸ Indeed, elements of all three of these works do appear in Alan’s and John’s allegorical epics, but the fact remains that none of these is an epic in dactylic hexameters but rather all are prosimetra, sometimes designated Menippean satires.²⁹

Similarly, Claudian’s *In Rufinum* and Prudentius’ *Psychomachia* were unquestionably influential on both the *Anticlaudianus* and *Architrenius*. In fact, the anonymous summary which often accompanies the *Anticlaudianus* explains that Alan’s work is so titled because it tells of a perfect man, a foil to Claudian’s Rufinus.³⁰ Likewise, the battle between the Vices and Virtues in the ninth book of the *Anticlaudianus* owes obvious debts to Prudentius’ *Psychomachia*. Yet, while both the *In Rufinum* and *Psychomachia* are at least written in hexameters, they are rather short for epics, consisting of 914 and 915 hexameters, respectively; the modern category of epyllion might best be employed to describe them.³¹ Something else must have inspired Alan of Lille and John of Hauville to compose their allegories in the form of full-length

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²⁷ Such is the judgment of Curtius in *European Literature*, 360.
³⁰ “Dicitur autem liber iste ‘Anticlaudianus’ ratione materie, quia materia hujus libri contraria est principio materie Claudiani. Cum etenim in principio sui libri Claudians introduct avicia ad deiformandum Rufinum, in principio hujus libri introductur Virtutes ad informandum hominem beatum.” This summary is edited by Bossuat in *Anticlaudianus*, 201.
epics in nine books totaling 4385 and 4361 hexameters, respectively. To Marc René Jung, the answer was clear—at least for the *Anticlaudianus*:

*L’Anticlaudianus* adopte la forme épique pour un matière qui ne s'y prête pas. Alain de Lille est la victime de l'interprétation morale des anciens auteurs. À l'époque, on avait fait de Virgile un philosophe. Alain croit donc l'imiter, s'il revêt sa pensée philosophique d'une affabulation épique.\(^{32}\)

Although Jung did not explore the ramifications of his suggestion, nonetheless, I believe that his intuition was correct: the allegorical reading of the *Aeneid* accounts for the epic form of twelfth-century allegorical epic.

As we shall see, the narrative structures of the *Anticlaudianus* and *Architrenius* correspond with remarkable consistency to the *Aeneid’s* allegoresis. In contrast, even though Martianus’ *De nuptiis*, which has nine books, is almost unanimously said to be the model for the nine books of the *Anticlaudianus* and *Architrenius*, the structure within each of the books of the *De nuptiis* bears virtually no relation to the organization of the *Anticlaudianus* and the *Architrenius*.\(^{33}\) In the *De nuptiis*, the first two books provide a frame allegory culminating in a wedding. During this wedding, each of the seven liberal arts appears and discourses on their subjects in each of the seven remaining books, one liberal art per book. We shall see that, although the number of Alan and John’s books may be indebted to Martianus, the organization of their contents is markedly different. Any reader expecting an epic laid out similarly to the *De nuptiis* would become immediately disoriented.

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\(^{32}\) Jung, *Études sur le poème allégorique*, 85.

\(^{33}\) Winthrop Wetherbee is an especially strong advocate of this theory. See his introduction to his translation of the *Architrenius*, xxxii. Here, he states that “Alan’s obvious thematic debt to the nine books of Martianus Capella’s *De nuptiis* is underlined by clear allusions at the beginnings of Books Three and Four.”
Reading the allegorized *Aeneid* as a structural model for allegorical poems

Before demonstrating how well the *Anticlaudianus* and *Architrenius* correspond to the medieval allegorical reading of the *Aeneid*, it should first be said that there is ample precedent for seeking poetic influence in the *Aeneid’s* allegoresis. Several modern scholars have argued that the *Aeneid’s* allegoresis serves as an important source of inspiration for certain late-medieval and early-modern vernacular epics.\(^{34}\) Even medieval and early modern readers sometimes argued that the allegorized *Aeneid* could be read as a structural model for medieval allegorical poems. Consider the judgment of Laurent de Premierfait (c.1400) upon two medieval allegorical narrative poems (which incidentally probably both owe debts to both the *Architrenius* and *Anticlaudianus* as well); Laurent links both the *Roman de la Rose* and Dante’s *Divine Comedy* to the traditional allegoresis of the *Aeneid’s* sixth book:\(^{35}\)

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Cestui poete Dant, qui, entre plusieurs volumes nouveaux et proufitables estans lors a Paris, rencontra le noble livre de la Rose, en quoy Jehan Clopinel de Meung, homme d’engin celeste, peigny une vraye mapemonde de toutes choses celestes et terrienes; Dant donques, qui de Dieu et de nature avoit receu l’esparadis des bons et l’enfer des mauvais en langaige françois, voul, en langaige florentin, soubz aultre maniere de vers rimoiez, contrefaire au vif le}
\end{align*}\]

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\(^{35}\) For the debts of the *Rose* to the *Architrenius*, see Edmond Faral, “Le *Roman de la Rose* et la pensée française au XIIe siècle,” *Revue des deux mondes* 35 (Sept. 1926), 449-52. Jean de Meun copied Alan’s description of the house of Fortune in great detail. For the *Anticlaudianus* in the *Rose* more generally, see Daniel Poirion, “Alain de Lille et Jean de Meun,” in H. Roussel and F. Suard, eds., *Alain de Lille, Gautier de Chatillon, Jakemart Giélée, et leur temps* (Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1980), 134-151. For the *Anticlaudianus* in Dante, see Eugène Bossard, *Alani de Insulis Anticlaudianus cum divina Dantis Alighieri comoedia collatus* (Andegavi: Lachèse & Dolbeau, 1885). E.R. Curtius makes the case for Dante’s use of the *Anticlaudianus* especially forcefully in *European Literature*, 360-1. No one appears to have made the case for Dante’s knowledge of the *Architrenius*, but Peter Dronke suggests the possibility in *Dante and Medieval Latin Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 37-8.
beau livre de la Rose, en ensuyvant tel ordre comme fist le divin poete Virgile ou sixiesme livre que l’en nomme Eneide.\textsuperscript{36}

This poet Dante, when he was staying outside of Paris, encountered, among several new and profitable volumes, the noble \textit{Roman de la Rose} in which Jean de Meun, a man of celestial ingenuity, paints a true universal map of all things celestial and earthly. Therefore, Dante, who had read in the French language about God and nature and about the paradise of the good and the hell of the wicked, sought to imitate the beautiful \textit{Roman de la Rose} in the Florentine language and in a different rhyme scheme, by following the same order used by the divine poet Virgil in the sixth book of the \textit{Aeneid}.

Jean de Meun’s portion of the \textit{Roman de la Rose}, perhaps the single most popular allegory of the Middle Ages, was written nearly a century after the \textit{Anticlaudianus} and \textit{Architrenius}. Today, Jean de Meun’s Virgilianism is rarely discussed, and yet even the \textit{Roman de la Rose} could once be perceived as imitating the structure (ordre) of the sixth book of the \textit{Aeneid}!

Whether or not we agree with Laurent that the \textit{Roman de la Rose} imitates the \textit{Aeneid}, few would question Dante’s debt to the \textit{Aeneid}’s sixth book for the basic plot of the \textit{Divine Comedy}. There are even some modern scholars who have argued that Dante “wrote allegory in the epic tradition, as it was conceived of in antiquity, in the Middle Ages, and in the Renaissance; more specifically, that the \textit{Aeneid}, as allegorized by Bernard Silvestris, afforded Dante a significant precedent for his twofold physical/spiritual journey.”\textsuperscript{37} However, the case was made much more forcefully by one

\textsuperscript{36} Quoted by Henry Martin, \textit{Le boccace de Jean sans peur “Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes”}: reproduction des cent cinquante miniatures du manuscrit 5.193 de la bibliothèque de l’Arsenal (Bruxelles: Van Oest, 1911), 10-11. See the brief discussion of this passage, where it is also cited without translation in Kathryn Lynch, \textit{The High Medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy, and Literary Form} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 119 n. 18. Lynch also believes that Laurent must be thinking of an allegorical reading of Virgil; however, beyond this passing reference, she makes no further mention of Virgilian allegory in her chapter on the \textit{Rose}.

\textsuperscript{37} David Thompson, \textit{Dante’s Epic Journeys}, 11. See also Paul Olson’s analysis of the \textit{Commedia} as an allegory for the “epic educational journey” in \textit{The Journey to Wisdom: Self-Education in Patristic and Medieval Literature} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 103-7.
of Dante’s late fifteenth-century commentators, Cristoforo Landino, who claims that “both of these poets [Virgil and Dante], although their fictions are different, nonetheless proceed toward the same end.”

As we shall see, for their notions of imitation to make much sense, both Laurent and Landino must have been thinking of the allegorized version of the *Aeneid*. Indeed, Landino consistently invokes Virgilian allegory as a template against which many scenes in the *Divine Comedy* are interpreted.

Such theories of allegorical imitation are not limited to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. A twelfth-century commentary on Martianus’ *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, generally attributed to Bernard Silvestris, posits that the sixth book of Virgil’s *Aeneid* is the ultimate model for the two allegories most popular in the twelfth century: Martianus’ *De nuptiis* and Boethius’ *Consolatio Philosophiae*:

*Auctoris uero imitatio est, quia Maronem emulatur. Sicut enim apud illum ducitur Eneas per inferos comite Sibilla usque ad Anchisem, ita et hic Mercurius per mundi regiones Virtute comite ad Iouem. Ita quoque in libro De Consolatione scandit Boecius per falsa bona ad summum bonum duce Philosophia. Que quidem tres figure fere idem expriment. Imitatur ergo Marcianus Maronem, Boecius Marcianum.*

This is an imitation of an author in that he emulates Virgil. For just as in the *Aeneid*, Aeneas, accompanied by the Sibyl, is led through the underworld all the way to Anchises so in the *De nuptiis*, Mercury, accompanied by Virtue, is led through all the spheres of the universe to Jove. Likewise, in the *Consolation*, Boethius ascends through false goods to the highest good guided by Philosophy. Certainly, these three episodes express virtually the same thing. Therefore, Martianus imitates Virgil, and Boethius imitates Martianus.

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The plots of the *De nuptiis* and the *Consolatio* are so different from that of the *Aeneid*, that Bernard’s judgment is sound only if we assume an allegorical reading of the *Aeneid*. Of course, we know, from his allegorical commentary on the first six books of the *Aeneid*, that Bernard unquestionably read the *Aeneid* allegorically. It is worth noting that Bernard assumes that any well-read scholar, such as Martianus, must have similarly interpreted the *Aeneid*.\(^{40}\) There is, of course, no single authoritative allegorical reading of the *Aeneid*, but the wide availability of Servius and Fulgentius (or close imitators) means that allegorical interpretations of the *Aeneid* tend to share many elements in common.\(^{41}\)

Bernard’s assertion that the *De nuptiis* and (indirectly) the *Consolatio* are fundamentally imitations of the *Aeneid* has two important implications for the present study. First, it demonstrates that a twelfth-century scholar, one writing only a couple of decades before the publication of the *Anticlaudianus* and *Architrenius*, could believe the *Aeneid* to be the basis for two grand philosophical allegories. Second, if Alan and John shared Bernard’s theory, then they may have wanted to imitate the structure of the “original”, i.e. the allegorized *Aeneid*, rather than the “imitations” made by Martianus and Boethius. In fact, as noted above, most modern scholars have assumed that the primary models for the *Anticlaudianus* and *Architrenius* are the *De nuptiis* and *Consolatio*.

\(^{40}\) In fact, Bernard’s reading of Book 6 of the *Aeneid* has so much in common with the *De nuptiis* that Winthrop Wetherbee claims that in his hands “the *Aeneid* comes to sound strangely like the *De nuptiis*” in *Platonism and Poetry*, 105. Wetherbee’s point is well taken, although Bernard actually stays quite close to the ancient readings of Book 6 of the *Aeneid*. Fulgentius was certainly influenced by Martianus, but much of what Fulgentius said about Book 6 is in Servius. Since Martianus probably knew Servius or at least Servius’ primary source Donatus, Martianus must have at least been familiar with a similar allegorical reading of Book 6. It is, therefore, entirely possible that many episodes of the *De nuptiis* owe genuine debts to allegorizations of Virgil.

\(^{41}\) For the best and most recent account of the allegorized *Aeneid* in the early modern period, see David Scott Wilson-Okamura, *Virgil in the Renaissance*, 143-247. Wilson-Okamura doubts the direct influence of Fulgentius on early modern Virgilians until the publication of its *editio princeps* in 1589, but he admits that Salutati and Landino must have known Bernard Silvestris’ commentary in some form or other. See *Virgil in the Renaissance*, 216, n. 89.
Relating the allegoresis of the *Aeneid* to the plots of the *Architrenius* and *Anticlaudianus*

Because Fulgentius’ commentary was undoubtedly the most well-known allegoresis of the entire *Aeneid* in the twelfth century, I will first give an overview of his allegoresis, introducing material from the other sources later in my detailed analysis of Alan’s and John’s allegories. Fulgentius begins his commentary on the *Aeneid* by summoning the ghost of Virgil, who then proceeds to dictate his own interpretation of the *Aeneid*. Fulgentius occasionally interrupts the poet with parallels from Christian teaching which Virgil, as a pagan, could not know. Before the ghost of Virgil gives the specifics of his allegory, Fulgentius has him begin with a summary:

*In omnibus nostris opusculis fisici ordinis argumenta induximus, quo per duodena librorum uolumina pleniorem humanae uitae monstrass em statum. ... Ergo sub figuralitatem historiae plenum hominis monstrauimus statum, ut sit prima natura, secunda doctrina, tertia felicitas. Hos ergo gradus uiuaciter intuere: quo sit ut supra diximus prima uirtus animi naturaliter data quae proficiat, neque enim eruditur nisi quod erudibile nascitur, secunda doctrina quae naturam ornat cum proficit, ut est aurum; est enim natura in auro productionis et decoris, sed ad perfectionem malleo proficit exudentis. Ita et ingeniem natum est proiectibile; proficit quia natum fuit; accedit felicitas ut prode sit quod proficit.*

In all of my works, I have introduced themes of natural order, so that I might show a more ample state of human life through the twelve volumes of books [of the *Aeneid]*... Therefore, in the guise of history, I have shown the entire condition of man: first, his nature; second, his learning; third, his prosperity. Therefore, consider these stages well. As I said above, nature first grants that virtue of spirit which may increase, for no one is taught unless he is born with the ability to be taught. Second is learning which ornaments nature when it grows. It is thus like gold, for gold, by nature, is capable of being worked and decorated, but it only grows to perfection by being beaten with a hammer. In the same way, intellect is, by nature, capable of improvement, and it increases because it was born. Prosperity occurs so that what increases may be beneficial.

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Both the Anticlaudianus and the Architrenius fit well with this most general outline of the allegorical Aeneid. The Anticlaudianus begins with Nature’s creation of a new perfect man in books one through seven (Fulgentius’ natura). This new man is then taught by Nature’s cohorts in Books 7 and 8 (Fulgentius’ doctrina), and finally he attains victory over evil and brings about a new golden age in Book 9 (Fulgentius’ felicitas).

Similarly, the Architrenius describes man’s nature through the eyes of Architrenius, who wanders the earth observing all of man’s vices and virtues in Books 1-5 (natura). At last, Architrenius reaches a far-off land where the famous philosophers of antiquity teach him how to avoid vice and Nature herself teaches him the workings of the universe in Books 6-9 (doctrina). At the end of Book 9, Nature weds Architrenius to Moderation amid much rejoicing (felicitas).

However, a major discrepancy emerges when Fulgentius’ more detailed allegoresis is compared to the Anticlaudianus and Architrenius. Once Fulgentius’ ghost of Virgil elaborates the contents of each book, he shows that the Aeneid describes the stages of a man’s life from birth to adulthood. The first five books describe a man’s birth and childhood (natura), Book 6 shows his education (doctrina), and Books 7-12 represent a young man’s attempt to pursue the good life and find happiness (felicitas).

This “ages of man” allegory presents an immediate problem for my theory of influence, because neither medieval epic begins with a birth. Architrenius himself is a young man when he sets out on his journey to observe man’s sad lot in the world, and he seems to be exactly the same age at the end of his journey in that he still has the “flame of youth,” and his hair has not yet begun to grow white.\(^{43}\) This is not to say that there is no progression.

\(^{43}\) For Architrenius’ age, compare Architrenius 1.216-21 and Architrenius 9.270-5.
during the narrative. In fact, the *Architrenius* fits rather well the *Bildungsroman* pattern established by Fulgentius in his more general schema of *natura, doctrina*, and *felicitas*. Architrenius makes a journey and learns about himself and humanity, but he does not physically mature in the course of the epic. In the *Anticlaudianus*, the New Man is not born until the beginning of Book 7. The first six books of the *Anticlaudianus* contain Nature’s reasons for creating the new man and the voyage of Prudence to heaven in order to petition God to make the soul of the new man. These six books can be read as describing the nature of man, and could be stretched to concern the birth, really pre-birth, of the New Man, but doing so would dramatically alter the proportions of Fugentius’ *Aeneid*, which spends no more than a few sentences on the birth of the new man, the allegorical meaning of Book 1 of the *Aeneid*.

Instead, I propose that only the last three books (7-9) of the *Anticlaudianus* correspond directly to Fulgentius’ allegorization of the whole *Aeneid*. The first six books of the *Anticlaudianus* and all of the *Architrenius* correspond primarily to the sixth book of the allegorized *Aeneid*. The sixth book of the *Aeneid* has an especially rich history of allegorical interpretation, which can stand on its own, independent of Fulgentius’ allegorical interpretation of the whole *Aeneid*. What is more, we have seen that the sixth book was especially singled out by Laurent de Premierfait, Landino, and Bernard as the allegorical model for entire works or large portions of works by Jean de Meun, Dante, and Martianus Capella (and via Martianus, Boethius). I will defend my theory and explain the reasons for Alan’s and John’s disproportionate emphasis on the *Aeneid’s* sixth book later, but first it is important to understand, in detail, how the structure of the whole *Aeneid* was allegorized and might be reflected in allegorical epic.
Alan’s allegoresis of the whole *Aeneid (Anticlaudianus 7-9)*

Books 7, 8 and 9 of the *Anticlaudianus* vividly demonstrate how the essential structures of the *Aeneid* can be translated into allegory. Alan’s primary source for this allegory was surely Fulgentius, and it is entirely possible that he knew Bernard’s allegorization as well. Moreover, since the allegorized *Aeneid* was inseparable from the plot of the “literal” *Aeneid*, individual episodes can as easily reflect the one as the other. In fact, Alan even sometimes quotes lines and partial lines from the very scenes in the *Aeneid* which are being allegorized. Through a series of close comparisons of key episodes, I will show that most of the scenes in Alan’s final three books either correspond exactly to Fulgentius’ reading of the *Aeneid* or else are logical extrapolations grounded in Virgil’s text.

Fulgentius explains the first book of the *Aeneid* as birth and childhood. He argues that the storm, which nearly destroys Aeneas’ fleet, represents birth, by analogy to the dangers faced by both mother and child in the birthing process.\(^{44}\) Fulgentius supports this interpretation by pointing out that “the shipwreck was brought about by Juno, who is the goddess of birth.”\(^{45}\) Bernard follows this interpretation as well, adding that Aeneas, explained as “*habitat corporis,*” the human spirit, is the son of Anchises, interpreted as “*celsa inhabitans,*” i.e. God.\(^{46}\) Fulgentius also interprets Anchises as God, though by

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\(^{44}\) *Naufragium posuimus in modum periculosae nativitatis, in qua et maternum est pariendi dispendium uel infantum nascendi periculum.* (Continentia, 91)

\(^{45}\) *a Iunone, quae dea partus est, hoc naufragium generatur.* (Continentia, 91)

\(^{46}\) Bernard, *Commentary on the Aeneid*, 9: “Anchises enim celsa inhabitans interpretatur quem intelligimus esse patrem omnium omnibus presidentem.”
Likewise, at the beginning of Book 7 of the *Anticlaudianus*, Nature presides over the birth of the New Man. She constructs the New Man’s body to house his soul, already created by God. Alan’s student, Ralph of Longchamp, states in his early thirteenth-century commentary on the *Anticlaudianus* that, in the ancient *auctores*, Juno means Nature, so it is no stretch to see Fulgentius’ Juno in Alan’s Nature. Similarly, God’s role as the creator of the New Man’s soul in the *Anticlaudianus* is identical to that of the allegorized Anchises.

The rest of Fulgentius’ allegoresis of man’s *natura*, covering *Aeneid* 1-5, briefly sketches the typical attributes and vices of childhood and youth. Most of Books 2 and 3 are said to represent the tales (*fabulae*) by which children are entertained. Achaemenides’ description of the Cyclopes allows for a nested allegory on the blindness of adolescence. Similarly, the burial of Anchises represents adolescent rebellion against parental control. The events of Book 4 of the *Aeneid* represent the awakening of sexual desire which the youth (Aeneas) must learn to control, for Mercury is defined as intellect (*ingenium*) and Dido as lust (*libido*). Thus, at the end of Book 4, when Aeneas has finally been persuaded by Mercury to leave Dido, Fulgentius claims that “the power of intellect has banished lust from his young heart.”

Near the end of Book 5, Aeneas’ fleet is set on fire by the Trojan women. For Fulgentius, this represents the triumph of the intellect over the

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47 “Anchises enim Grece quasi ano scenon, id est patrium habitans; unus Deus enim pater, rex omnium, solus habitans in excelsis, qui quidem scientiae dono monstrante conspicitur.” ( Continentia, 102)
49 “In quo diu commoratus Mercurio instigante libidinis suae male praesumptam amorem relinquit; Mercurius enim deus ponitur ingenii; ergo ingenio instigante aetas deserit amoris confinia. Qui quidem amor contemptus emoritur et in cineres exastus emigrat; dum enim de corde puerili auctoritate ingenii <libido> expellitur, sepulta in obliuionis cinere faullescit.” ( Continentia, 94-5)
irresponsibility of youth.\textsuperscript{50} Finally, the death of Aeneas’ helmsman Palinurus, at the very end of Book 5, is again explained as evidence of Aeneas’ new stage of life, for Aeneas successfully avoids the potential “shipwreck” of unsteady adolescence and loses Palinurus, equated via etymology with lust.\textsuperscript{51}

Alan describes boyhood and adolescence in a similarly succinct fashion, but, in contrast to Fulgentius’ Everyman/Aeneas, Alan does not have the New Man learn through experience. Instead, Alan describes various personified Virtues bestowing gifts on the New Man, so that he might avoid these usually unavoidable experiences. In order to make this more plausible to his audience, the first named gift comes from personified Youth:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Munera leticie largitur grata Juuentus,
Et quamuis huius soleat lasciuia semper
Esse comes, deponit eam moresque seueros
Induit atque senis imitatur moribus euum:
In senium transit morum grauitate Juuentus.
Sic etate uiiret iuuenis, quod mente senescit,
Etatem superat sensus, primordia floris
Anticipat fructus et riuum preuenit annis.
Euo concludit animus, dum dispare ritu
Pugnant: Hoc iuuenem loquitur, probat ille senectam.}\textsuperscript{52}
\end{quote}

Youth grants the pleasing gifts of beauty, and although licentiousness is normally its companion, it puts aside lust and assumes an austere character, and it imitates the age of an old man in its character. Youth passes into old age by the gravity of morals. Thus the young man is virile in age, but because he has the mind of an old man, good sense prevails over his age. The fruit anticipates the beginnings of the flower and the river comes before the stream. His mind holds his age in check, while they fight by different methods. The latter suggests youth, while the former proves his maturity.

\textsuperscript{50} “\textit{Tunc etiam et naues ardescunt, id est instrumenta periculosa, quibus aetas tempestiuis iactationum cursibus flagitatut et uelut procellis periculorum cottidie quiatitur. Igne ingenii superexcellente haec omnia consumuntur et scientia astutiae coalescente in fauillam obliusio sopia commigrant.” (Continentia, 95)

\textsuperscript{51} “\textit{ergo postposito lubricae aetatis naufragio et Palinuro omissos, Palinurus enim quasi planonoros, id est errabunda uiio, unde et in quarto libro de aspectu libidinis ita posuimus.” (Continentia, 95)

\textsuperscript{52} Anticlaudianus 7.92-101.
Thus, Alan acknowledges the improbability of such a youth who can learn merely from being taught without ever falling victim to the traditional vices of adolescence. What is more, Alan sees conflict between the mind and young age using such words as *superat, concludit,* and *pugnant.* This conflict is also manifest in Fulgentius’ treatment of the first five books where Everyman’s mind gradually becomes strong enough to suppress all youthful desires by the end of *Aeneid* 5. In fact, in Fulgentius’ interpretation, Aeneas’ successes at reigning in his youthful passions are all represented by violent fires and death: Dido’s pyre, the burning of the Trojan fleet, and the loss of Palinurus.

Alan next describes how Chastity teaches the New Man to fend off the “poison of Venus” and “conquer Dione (sexual desire) not with his mind but by fleeing.”

Recall that Fulgentius’ allegorical Aeneas also has to learn to flee from lust by abandoning Dido. Just as Chastity does, Modesty and Constancy bestow gifts to keep the New Man from learning through youthful mistakes. Finally, Reason, Honesty, and Wisdom teach the New Man to distinguish between vice and virtue and to love knowledge. At last, the New Man has arrived at a point in his spiritual development similar to Fulgentius’ allegorized Aeneas at the end of Book 5.

At the beginning of the sixth book of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas reaches the temple of Apollo. Fulgentius equates Apollo’s temple with “the teaching of school” (*doctrinam studii*). After arriving at the temple, Aeneas must seek out the golden bough which is equated with “the study of scholarship and letters” (*doctrinae atque litterarum studium*). Bernard Silvestris’ commentary on the *Aeneid* gives even greater emphasis to Fulgentius’

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53 “Hiis Pudor accessit, longe fermenta relegans / Luxurie, Veneris declinans dulce uenenum, / Incestusque sitim redeuntem grata Pudoris / Extinguit sacies, fluctusque libidinis a se / Depellit, uincitque fuga, non mente Dyonem.” (*Anticlaudianus* 7.110-14)

54 *Anticlaudianus* 7.117-65.

55 *Anticlaudianus* 7.166-244.
equation of Apollo’s temple and the education process. Bernard etymologizes Trivia, the location of Apollo’s temple, as the trivium of the medieval education system.\footnote{Bernard, \textit{Commentary on the Aeneid}, 31.}

Furthermore, according to Bernard, the temple doors, made by Daedalus, represent all the tales of the poets which Aeneas must first learn before going on to study the rest of the trivium and quadrivium (represented by the temple itself).\footnote{Bernard, \textit{Commentary on the Aeneid}, 36-7 (ad Aeneid 6.13-4).} This interpretation of Apollo’s temple has an obvious parallel in the \textit{Anticladianus}, for once the New Man has received the stabilizing gifts of Reason, Honesty, and Wisdom, he is taught the trivium and quadrivium. Alan elaborately describes each of the seven liberal arts which are bestowed upon the New Man in 7.245-329.

After Aeneas has met with the Sibyl at the temple of Apollo, he retrieves the golden bough and descends to the underworld to meet the shade of his father. Aeneas’ \textit{descensus} is the most widely and elaborately allegorized episode in the \textit{Aeneid}, but for reasons that will become clear in the next section of this chapter, the New Man does not go on a similar quest. However, Virgil’s famous episode has been replaced with a fitting nod to the tradition. There is a lengthy set-piece describing the journey of Nobility to the far-off home of her mother Fortune whose blessing is required in order for the New Man to receive the gift of noble birth.\footnote{Anticladianus 7.397-8.130. Before this episode, there may also be something of a connection for first come instructions from Pity/Piety, Faithfulness, and Generosity—all virtues traditionally learned by Aeneas in the underworld by observing their opposites: Pride, Ambition, and Greed (\textit{Anticladianus} 7.329-96). For Aeneas observing Pride, Ambition, and Greed in the underworld, this assertion is supported and explained in the third section of my chapter. Compare also Servius’ notes on \textit{Aeneid} 6.596, 603, 616 and 602.} The overall plot evokes Aeneas’ quest to converse with his own father. Moreover, there are two specific instances where Alan has borrowed elements from Aeneas’ descent to the underworld: the descriptions of the two rivers in Fortune’s realm.
The first river is “black with sulfurous waters” (sulfureis tenebrosus aquis) whose bank is thronged by people pouring out tears because they cannot cross.\(^{59}\) Alan’s description recalls the souls crowding the bank of the Styx in the \textit{Aeneid}.\(^{60}\) Indeed, Nobility’s journey is just as perilous as is Aeneas’. In this same scene, there is even a full-line quotation from \textit{Aeneid} Book 6. When souls fall into this Stygian river, they are unable to “recall their step and escape to the air above.”\(^{61}\) Alan composed an entire sermon inspired by this famous line, so it is most likely that he is using Virgil’s words here with strong allusive intention.\(^{62}\)

The other river, in contrast, is sweet and tastes of honey.\(^{63}\) Its banks are crowded by people drinking from it in much the same manner as the souls drinking from Lethe in Elysium.\(^{64}\) Virgil compares the souls flitting about the bank to bees buzzing about lilies in a serene field. Alan takes Virgil’s simile and transfers it to this scene where the honeyed river “murmurs with a sweet whisper” and the people flitting around its banks keep coming back to take more sips.\(^{65}\)

\(^{59}\) \textit{Anticlaudianus} 7.458-80.

\(^{60}\) \textit{Aeneid} 6.295-316. The similarity is noted by Bossuat in his apparatus. As Bossuat explains, this passage is also indebted to Martianus who depicted three rivers of Fortune in \textit{De nuptiis} 1.14-16.

\(^{61}\) Alan’s line at 7.474, “
\begin{quote}
\textit{quod reuocare gradum superasque euadere in auras},
\end{quote}

is essentially word-for-word identical to \textit{Aeneid} 6.128 (sed revocare gradum superasque evadere ad auras). This remarkable quotation is not noted in Bossuat’s apparatus fontium.


\(^{63}\) “
\begin{quote}
\textit{Predulces habet alter aquas mellitaque donans / Pocula, melle suo multos seducit et hauste / Plus siciuntur aque, potantes debriot, immo, / Dum saciat, parit unda sitim potusque sititur / Amnis et innumeros ydropicat ille bibentes}.
\end{quote}

(Anticlaudianus, 7.442-6)

\(^{64}\) Compare \textit{Aeneid} 6.703-712.

\(^{65}\) “
\begin{quote}
\textit{Murmure lasciuit tenui dulcique susurro / Murmurat et placida rupe preterfluit unda. / Annis in ingressu multi sistuntur et ultra / Non patet accessus, qui dulces fluminis undas / Vix tangunt libantque parum, tantoque sapore / Pasci plus cupiunt, immergi plenius undis / Optant et totos perfundunt fluctibus artus}.
\end{quote}

(Anticlaudianus, 7.447-53)
Fulgentius characterizes Books 7-12 of the *Aeneid* as a psychomachia wherein Aeneas fights the Vices while seeking *felicitas* in Ausonia, etymologized as “increase of good,” and pursues the hand of Lavinia, etymologized as “the path of toil.” In Fulgentius’ general interpretation, we can easily see a relationship to the second half of the last three books of the *Anticlaudianus* (8.147-9.383), in which the New Man fulfills his raison d’être by defeating the Vices and ushering in a new Golden Age on earth. The order of specific episodes in the second half of the *Aeneid* also corresponds well to the order of events in the rest of the *Anticlaudianus*. Once Nobility has returned from her quest to bestow noble birth on the New Man, the scene shifts to the underworld where Allecto musters an army of Vices in order to defeat the now perfected New Man. As Bossuat notes, this episode owes a debt to a similar scene at the beginning of Claudian’s *In Rufinum* (lines 1.25ff.); however, Claudian himself constructed his scene based largely on Juno’s summoning of Allecto in *Aeneid* 7.286-571. In all three works, Allecto motivates the action of the rest of the plot by stirring up a war. Alan follows Claudian in transposing Juno’s indignant speech at *Aeneid* 7.286 to Allecto herself, but within the larger narrative, the location of Alan’s Allecto episode falls exactly where one would expect the beginning of the war against the Vices in the allegorized *Aeneid* to fall, near the mid-point of the narrative, after the New Man has received all of his gifts and instruction from the Virtues.

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66 “Ergo pedagogantis suspicione sepulta ad desideratam olim peruenitur Ausoniam, id est ad boni cremen, quo omnis sapientum voluptas auida alacritate festinat, Ausonia enim apo tu ausenin, id est cremen, siue etiam quod usque in hac aetate crementa sint corporum. Denique tunc et axorem petit Lauiniam, id est laborum uiam; ab hac enim aetate unusqu(it)i suis utilitatum emolumentis laborum asciscit suffragia.” (Continentia, 104)

67 *Anticlaudianus* 8.147-217.
In the *Aeneid*, once Juno and Allecto have set the war in motion, Virgil gives a catalog of the Italian heroes mustered by Turnus at 7.647-817. Similarly, after Allecto has declared war on the New Man, Alan catalogs the major members of Allecto’s army, Vices dressed for battle and going off to war.⁶⁸ Although Fulgentius does not specifically mention Virgil’s catalog of Italian heroes in his allegorization of Book 7, Alan’s catalog of Vices could be read as a reasonable extrapolation since, as we shall see, Fulgentius later allegorizes Turnus, Mezentius, and a few other Italian heroes as specific Vices.

At the end of the eighth book of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas is armed by Vulcan. Fulgentius allegorizes this episode as “the fortification of an ardent mind against every temptation of vice, for Vulcan comes from *bulencauton*, that is burning counsel.”⁶⁹ In similar fashion, at the end of the eighth book of the *Anticlaudianus*, the New Man is armed by the Virtues in preparation for the battle against the Vices.⁷⁰ The parallel is even stronger if we consider how Fulgentius describes the shield of Aeneas, for he expressly states that “the shield depicts all the virtuous deeds (*virtutes*) of the Romans because all successes either happen or are foreseen through the fortifying advice of wisdom.”⁷¹ Fulgentius’ interpretation of the shield makes it clear that by *virtutes* he means not just manly deeds but virtues. Thus, for Fulgentius, the shield stands for the virtues that Aeneas has acquired by means of wisdom. The same allegorical meaning applies to the arming scene in the *Anticlaudianus*, since it is the Virtues themselves who are arming the New Man.

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⁶⁸ *Anticlaudianus* 8.218-304.
⁶⁹ “Deinde arma Uulcania, id est igniti sensus munimina aduersus omnem malitiae temptamentum induitur; Uulcanus enim quasi bulencauton, id est ardens consilium, dicimus.” (*Continentia*, 105)
⁷¹ “Ideo illic etiam omnes Romanorum depictae uirtutes sunt, quod in sapientiae consulo munimine felicitates omnes aut conueniunt aut praeuidentur; bene enim agere futurae bonitatis est seminarium; siue etiam is qui bene agit bona sibi fiducialiter repromittit. Ergo sapientia et bona seminat et bona sperat.” (*Continentia*, 105).
In Books 9-12 of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas fights against the forces of Turnus whose name is etymologized by Fulgentius as “*turnosus*, i.e. furious emotion (*furibundus sensus*), for the arms of intelligence and wisdom fight against every fury (*furiam*).”

Fulgentius similarly interprets other Italian heroes as vices such as impiety towards the gods (Mezentius) and drunkenness (Metiscus). In the final book of the *Anticlaudianus*, the New Man has to fight off a wide array of Vices led by Allecto, a fury, and therefore a close parallel to Fulgentius’ allegorization of Turnus as “*furiam*.” Fulgentius’ allegoresis of the *Aeneid* ends abruptly partway through Book 12, before Turnus is slain by Aeneas, but it is certainly possible to extend his allegory. One could imagine that Aeneas ultimately triumphs over the forces of “*furibundus sensus*” when he slays Turnus, just as the New Man slays Allecto and sends her forces back to the underworld. An obvious quotation of the final four words of the *Aeneid* concludes the battle between the New Man and the Vices:

\[
\textit{Iam scelerum superata cohors in regna silenter} \\
\textit{Arma refert, et se uictam miratur, et illud} \\
\textit{Quod patitur uix esse putat. Non creditur illi} \\
\textit{Quod uidet, et Stigias fugit indignata sub umbras.}\]

At last the defeated army of Vices silently returns their arms to their own kingdom. They marvel that they have been conquered and can barely understand what happened. They do not believe their eyes and flee ignignant to the Stygian shadows.

In the *Aeneid*, “*fugit indignata sub umbras*” (12.952) refers to Turnus’ shade seeking the underworld after Aeneas has slain him. Again, note the close connection between Turnus, allegorized by Fulgentius as fury/vice, and the forces of Allecto which are defeated by the New Man. Admittedly, Alan’s epic continues for another forty-three lines, but this is

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72 “*Contra omnem enim furiam sapientiae atque ingenii arma reluptant.*” (*Continentia*, 105)
73 Fulgentius, *Continentia*, 105-6.
74 *Anticlaudianus* 9.380-3. The quotation is cited in Bossuat’s apparatus.
essentially an epilogue in which Alan describes the effects of the New Man’s victory and wishes farewell to his epic in the manner of Statius’ *Thebaid*. Although this epilogue does not have a direct basis in the allegoresis of the final book of the *Aeneid*, I contend that it is still also Virgilian, and I explore its relationship to the *Aeneid*’s commentary tradition more fully in Chapter 3.

In my correlation of the last three books of the *Anticlaudianus* with the *Aeneid* and its allegoresis, all of the major episodes appear in exactly the order in which they happen in the *Aeneid*. Even the relative proportions of the two halves of the *Aeneid* are observed. The Odyssean half of Alan’s allegoresis of the *Aeneid* extends from the beginning of Book 7 to 8.146; the Iliadic half covers roughly the second half of Book 8 (8.147-368) to the end of Book 9. David Wilson-Okamura argues that, in the Middle Ages, people rarely read the last six books of the *Aeneid*. Alan had most certainly read all twelve books of the *Aeneid*, yet as we will see, like most scholar-poets of any age, he was especially drawn to Book 6.

**Aeneid 6 and Anticlaudianus 1-6: Descensus as ascent to God**

The sixth book of the *Aeneid* has long attracted the most attention from commentators. Servius introduces his commentary on Book 6 with reference to its special scientific/philosophic interest:

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75 See Wilson-Okamura, *Virgil in the Renaissance*, 217 and “Lavinia and Beatrice: The Second Half of the *Aeneid* in the Middle Ages,” 106-9. Wilson-Okamura makes many excellent points, but I do not see a distinction between the habits of elite medieval scholar-poets and their early modern successors; these scholars were always “twelve-book readers,” to borrow Wilson-Okamura’s terminology. Consider also that Books 1, 4, and 6 have always been the most popular books of the *Aeneid* in any period, from the first century to the present.
Totus quidem Vergilius scientia plenus est, in qua hic liber possidet princicipatum, cuius ex Homero pars maior est. et dicuntur aliqua simpliciter, multa de historia, multa per altam scientiam philosophorum, theologorum, Aegyptiorum, adeo ut plerique de his singulis huius libri integras scriberent pragmatias.

Truly, all of Virgil is full of knowledge, but this book, the majority of which comes from Homer, contains the most. Some things are said plainly, but much is drawn from history and the deep wisdom of the philosophers, theologians, and Egyptians—so much so that many people have written whole treatises about the individual areas of knowledge in this book.

What is more, although Servius makes many isolated allegorical comments throughout the books of the Aeneid, his commentary on Book 6 “in effect, frames the whole underworld scene as an extended allegory and asserts as a corollary that Vergil is simply using the traditional representations of Tartarus and of the underworld in general as poetic forms to clothe profound moral and philosophic truths.”

Fulgentius himself devotes nearly half of his commentary to Book 6, four times as much as to any other book. Bernard allots far more than half of his commentary on the Aeneid to this book even though his commentary breaks off at line 631, nearly two hundred lines from the end of Book 6. Taking his cue from his predecessors, Bernard opens his commentary on Book 6 by announcing that his commentary will henceforth go into greater depth:

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76 Jones, “Allegorical Interpretation in Servius,” 220. There is a tendency in modern scholarship to underappreciate the significance of Servius both in his mythological and in his philosophical contributions to medieval thought. This is due to a wider underestimation of Virgil’s importance in this period and also to the difficulty presented by Servius’ disjunctive commentary format. Fortunately, at least this last problem has been to some degree solved for Servius’ philosophy by Edith Owen Wallace’s The Notes on Philosophy in the Commentary of Servius on the Eclogues, the Georgics, and the Aeneid of Vergil (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938).

77 I am inclined to agree with David Pike in believing that Bernard intentionally ended his commentary where it breaks off—or at the very least that the commentary itself never went much further in the sixth book. See Pike’s “Bernard Silvestris’ Descent into the Classics: The Commentum super sex libros Aeneidos,” International Journal of the Classical Tradition 4, no. 3 (1998), 343-363: 362-3. For a similar opinion, see Baswell, Virgil in Medieval England, 119.
Since Virgil declares philosophic truth more profoundly in this book, let us not only give a summary of its contents, but also spend more time interpreting individual words in it.

Servius’ allegorizing comments in Book 6, though numerous, are fine-tuned to explain each lemma and sometimes even can appear contradictory. It is therefore dangerous to assign a single allegoresis to Servius, but the primary theme, found in many notes (explored below), is that Aeneas’ descent was not physical but spiritual. By contemplating vice, represented by characters in the underworld, Aeneas could ultimately come to understand the nature of the universe and the creator.

Fulgentius’ allegoresis of Book 6 of the Aeneid, followed by Bernard, is much more focused than Servius’ and falls into three distinct parts. The first part is the acquisition of philosophical knowledge through schooling. The ultimate acquisition of philosophy is made manifest in the plucking of the golden bough. The second part is the descent of Aeneas to the underworld, representing the philosopher’s contemplation of worldly goods or vices. In the third and final part, the spirit ascends to heaven, Virgil’s Elysium. The purpose of this journey is to contemplate God and the divine origin of the soul, since both Fulgentius and Bernard allegorize Anchises as God the father, creator of the universe.

Books 1-6 of the Anticlaudianus correspond well to most of Fulgentius’ allegorical paradigm, except for the descent. Instead of descending, Alan’s heroine ascends directly to heaven. Instead of contemplating earthly vice, she contemplates the natural, perceivable universe, as she ascends through the air to God. To summarize

78 Bernard, Commentary on the Aeneid, 28.
Alan’s structure, education (Books 1-3) leads directly to contemplation of the structure of
the universe (Books 4 and 5) and ultimately God (Book 6).

In the opening scene of the *Anticlaudianus*, Nature has summoned all of the
Virtues to help her build the New Man, but first, they have to enter an idyllic grove which
contains Nature’s palace. There follows an ecphrasis in which Alan describes how the
walls of this palace are decorated with *auctores* at work on their books and important
figures from history and myth.  

Virgil also introduces a large-scale ecphrasis at the
beginning of Book 6. Aeneas and his men enter the grove of Trivia at Cumae where
stands the temple of Apollo. Virgil explains that Daedalus had sculpted his own
participation in the myth of Theseus and the minotaur on the doors of this temple. The
subject matter of Alan’s and Virgil’s ecphrases might at first appear unrelated, but recall
that Fulgentius allegorizes the temple of Apollo as education in literature. Bernard’s
elaboration of Fulgentius on this passage makes the similarities between the allegorized
temple of Apollo and the palace of Nature even more apparent:

*DEDALUS:* Extra templum Apollinis depicta cernabantur historie et fabule quas
ingressuri templum cernebant. Templum Apollinis sunt artes philosophice quas
qui ingressuri sunt oportet quod prius cernant picturas ante descriptas, id est ut
dent operam istoriis et fabulis et hoc est quod in porticum ab introeuntibus
cernuntur historie depictet fabule. ... *LETUM ANDROGEI:* He fabule que sunt
extra templum figurant omnes poetrarum fabulas et ita non sunt mistice
intelligende. ... *PERLEGERENT:* Eneas et qui cum eo ad templum adveniebant,
qui ad philosophiam venire proponunt.  

*DAEDALUS:* Outside the temple of Apollo were shown depictions of histories
and myths which those about to enter the temple would examine. The temple of
Apollo is the philosophic arts because whoever enters must first understand
literature as pictures before they can read the descriptions, i.e. so that they can
give heed to history and myth, and this is why history and myth are seen by those
entering the gallery. ... *LETUM ANDROGEI:* These myths which are outside the

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80 *Anticlaudianus* 1.107-86.
81 *Aeneid* 6.14-34.
temple represent all the myths of the poets and thus are not to be understood allegorically [i.e. as individual allegories]. ... PERLEGGERENT: Aeneas and those who came with him to the temple, i.e. all those who propose to study philosophy.

We could read Bernard’s allegorization of the temple of Apollo as vividly fleshed out in Alan’s description of the murals that decorate the palace of Nature. As Simpson has noted, Alan has a particular fondness for equating the painting of pictures to the writing of literature, especially poetry.\(^8^3\) Within this ecphrasis itself, we can see a clear example of just such an equation, when Alan describes how Maevius “tries to paint (\textit{pingere temptat})” the deeds of Alexander.\(^8^4\) As I showed in my introduction, this particular phrase is almost universally interpreted today as describing Walter at work writing the \textit{Alexandreis}. Furthermore, there are hints that Alan intends these paintings to represent not just any literature but specifically the literary canon used in the schools. The description of the paintings on the wall of Nature’s palace is introduced with the following line: “Here a charming painting inscribes the morals of men (\textit{Hic hominum mores picture gracia scribit}).”\(^8^5\) Again, we see a term for writing, \textit{scribit}, being applied to painting. What is more, the paintings (i.e. literature), which appear in the ecphrasis, especially teach ethical behavior—just as we would expect of the twelfth-century literary canon.\(^8^6\)

Alan divides the murals into two parts containing, in Ralph of Longchamp’s words, noble personages (\textit{nobiles personae}) and ignoble personages (\textit{ignobiles personae}).\(^8^7\) The noble personages, Aristotle, Plato, Seneca, Ptolemy, Cicero, and Virgil,

\(^8^3\) See Simpson, \textit{Sciences and the Self}, 235-241, concluding at 241: “For Alan, then, the arts of writing and painting are equivalents.”
\(^8^4\) “Mevius... / Gesta ducis Macedum tenebrosi carminis umbra / Pingere dum temptat.”
\(^8^5\) \textit{Anticlaudianus} 1.119.
\(^8^6\) See Chapter 3 and Judson Boyce Allen, \textit{The Ethical Poetic of the Later Middle Ages: A Decorum of Convenient Distinction} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982).
\(^8^7\) Ralph of Longchamp, \textit{Commentary on the Anticlaudianus}, 72-3.
were, for the most part, foundational authors in northern European schools. The list of ignoble personages begins with the names of two poets from antiquity: Ennius and Maevius, together with their chosen subjects: Priam/Troy and Alexander the Great. Even though Ennius’ poetry was not known directly in the Middle Ages, nevertheless Ennius is named in a list of canonical authors. Aimeric’s *Ars lectoria* (c.1080) lists Ennius with the “silver” authors (including Boethius, Priscian, and several others) as against the “golden” authors who, for him, include Virgil and Lucan, among others. Furthermore, I argued in my introduction, in agreement with most modern scholars, that Ennius and Maevius are pseudonyms for Joseph of Exeter and Walter of Châtillon respectively. As I showed in my introduction, both Joseph and Walter aspired to be read with the standard classical epics in the school curricula (and indeed achieved this goal). All of the remaining names in both parts of the ecphrasis featured as exempla in the usual canonical literature of the twelfth century: the positive exempla of Ulysses, Hercules, Titus, Turnus, Hippolytus, and the negative exempla of Nero, Midas, Ajax, Paris, and Davus. If we see a parallel between Nature’s palace and the temple of Apollo, then Alan might be read as equating the Virtues summoned by Nature to Aeneas and his men, who first must study the depictions of the literary canon on the portico of Apollo’s temple before embarking on their further education.

The most important Virtue summoned by Nature is Prudence. Throughout the first six books of the *Anticlaudianus*, Prudence is the protagonist.

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89 For discussion, see Curtius, *European Literature*, 464-5.
90 Alan calls the same character by four different names, *Prudentia*, *Fronesis*, *Sapiencia*, and *Sophya*, depending on which aspect of thought she is manifesting.
91 James Sheridan goes so far as to call Prudence not just the heroine of the first six books but “the heroine of Alan’s epic” in *Anticlaudianus*, 35.
Nature, Reason (*Ratio*) urges Prudence to ascend to God and petition him for the New Man’s soul. This same Reason then accompanies Prudence as her guide through the heavens. Prudence corresponds well to Fulgentius’ and Bernard’s allegorizations of Aeneas; she represents the mental faculties of the philosopher. The goddess Reason is roughly analogous to the Sibyl in the allegorized *Aeneid*. Just as Reason guides Prudence on her journey through the heavens, so the Sibyl guides Aeneas through the underworld. Fulgentius leaves the allegorical role of the Sibyl to the reader’s imagination, but Bernard defines the Sibyl in a way essentially identical to Alan’s Reason:

\[ Sibilla vero quasi scibule, id est divinum consilium, quod accipimus esse intelligentiam, que dicitur consilium quia per eam homo sibi consulit. Dicitur divinum quia intelligentia non est aliud quam divinorum comprehentio. \]

Sibyl is for “scibule,” i.e. divine counsel which we take to be understanding which is called counsel because through intelligence man consults with himself. It is called divine because understanding is nothing other than comprehension of divine matters.

Before Aeneas can gain access to the underworld, he has to locate and pluck the golden bough. In the *Anticlaudianus*, Prudence must have a chariot built which will allow her to ascend to God accompanied by Reason. Although at first a chariot might seem to have little in common with the golden bough, there are many parallels between Alan’s chariot and allegorizations of Virgil’s golden bough. Alan spends nearly two books describing the creation of the chariot. It is assembled out of components fabricated by personifications of each of the seven liberal arts, comprising the medieval trivium and quadrivium. Each contribution is elaborately described and even the materials of each component are given special significance. Grammar’s pole is made of wood. Logic’s

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92 *Anticlaudianus* 2.90-8 and 140-7.
94 *Anticlaudianus* 2.484-5.
axle is made of steel. Rhetoric ornaments the pole and axle with silver and gems. The four wheels contributed by the quadrivium (Arithmetic, Music, Geometry, and Astronomy) are each made from bronze, lead, marble, and finally gold.

In the allegorical tradition, the golden bough is almost always associated with the study of philosophy and literature—essentially equivalent to the medieval trivium and quadrivium which constitute Alan’s chariot. Fulgentius explains that “the knowledge of secrets cannot be learned before one has plucked the golden bough, that is, unless the study of philosophy and letters has been learned.” Even the material of the bough is relevant, as Fulgentius has Virgil explain: “When we called it golden, we wanted to indicate the splendor of eloquence.” A century earlier, Servius had similarly defined the golden bough:

de reditu autem animae hoc est: novimus Pythagoram Samium vitam humanam divisisse in modum Y litterae, scilicet quod prima aetas incerta sit, quippe quae adhuc se nec vitiis nec virtutibus dedit: bivium autem Y litterae a iuventute incipere, quo tempore homines aut vitia, id est partem sinistrum, aut virtutes, id est dexteram partem sequuntur: unde ait Persius “traducit trepidas ramosa in compita mentes”. ergo per ramum virtutes dicit esse sectandas, qui est Y litterae imitatio: quem ideo in silvis dicit latere, quia re vera in huius vitae confusione et maiore parte vitiorum virtus et integritas latet.

However, concerning the return of the soul, it means this: We know that Pythagoras of Samos divided the human life in the manner of the letter Y. Specifically, he says that the first age is uncertain, for it has not yet committed itself to either a life of vice or of virtue. However, the fork in the letter Y begins at manhood by which age men pursue either vice, i.e. the left fork, or virtue, i.e. the right fork. For this reason, Persius says, “it leads fearful minds into a branching crossroads.” Therefore, by “branch”, he indicates that virtues must be followed and this branch is an imitation of the letter Y. Indeed, he says that it lies hidden in

95 Anticlaudianus 3.90-8.
96 Anticlaudianus 3.250-71.
97 Anticlaudianus 3.272-4.69.
98 “Sed tamen non antea discitur cognitio secretorum, nisi quis ramum decerpserit aureum, id est doctrinae atque litterarum discatur studium.” Continentia, 96-97.
99 “At uero aureum quod diximus, claritatem facundiae designare vultimus.” Continentia, 97.
100 ad Aeneid 6.136.
a forest because virtue and integrity are completely hidden in the confusion of this life and by the greater quantity of vices.

Skillfully blending both Servius and Fulgentius, Bernard says:

*Ramus integumentis vocatur quodlibet quod in diversa scinditur ut virtutes, vicia, scientie. RAMUS ergo AUREUS hoc loco intelligitur philosophia quia quemadmodum ramus per alios furcatur, ita philosophia quasi quidam stipes in duas alias, scilicet theoricaet et practicae et rursus inseparabili ac ad duas aliis divisioneque subjecta docet figura... AUREUS autem quia per aurum sapientia intelligitur... Hunc ramum intelligenter monet querere Eneam ut possit meatus ad inferos patere quia qui philosophia caret ei rerum agntio non patet.*

In allegories, anything which is divided into separate parts (such as the virtues, the vices, and knowledge) is called a branch. Therefore, the GOLDEN BOUGH is interpreted here as philosophy because, just as a branch forks into smaller branches, so too philosophy is like a tree with two branches, namely the theoretic and practical, which are each subdivided again into others as the following figure shows... It is GOLDEN because we interpret gold as wisdom... Understanding advises Aeneas to seek this branch so that the way to the underworld may be open since the recognition of things does not lie open to the one who lacks philosophy.

Although Alan never explicitly makes the comparison, even the shape of the chariot, with its pole, axle, and four wheels, when viewed from above, recalls a bough with its branches much like the Pythagorean Y. In fact, Prudence’s chariot is drawn, from above, in precisely the form of a Y in at least one illustrated manuscript of the *Anticlaudianus.*

Alan was certainly familiar with the Servian connection between Aeneas’ *descensus* and the Pythagorean Y because he mentions the Pythagorean Y in a sermon inspired by the first three lines of Aeneas’ *descensus.* Finally, we can even find precedents for Alan’s transformation of Virgil’s golden bough into a means of getting to the heavens in an anonymous twelfth-century gloss on *Aeneid* 6.406:

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102 These appear in Verona Biblioteca Capitolare, MS CCLI, fol. 11v and 20r. For photographs of the images, see Christel Meier, “Rezeption des Anticlaudianus Alans von Lille,” in *Text und Bild: Aspekte des Zusammenwirkens zweier Kûnste in Mittelalter und frûher Neuzeit,* ed. Christel Meier and Uwe Ruberg (Wiesbaden: L. Reichert Verlag, 1980), 529 (plates 8 and 9).
103 This sermon has been edited by M.T. d’Alverny, “Variations sur un thème de Virgile,” 1517-28. See also Justin Lake’s discussion and translation in the *Virgilian Tradition,* 116-128.
That bough signifies the virtues by which men are liberated from the hell of this life and are carried to the heavens.

Although Servius, Fulgentius, and Bernard hold that Aeneas begins his ascent to the divine with a descent, interpreted as contemplation of earthly matters, Alan depicts Prudence physically ascending away from the earth in the chariot. But even in this reversal, Alan could have drawn inspiration from Servius, for it is possible to glean at least two distinct allegories from Servius’ notes on the underworld. The first allegory is that followed by Fulgentius and Bernard where Aeneas, allegorized as a philosopher, embarks upon an inner journey in which he would contemplate the vices of the world.

According to this interpretation, the underworld represents the world of the living, which is mired in vice; the philosopher, of course, never leaves the earth’s surface. For example, the following note expressly states that everything described in the underworld pertains to our life:

\[
\textit{PER TOTA NOVEM CUI IVGERA CORPUS PORRIGITUR} \ldots \textit{sane de his omnibus rebus mire reddit rationem Lucretius et confirmat in nostra vita esse omnia quae finguntur de inferis. dicit namque Tityon amorem esse, hoc est libidinem, quae secundum physicos et medicos in iecore est, sicut risus in splene, iracundia in felle: unde etiam exesum a vulture dicitur in poenam renasci: etenim libidini non satis fit re semel peracta, sed recrudescit semper.}^{105}
\]


WHOSE BODY IS STRETCHED OUT ACROSS NINE ACRES: ... Lucretius provides an excellent suggestion about all of these things and confirms that all of those things which are described in the underworld are in our own life. For he says that Tityos is a lover, that is lust, which, according to physicians and doctors resides in the liver, just as laughter in the spleen, anger in the gall-bladder. For this reason, his liver is said to be eaten by a vulture only to have it grow back as punishment, because there is no end to sexual desire once it has been indulged, for it is a wound which will not heal.

\footnote{104 This is Christopher Baswell’s transcription. See \textit{Virgil in Medieval England}, 354, n.81. This note occurs in MS Cambridge, Peterhouse College 158, referred to by Baswell, for convenience, as Peterhouse I.}

\footnote{105 Servius ad \textit{Aeneid} 6.596.
This comment explains Aeneas’ descent as contemplation either of his own past vice or the vices of those around him. In his note on *Aeneid* 6.127, Servius most thoroughly develops the idea that the underworld is actually the earth:

_NOCTES ATQUE DIES PATET ATRI IANVA DITIS id est omni tempore homines in fata concedunt. et hoc poete: nam Lucretius ex maiore parte et alii integre docent inferorum regna ne posse quidem esse: nam locum ipsorum quem possimus dicere, cum sub terris esse dicantur antipodes? in media vero terra eos esse nec soliditas pattitur, nec κέντρον terrae: quae si in medio mundi est, tanta eius esse profunditas non potest, ut medio sui habeat inferos, in quibus esse dicitur Tartarus, de quo legitur “bis patet in praeceps tantum tenditque sub umb ras, quantus ad aetherium caeli suspectus Olympum.”_106 _ergo hanc terram in qua vivimus inferos esse voluerunt, quia est omnium circulorum infima, planetarum scilicet septicum, Saturni, Iovis, Martianum, Solis, Veneris, Mercurii, Lunae, et durorum magnorum._107 _hic est quod habemus “et novies Styx interfusa coercet”: nam novem circulis cingitur terra. ergo omnia quae de inferis finguntur, suis locis hic esse conprobabimus._108

**HELL’S GATE LIES OPEN DAY AND NIGHT:** i.e. men can fall victim to fate at any time. And this is said in the manner of poets, for Lucretius, for the most part, and others, exclusively, teach that the kingdoms of the underworld cannot exist: for what can we call their abode when the antipodes are said to exist under the earth? Neither does the solidity in the middle of the earth or the kentron of the earth allow those things to exist, and if this is in the middle of the earth, its depth could not be so great that in its middle it holds the underworld in which Tartarus is said to exist and concerning which it is pointed out that “it lies open downward and stretches down to the shades twice as far as the height of the sky to ethereal Olympus.” Therefore, they assume that this earth, in which we live, is the underworld because it is the lowest of all the circles – namely of the seven planets, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, the moon, and the two great circles. Thus we read “and the nine-fold Styx, flowing through it, surrounds it,” for the earth is surrounded by nine circles. Therefore, all things which are depicted in the underworld, we will acknowledge to be here in their own places.

106 _Aeneid* 6.578-9

107 For a discussion of what exactly these “two great spheres” are, see Edith Owen Wallace, *The Notes on Philosophy in the Commentary of Servius on the Eclogues, the Georgics, and the Aeneid of Vergil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938.), 90-2. I am inclined to agree that the two great spheres are meant to be placed above the seven planets: i.e. the fixed stars and the fiery tenth sphere (counting the earth as sphere number one) where God lives. Alan’s universe is certainly so structured.

108 Servius ad *Aeneid* 6.127.
Thus to Servius, the underworld is a poetic fiction since earth itself is the lowest possible sphere and the only thing “under” it is the antipodes, which is still part of the earth. Therefore, if souls, when they die, always go upwards rather than down, then the afterlife, i.e. the underworld, must logically be in the heavens. Indeed, Servius goes on to pursue this line of thought further in the same note:

Quod autem dicit “patet atri ianua Ditis sed revocare gradum superasque evadere ad auras hoc opus hic labor est” aut poetice dictum est aut secundum philosophorum altam scientiam, qui deprehenderunt bene viventium animas ad superiores circulos, id est ad originem suam redire: quod dat Lucanus Pompeio ut “vidit quanta sub nocte iaceret nostra dies”\textsuperscript{109}: male viventium vero diutius in his permorari corporibus permutatione diversa et esse apud inferos semper.\textsuperscript{110}

Moreover, when he said “the door to hell is open but to recall your step and escape to the air above, that is the task, that is the difficulty,” either it was said in the manner of poets or else according to the lofty knowledge of philosophers, who have discovered that the souls of those who lived well return to the higher circles, i.e. to their origin. Thus, Lucan had Pompey “see how much our day lies under night”: the souls of those living badly truly for a long time remain in these bodies by diverse permutation and are always in the underworld.

Servius’ distinction between the underworld, where we live and continue to live through re-incarnation, and the afterlife, where those who have lived well go when they die, forces a choice on those who would impose a single consistent allegory on the \textit{descensus} because Aeneas is visiting both the underworld and the afterlife in the \textit{Aeneid}. At least two distinct allegories for Aeneas’ journey can be derived from Servius. In some notes, Aeneas is contemplating vice on earth, while in others he seems to be travelling through the cosmos.

The seeds of this bifurcation are sown in the comment on \textit{Aeneid} 6.127 where Servius defines the underworld as earth, but then goes on to say that the “ninefold Styx”

\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Pharsalia} 9.13.
\textsuperscript{110} Servius ad \textit{Aeneid} 6.127.
refers to the nine spheres above the earth. He repeats this idea in his comment on Aeneid 6.439. If the nine circles represent the nine spheres (indeed, Servius uses the same word for both, *circulus*), consider how easily one could interpret the following two notes as describing a celestial journey:

CONTINVO AVDITAE VOCES novem circulis inferi cincti esse dicuntur, quos nunc exequitur. nam primum dicit animas infantum tenere, secundum eorum qui sibi per simplicitatem adesse nequiverunt, tertium eorum qui evitantes aerumnas se necarunt, quartum eorum qui amarunt; quintum virorum fortium esse dicit, sextum nocentes tenent qui puniuntur a iudicibus, in septimo animae purgantur, in octavo sunt animae ita purgatae, ut redeant in corpora, in nono ut iam non redeant, scilicet campus Elysius.

SUDDENLY VOICES ARE HEARD The underworld is said to be bounded by nine circles which now he explains, for he says that the first holds the souls of infants; the second holds the souls of those who were unable to be truly themselves because of their simplicity; the third holds the souls of those who killed themselves to avoid their troubles; the fourth holds those who were lovers; he says that the fifth is for brave men, while guilty men, who are punished by judges, occupy the sixth. In the seventh circle, souls are purged. In the eighth, the souls are purged to such an extent that they return to their bodies or, in the ninth, so that they no longer return, and this is, of course, the Elysian fields.

NULLI CERTA DOMUS id est habitatio, quam animae tamdiu certam habent, quamdiu in corporibus sunt: post quorum solutionem vagantur pro vitae merito in circulis. “Lucis habitamus opacis varia” dicit quae pro vitae varietate contingunt. in his autem locis heroum animae coluntur.

NO ONE HAS A CERTAIN HOME i.e. the habitation which souls consider to be certain for as long as they are in bodies: after the loss of these bodies, they wander in different circles according to the merits of their lives. The phrase, “we inhabit various parts of the shady groves,” alludes to these different lives. The souls of heroes dwell in this location.

111 “NOVIES STYX INTERFUSA quia qui altius de mundi ratione quaesiverunt, dicunt intra novem hos mundi circulos inclusas esse virtutes, in quibus et iracundiae sunt et cupiditates, de quibus tristitia nascitur, id est Styx. unde dicit novem esse circulos Stygis, quae inferos cingit, id est terram, ut diximus supra: nam dicunt alias esse purgatiores extra hos circulos potestates.”
112 Servius ad Aeneid 6.426.
113 Servius ad Aeneid 6.673.
Thus, Servius’ notes suggest two different allegories for the descent into the underworld. The descent itself is always allegorized in Servius as the philosophical descent, i.e. contemplation of vice on earth, but Servius equates the nine circles of the Styx with the nine spheres which encircle the earth. Such an equation implies that if one were to visit the underworld physically, one would necessarily ascend through the nine spheres. This is not a problem for Servius because he never pretends to be writing a systematic allegory for all of Book 6; he remains free to explain individual passages according to whatever interpretation suits the context. However, anyone attempting to create a complete allegorical narrative based on the *Aeneid* would have to choose whether to locate the allegorized Aeneas’ journey on the surface of the earth or in the heavens. In other words, the mind of the philosopher either descends and then ascends to God, or else it ascends and keeps ascending. Fulgentius and Bernard choose the former, but Alan was free to choose the latter. Without doubt, all of these authors would agree that if Aeneas had been determined to meet his creator and physically see where souls come from, then he would have had to ascend to the heavens.

Alan inherited these interpretations, but he also had to allow for the fact that his religion located the afterlife in two wildly disparate places—hell beneath the earth and heaven far above it. Pietro Alighieri’s commentary on Dante’s *Commedia* addresses this issue: “Despite the fact that pagan writers, particularly Platonic philosophers and the poets, have said that the real inferno was situated beneath the moon, the truth is that it is in the bowels of the earth with its demons and damned spirits. This is clearly shown by Holy Scripture, etc.”114 Because Prudence ascends without ever descending, she cannot

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visit the Christian hell, but I would argue that Alan still begins Prudence’s journey upward with a nod to Virgil’s Tartarus and the traditional allegorization of hell as the contemplation of vice.

At *Aeneid* 6.548-627, Virgil has Aeneas pass by Tartarus, the prison within the underworld where the wicked are punished, before he enters Elysium. Similarly, at *Anticlaudianus* 4.271-331, Alan has Prudence pass through the abode of the fallen angels, the “aerios ciues, quibus aer carcer, abyssus / pena, dolor risus, mors uiuere, culpa triumphus” (citizens of the lower air, for whom the lower air is a prison, the abyss a punishment, happiness is grief, death is life, sin is triumph).”\(^\text{115}\) Besides such references as “carcer” and “abyssus pena,” Alan also associates this region with hell when he explains how the fallen angels “luce relicta / in tenebras adiere suas” (abandoning the light, went into their own darknesses) and “fonte relicto / inferni petiere lacus” (abandoning the font, sought the lakes of the underworld).”\(^\text{116}\) Alan does not strictly contradict medieval Christian dogma because the lower air (aer) is often described as the domain of the *daemones*; Alan never says that condemned human souls inhabit this region.\(^\text{117}\) After describing the fallen angels and Satan, Alan then makes reference to the allegorical interpretation of Tartarus by launching into a tirade against pride. According to Fulgentius, pride is the chief vice represented by Virgil’s Tartarus. Indeed, Fulgentius allegorizes Virgil’s line, “Tartarus itself descends twice as far as Olympus rises,” as a description for the “full reward of pride” meaning that “the punishment for pride is being 

\(^{115}\) *Anticlaudianus* 4.274-5.
\(^{116}\) *Anticlaudianus* 4.290-2.
\(^{117}\) For instance, Augustine locates the *daemones* in the aer at *City of God*, 10.21.
hurled down.” Thus, although Prudence never descends to the Christian hell, Alan nevertheless would seem to include an allegorical homage to Virgil’s Tartarus in the ascent through the air.

Prudence continues on her ascent, but Reason, the horses, and the chariot can go no higher once they have passed the lower nine spheres (earth, the seven planets, and the constellations). In order to reach the tenth sphere, the divine kingdom, Prudence has to abandon Reason and her chariot, continuing to ascend through the aid of her new companion, the *regina poli*, usually interpreted by modern scholars as Theology (*Anticlaudianus* 5.40-264). Just as Aeneas has to deposit the golden bough at the gate of Elysium, so Prudence has to leave her chariot just outside of the tenth sphere. Moreover, Prudence still requires a guide; Theology must accompany Prudence as soon as she leaves Reason. In the *Aeneid*, of course, the Sibyl remains with Aeneas throughout, but both Reason and Theology fulfill the Sibyl’s role within the narrative.

When Aeneas is about to enter Elysium, he must be purified by sprinkling water on himself. Servius explains the act in the following way:

*SPARGIT AQUA purgat se: nam impiatus fuerat vel aspectu Tartari. et 'spargit', quia se inferis purgat.*

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118 “nam illud quod diximus: ‘Tartarus ipse bis patet in praecipus tantum’, considera plenum superbiae meritum; poena enim superbiae deiectio est.” *Continentia*, 100.

119 See, for instance, Jung, *Études sur le poème allégorique*, 81 n.33; Sheridan, *Anticlaudianus*, 139 n.21. Peter Dronke objects to this interpretation in *Dante and Medieval Latin*, 12-3. Dronke argues that because everywhere else Alan spells out exactly what name he desires for his allegorical characters, Alan must have left the significance of the *regina poli* intentionally vague and unnamed. Wetherbee concurs with Dronke’s assessment in “Philosophy, Cosmology, and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance,” in *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, ed. Peter Dronke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 51. Dronke and Wetherbee seem to have overlooked a very good reason for Alan not to call this character by the name of Theology: *theologia* is composed of exclusively short syllables and cannot appear in a hexameter epic.

Bernard interprets the same act as, “he nourishes himself with new instruction.” Alan substitutes a more dramatic form of purification, for Prudence faints when she enters the divine kingdom and can only be restored to her senses by drinking from a special potion prepared by a newly introduced character, Faith (*Anticlodianus* 6.1-111). This potion spreads throughout her body and makes her capable of experiencing heaven.

For Fulgentius, the next important moment in Book 6 occurs when Anchises, allegorized as God, teaches his son about the nature of the universe. By way of illustration, Fulgentius quotes the opening two lines of Anchises’ speech at *Aeneid* 6.724-51. I have supplied the following three words to complete the sense:

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Principio caelum ac terram camposque liquentis
lucentemque globum lunae Titaniaque astra
spiritus intus alit...
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In the beginning, a spirit created, from within, the heavens and the earth, the liquid plains, the shining globe of the moon and the Titanian stars...

This particular passage was especially commented upon in the twelfth century and cited as an example of Virgil’s deep philosophical (and almost Christian) knowledge. Fulgentius then has the ghost of Virgil say, “you see how, just as God the creator might, Anchises teaches the secret mysteries of nature, pointing out how spirits return from life

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121 Bernard, *Commentary on the Aeneid*, 114: “*CORPUS SPARGIT RECENTI AQUA dum se ipsum nova irrigat doctrina.*” At this point in Book 6 of the *Aeneid*, Bernard’s commentary breaks off. Bernard announces his intention to comment on all twelve books of the *Aeneid* in his introduction. However, the new, more detailed exegesis which he proposes for Book 6 suggests that he was not averse to altering his plans midcourse. I am inclined to agree with David Pike that Bernard probably never finished his commentary partly because he had already covered most of what he wanted to address. See “Bernard Silvestris’ Descent into the Classics: The ‘Commentum super sex libros Aeneidos,’” *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 4, No. 3 (1998), 343-63.

122 Fulgentius no doubt omitted these because of the somewhat problematic (from a Christian perspective) “intus.” By omitting “intus,” he can emphasize how Anchises begins with such a Christian (Genesis) view but then ends with such a distinctly pagan one.

over and over again, and reveals the future.”

At the mention of metempsychosis, which of course ends Anchises’ speech in the *Aeneid*, the character of Fulgentius suddenly interrupts Virgil to berate him for “clouding his brilliant genius with the dullness of such a stupid argument.” After the ghost of Virgil excuses himself with the defense that he was, after all, still only a pagan and not privy to Christian knowledge, Fulgentius makes Virgil skip ahead to Book 7. Fulgentius’ frustration with the last part of Book 6 must have been a familiar experience to Virgil’s twelfth-century readers as well. After showing so much wisdom consonant with not only Genesis but also medieval Platonism (the world spirit), Virgil’s description of metempsychosis must have seemed a continual disappointment. Fulgentius even expresses his surprise in the same way that his twelfth-century counterparts might have—by asking in consternation how the same person could have written the “messianic” fourth *Eclogue*.

In the *Anticlaudianus*, Alan vividly expresses this same disgust with Virgil’s Elysium, for when Prudence sets foot in heaven, he declares that Virgil’s muse has become mute. In fact about a hundred lines earlier, Alan banishes the muse of the classical poets in favor of a direct appeal to God. There are resonances here with Christian authors such as Juvenecus, Augustine, Boethius and others; however, even in

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124 “*Uides ergo quia sicut Deum creatorem oportuit et de secretis naturae mysteriis docet et reducet iterum animas iterum de uita demonstrans et futura ostendit.*” (*Continentia*, 102)

125 “*O uatum Latialis autenta, itane tuum clarissimum in genium tam stultae defensionis fuscare debuisti caligine?*” (*Continentia*, 102)


128 “*Tullius ipse silet, mutescit musa Maronis.*” (*Anticlaudianus* 5.371)
this, Virgil is among the most important models.\textsuperscript{129} Alan’s re-invocation echoes both Virgil’s re-invocation of the gods of the underworld in \textit{Aeneid} 6.264-7 and Virgil’s re-invocation at the beginning of the second half of the \textit{Aeneid} as he undertakes a “\textit{maius opus}” in \textit{Aeneid} 7.37-44. Like the latter, Alan’s re-invocation stands at the center of his epic.\textsuperscript{130} Alan also claims to be about to tell something greater (\textit{maiore nunc tendo liram}) with a prophet’s (\textit{prophete}) voice instead of a poet’s (\textit{poetam}).\textsuperscript{131} Compare Virgil’s use of the term “\textit{vates}” here to describe himself (\textit{Aeneid} 7.41). Like Virgil’s re-invocation in Book 6 as Aeneas and the Sibyl enter the underworld, Alan invokes the ruling deity of heaven just as his characters are about to enter it.

Unsurprisingly, upon entering the true Elysium situated in the tenth sphere, Prudence experiences quite a different God from the Anchises of the \textit{Aeneid}.\textsuperscript{132} However, there are still enough similarities to remind the reader of Virgil’s Elysium. For instance, just like Virgil’s Elysium, Alan’s heaven has its own sun.\textsuperscript{133} There is even a river prominently flowing through Alan’s heaven, akin to the river Lethe.\textsuperscript{134} Perhaps most dramatically, Prudence sees a parade of souls that will one day become people with different preordained talents.\textsuperscript{135} The talents of these souls are compared to a list of named historical figures including Hector, Cicero, Cato, and Ovid. The similarity to the parade of Aeneas’ descendants in \textit{Aeneid} 6.756-886 is striking. Most significantly and pointedly,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Bossuat cites only Boethius’ famous “\textit{O qui perpetua}” in \textit{Consolatio} 3, m. 9, which significantly occurs in the exact middle of the work, but just as important is Juvenecus’ \textit{Evangelicae Historiae Libri} IV 1.1-27. Here Juvenecus invokes the Holy Spirit while claiming a higher purpose for his epic than those of Virgil and Homer. Cf. Augustine, \textit{Confessions}, Book 9.
\item Ratkowitzch makes the same point (without reference to Virgil’s re-invocation in book 6) in \textit{Descriptio picturae}, 246-7.
\item \textit{Anticladianus} 5.268-9.
\item In notes on \textit{Aeneid} 5.735 and 6.640, Servius claims that, according to theologians, Elysium is located in the lunar sphere, although, as the ninth circle of the underworld, he seemed to be assigning Elysium to the tenth sphere in the note on 6.426.
\item Compare \textit{Aeneid} 6.640-1 to \textit{Anticladianus} 6.249-51.
\item Compare \textit{Anticladianus} 6.239-48.
\item \textit{Anticladianus} 6.214-30.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
God shows Prudence how souls are really created. From the perspective of a twelfth-century reader, this scene might look like an intentional correction of Virgil’s most glaring mistake.

Having completed her mission, Prudence returns to her companion Reason and descends to earth. Likewise, after consulting with his father, Aeneas returns to earth accompanied by the Sibyl. We may note one final point of similarity to a philosophizing comment of Servius. As Prudence descends, she is very protective of the New Man’s soul as she passes through the orbits of the various planets. In fact, Alan even has Noys specially anoint the soul with a protective unguent in order to shield it from the influence of the planets. Servius explains why this elaborate care would have been necessary in a comment near the end of his commentary on Aeneid Book 6:

\[docent autem philosophi, anima descendens quid per singulos circulos perdat: unde etiam mathematici fingunt, quod singulorum numinum potestatibus corpus et anima nostra conexa sunt ea ratione, quia cum descendunt animae trahunt secum torporem Saturni, Martis iracundiam, libidinem Veneris, Mercurii luci cupiditatem, Iovis regni desiderium: quae res faciunt perturbationem animabus, ne possint uti vigore suo et viribus propriis.\]

Moreover, philosophers teach that the soul loses this [knowledge of the future] as it descends through the individual spheres. Similarly, the mathematicians devise that our body and soul were joined by the powers of various divinities according to the following rationale: when the souls descend, they draw to themselves Saturn’s torpor, Mars’ wrath, Venus’ lust, Mercury’s covetousness, and Jove’s ambition for power. These things disturb the souls so that they are not able to use their own vigor and inherent strength.

Of course, the idea that souls, in their descent, are affected by the spheres through which they pass is not confined to Servius. However, coming as it does near the end of Book 6

\[136\] Anticleadianus 6.428-47.  
\[137\] Anticleadianus 6.461-5.  
\[138\] ad Aeneid 6.714.
in the *Aeneid*, Servius’ comment may well have contributed to Alan’s narrative choices towards the end of what I have argued is a reimagining of *Aeneid* 6.

**Interpreting the structure of the *Anticlaudianus***

The structure of Alan’s allegory has been the subject of much critical debate; most scholars have found Alan’s structure flawed or confusing. But the Virgilian parallels adduced above provide us with another angle from which to understand the allegorical structure of the poem. The last three books of the *Anticlaudianus* have often been read as incoherent and rambling, but we have seen above that their overall plot is closely aligned with the *Aeneid’s* allegoresis. Alan’s audience likely would not have been confused by the structure of the last three books of the *Anticlaudianus* because they would have found it readily intelligible from their reading of the *Aeneid*.

Other questions about the *Anticlaudianus’* structure are not so easily solved, but the *Aeneid’s* allegoresis still provides a useful way to re-examine the problems raised in the last few decades. Many modern scholars have seen Alan’s division of the *Anticlaudianus* into two sections as a major weakness of the poem. In particular, it is often argued that the first section contains the weighty philosophical material while the second section contains an anticlimactic discussion of more mundane and elementary

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139 See, for instance, Jung, *Études sur le poème allégorique*, 80: “Alain de Lille ne semble pas suivre un système défini. Ne cherchons pas la cohérence là où on ne saurait la trouver. Il y a utilité d’indiquer les sources pour le traité De virtutibus et de vitiis, où Alain de Lille suit Macrobe, Cicéron, et Abélard; pour l’*Anticlaudianus*, il suffit de relever que le concile infernal vient de Claudien, et que l’idée d’une lutte entre vices et vertus est prise à Prudence.” For discussion of the critical problems with books 7-9, see Ochsenbein, *Studien zum Anticlaudianus*, 168-9. Ochsenbein and Simpson both provide interpretations which aim to solve these problems. See Ochsenbein, *Studien zum Anticlaudianus*, 137-85; Simpson, *Sciences and Self*, 42-56.

140 Simpson discusses these critical problems in *Sciences and Self*, 26-31. Ratkowitsch also usefully summarizes scholarly opinions on the *Anticlaudianus*’ structure in *Descriptio Picturae*, 243-6.
moral knowledge of the vices and virtues. For instance, Wetherbee believes that the theme of the *Anticlaudianus* is “the working out of the relation of the Arts to theology that culminates in Prudentia’s vision of God” and that there is therefore “something gratuitous and anticlimactic about the ensuing psychomachia and the new earthly order to which it leads.”

The order of the two parts, where the mind ascends to God in the middle rather than the end, seemed to pose such a problem to the appreciation of Alan’s poem that James Simpson has proposed the “preposterous solution” of reading the two sections out of order, beginning with the creation of the New Man in the second part and ending with the first part of the poem. Simpson bases his argument on Bernard Silvestris’ distinction between the “artificial order” of the literal *Aeneid* and “natural order” of the allegorical *Aeneid*. Simpson’s rather clever idea is that since the surface of the *Anticlaudianus* is allegory, perhaps this literal meaning is told in a “natural order” while the hidden meaning of the *Anticlaudianus* must be read according to an “artificial order,” and therefore we might be allowed by twelfth-century literary theory to read the poem out of order. Simpson’s argument rests on the assumption that all poems contain both a “natural” and an “artificial order,” but Bernard’s source, Fulgentius, makes it clear that Bernard’s “artificial order” is synonymous with “in medias res,” i.e. the epic convention of beginning the narrative in the middle of the plot and telling earlier events in flashback. To Fulgentius and Bernard, “natural order” means merely normal chronological order, not an allegorical reading per se. Fulgentius had to make the distinction between the two orders because he decided to allegorize the *Aeneid* by book order rather than by the

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142 See “A preposterous interpretation of the *Anticlaudianus*” in *Sciences and the Self*, 57-91.
chronological order of the narrative. If Fulgentius had interpreted the books in chronological order, then the second and third book would have been telling about things before the “birth” of Everyman in Book 1, because the flashback in Books 2 and 3 relate Aeneas’ experiences before the storm of Book 1. Simpson’s mistake is to assume that medieval rhetoricians believed that there are always two orders, natural and artificial, in a narrative poem. In fact, there are two orders only in the medieval Aeneid, and only because Fulgentius decided to allegorize by book number, rather than by the relative chronology of the events described in each book. My own theory, linking the interpretation of the Anticlaudianus to the Aeneid, cannot salvage Simpson’s theory because the artificial and natural orders are only in conflict in the allegorized Aeneid in Books 2 and 3—books relatively unimportant to the allegoresis of the Aeneid.

In contrast to most previous scholarship, I see no problem in the order of the two sections of Alan’s poem because at the most general level the Anticlaudianus roughly follows the organization of the Aeneid. Ratkowitsch uses a similar line of reasoning, pointing to the literal Aeneid’s bipartite Odyssean and Iliadic structure. Further, I have shown that the allegorized Aeneid contains a philosophical journey to the creator near the midpoint of the epic and concludes with a psychomachia. Any reader familiar with the structure of the allegorized Aeneid would have known that Alan’s order which finds God in the middle and ends in psychomachia has the authority of Virgil behind it. Therefore, any modern scholar who does not think that the philosophical ascent to the creator should precede a battle between Vices and Virtues must contend with the traditional allegory contained in the Aeneid.

143 Ratkowitsch, Descriptio Picturae, 246-8.
Admittedly, my own view of the relationship of the Anticlaudianus to the Aeneid is not so simple as merely the reflection of Virgil’s bipartite Odyssean and Iliadic structure. I have argued that Alan’s Books 1-6 together equate to the Aeneid’s Book 6 alone while Books 7-9 of the Anticlaudianus relate the entirety of the allegorized Aeneid. This is quite a distortion of the allegorized Aeneid’s plot and provides an alternate way of viewing the problem which has bothered so many of Alan’s modern readers: the fundamental disjunction of the two halves which even appear to have different protagonists—Prudence and the New Man. My analysis confirms this problem since Prudence stands in for Aeneas/Everyman in Books 1-6 and the New Man is the Aeneas/Everyman of Books 7-9. Why would Alan so distort the accepted structure of the allegorized Aeneid? My primary answer to this question will be given in Chapter 3 because it depends upon the ethical reading of the Aeneid which is the subject of that chapter, but there is another complimentary reason which I will suggest here.

We have seen that Book 6 of the Aeneid was esteemed far beyond the rest of the Aeneid by Virgil’s philosophically inclined readers. Thus, the allegorized Aeneid was already inherently distorted in favor of Book 6: Servius allegorized it more thoroughly than any other book, Fulgentius spent half of his explication on it, and Bernard Silvestris devoted far more than half of his commentary to its first six hundred lines. What is more, the descent/ascent of Book 6 was regularly singled out as a model. Indeed, if we believe Laurent, then Dante and even Jean de Meun chose to make Book 6 a model for their whole epics. In Bernard Silvestris’ view, Martianus imitates the sixth book of the Aeneid in the first book of the De Nuptiis. There is also Bernard’s own likely imitation in the Cosmographia to consider. The Cosmographia itself is divided into nine sections of
prose interspersed with nine sections of verse. The first six prose and verse sections
describe the universe, including a voyage through the spheres, while the last three prose
and verse sections describe the making of man. Thus, Alan’s division of the
Anticlaudianus into a six book celestial journey and three book creation of a New Man
can be read as reflecting Bernard’s emphasis on the allegoresis of Aeneid 6 in his
Cosmographia. In this light, we might see Alan’s solution as a brilliant restructuring of
the Aeneid to bring it into line with certain medieval conceptions of what the Aeneid
ought to look like. Without a doubt, Alan highlights the encyclopedic knowledge which
the commentary tradition finds in the Aeneid, emphasizing a reading which today looks
more like the De nuptiis, Consolatio, and Cosmographia. In the process, the Aeneid’s
sixth book is enlarged upon and occupies the real philosophical heart of the
Anticlaudianus.

**Aeneid Book 6 and the Architrenius: The philosophic descent**

Like Alan, John seems to draw inspiration from allegorizations of Book 6 of the
Aeneid. In fact, all nine books of the Architrenius correspond well to the traditional
allegoresis of the sixth book of the Aeneid; however, John emphasizes different aspects of
this tradition. While Alan focuses on the allegory of education as ascent to the creator,
John stresses the allegory of philosophical descent through contemplation of worldly
vices. This different emphasis leads to many different choices affecting the whole
Architrenius.

One of the most obvious differences is that unlike the Anticlaudianus with its
personification, Prudence, as the protagonist of Books 1-6, the Architrenius has a human
protagonist throughout all nine books, who traverses the world observing its vices as he searches for Nature, but he always remains on the surface of the earth, never physically ascending or descending. Architrenius’ journey bears striking similarities to the philosophical descent through contemplation of vice which so concerns the allegorists of the sixth book of the Aeneid. As many of Servius’ notes on Book 6 advocate, John imagines his protagonist’s “descent” as one taking place exclusively on the surface of the earth. This philosophical descent as contemplation of vice is, of course, the very component of Aeneid 6 which was noticeably foreshortened in the Anticlaudianus.

When John first describes the poem’s protagonist, Architrenius, he introduces a figure very similar to Fulgentius’ and Bernard’s Aeneas at the beginning of Book 6.

Respicit et, quicquid tenero persuaserit etas
Floridior, recolit memor Architrenius, imas
Pectoris evolvit latebras mersosque profunda
Explorat sub mente lares, nec moribus usquam
Invenit esse locum, nec se virtutibus unum
Impendisse diem.144

Architrenius looks back on his life and recalls to memory whatever an age more lively than delicate persuaded. He opens up the deepest recesses of his heart and explores the realms buried deep within his mind. He finds that morals have never had a place there and that he has never devoted a single day to virtues.

Architrenius is not the perfect man constructed by Alan’s Nature, nor is he a personification of the philosopher’s mind, but rather an Everyman, just like Fulgentius’ Aeneas, who has committed all of the typical youthful vices which Books 1-5 of the Aeneid are said to have described. When John’s story begins, this Everyman has begun to contemplate his past and lament his youthful indiscretions. Even the language of the passage evokes the spiritual descent to the underworld. The words “imas latebras” (deepest recesses) and “mersos lares” (buried realms) could easily be applied to the

144 Architrenius 1.220-5.
underworld, yet this is an underworld existing only in the “mens” (mind) and “pectus” (heart). Likewise, the verb “exploro” suggests a quest, but it is a quest taking place within the “mens profunda.” Thus, at the beginning of Architrenius’ journey, John signals to the reader that this will be purely a voyage of the mind.\textsuperscript{145}

Bernard Silvestris begins his commentary on Book 6 of the \textit{Aeneid} by outlining four different kinds of descents. The second one is said to be the manner of Aeneas’ allegorical descent:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Est autem alius virtutis qui fit dum sapiens aliquis ad mundana per considerationem descendit, non ut in eis intentionem ponat, sed ut eorum cognita fragilitate, eis abiectis, ad invisibilia penitus se convertat et per creaturarum cognitionem creatorem evidentiis cognoscat. Sed hoc modo Orpheus et Hercules qui sapientes habiti sunt descenderunt.}\textsuperscript{146}
\end{quote}

There is also another [descent] through virtue which happens whenever a wise person descends to earthly matters through meditation, not so that he may devote himself to them, but so that, having recognized their ephemeral nature and rejected them, he may entirely turn his mind to invisible things and come to know more clearly the creator through contemplation of his creations. In this manner, Orpheus and Hercules, who are held to be wise men, descended.

Indeed, turning from vice and seeking out the creator is exactly what Architrenius announces his intention to do:

\begin{quote}
\textit{“Quid faciam, novi: profugo Natura per orbem }\textit{Est querenda michi, veniam, quacumque remotos Abscondat secreta lares, odiique latentes Eliciam causas et rupti forsan amoris Restituum nodos, adero: pacemque dolorum Compassiva feret et subsidiosa roganti Indulgebit opem...} \textit{....ad vota parentem Filius inducet.”}\textsuperscript{147}
\end{quote}

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{145} Similarly, Servius read Virgil’s tree of dreams (ad \textit{Aeneid} 6.282) as a subtle marker indicating to the reader that the \textit{descensus ad inferos} which followed was simply a dream in the mind of Aeneas. See also Servius’ similar interpretation of the ivory gate ad 6.893.

\textsuperscript{146} Bernard, \textit{Commentary on the Aeneid}, 30.

\textsuperscript{147} \textit{Architrenius} 1.321-7 and 330-1.
“What should I do? I know: I have to become an exile and search the globe for Nature. I will come to wherever she secretly hides her remote home, and discover the hidden causes of her hatred, perhaps I will restore the broken bond of her love. I will be there, and she will compassionately soothe my grief and generously indulge my pleas... The son will persuade his parent to his wishes.”

Architrenius follows through with his plan. As soon as he sets out, he encounters various representations of lust and then gluttony. After narrowly escaping these vices at the end of Book 2, Architrenius studies at the schools of Paris in Book 3. Book 4 takes place on the Mountain of Ambition which is predominately an allegory for the vices of courtly life. In Book 5, Architrenius visits the nearby Hill of Presumption where he observes pride and avarice among the clergy and the court. He finally arrives at Nature’s kingdom at the start of Book 6. In this distant land of eternal spring, counterpart to Virgil’s Elysium and Alan’s heavenly kingdom, Architrenius first discusses virtue and vice with a parade of famous philosophers from antiquity. At last near the end of Book 8, Architrenius is granted an audience with Nature who explains the workings of the universe and ultimately marries Architrenius to Moderation. The last part of Book 9 describes this marriage. John of Hauville’s goddess Nature is the creator of man and therefore a close parallel to the allegorized Anchises, creator of Aeneas. Thus, Nature is cast in the role occupied by God in allegorizations of the Aeneid and Alan of Lille’s epic.

The essential similarity to allegorizations of the sixth book of the Aeneid is clear: Architrenius examines various vices, and this reflection ultimately leads him to contemplate the creator. However, the exact structural relationship is more fluid than that of the Anticlaudianus. In particular, the placement of Architrenius’ studies in Paris seems slightly out of place. Paris, described by John as the regia Apollonis, would seem at first to correspond well to the attainment of the seven liberal arts (Virgil’s temple of Apollo)
and to the acquisition of philosophy (Virgil’s golden bough). Based on the position of the temple of Apollo at the very beginning of *Aeneid* 6, one would expect Architrenius to begin his philosophical journey by studying in Paris before encountering any vices such as lust and gluttony. After all, Fulgentius and Bernard argue that one cannot begin the contemplative descent until one has first learned the basics of philosophy.

One could perhaps counter that John intended only Books 3-9 of his poem to equate to *Aeneid* 6. In such a reading, the second half of Book 1 and most of Book 2 would equate roughly to Books 4 and 5 of the allegorized *Aeneid*. However, Paris itself is not just a place where Architrenius learns the seven liberal arts; it is also a home to both vice and virtue. Indeed, only a quarter of the content of Book 3, at most, is devoted to showing Architrenius’ studies. Most of the book is spent lamenting the poor lot of scholars while criticizing bad scholars and ignorant patrons. Thus, even the perspective in Book 3 is very much in line with the philosophic descent announced in Book 1 of the *Architrenius*.

A less problematic explanation might be that the contemplative descent begins in Book 1, as the experienced and well-educated Architrenius reflects on his earlier life. Indeed, the prologue usually accompanying the text of the Architrenius begins by saying that “a certain Architrenius, when he had reached full adulthood, gathered together all of his past actions with the pen of recollection.” I would argue that the allegory itself begins when Architrenius’ past vices are laid out in the form of a landscape journey. Fulgentius and Bernard maintain that the *descensus* represents Aeneas’ reflection on his past encounters with vice. Bernard best sums it up:

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148 “Architrenius quidam, cum ad annos virilis roboris devenisset, recordationis stilo retroacti temporis actus colliget universos.” (Schmidt, *Architrenius*, 118)
**ECCE:** Nota quod Enee facto descensu ad inferos fata omnia que passus et socii defuncti ante occulos reducuntur: Dum rationabilis spiritus ad caduca contemplanda inclinatur, mortificata primarum et atum vitia imaginaria representatione quodammodo retractantur, ut “ecce Palinuri se umbra agebat” dum erroris preteriti imaginatio redibat. Sic umbra Didonis et Deiphebi occurrit dum retractio transacte libidinis et terroris redit.\(^{149}\)

**BEHOLD:** Note that after Aeneas’ descent to the underworld, all of the fates which he endured and his dead companions pass again before his eyes, for while the rational spirit is inclined to contemplate transitory things, the conquered vices of youth return, in a manner of speaking, through imaginary representations. Thus, “Behold, the shade of Palinurus came forward” while the recollection of past deviance came to mind. Similarly, the shades of Dido and Deiphobus appear while the remembrance of past pleasure and terror returns.

John of Salisbury similarly characterizes the allegory of *Aeneid* 6 in his brief summary at *Policraticus* 8.24 as “quendam descensum ad inferos, ubi quasi rebus inutiliter gestis totius anteactae uitae recognoscat errores” (a sort of descent to the underworld, where he reviews the errors/wanderings of his whole earlier life as if his deeds accomplished nothing). John of Salisbury makes an explicit link between the contemplation of previous vices and Aeneas’ own physical journeys across the surface of the earth through the carefully chosen term “errores.” That is to say, Aeneas’ contemplation of vice becomes a landscape journey through his previous vices—just the sort of journey that Architrenius makes.

My solution hinges somewhat on the identity of Architrenius. Obviously, “Architrenius,” is not really a name but a descriptor, “the arch-weeper.” The medieval prologue to the *Architrenius* explains that he is called “Architrenius” because he is always lamenting vice.\(^ {150}\) I suggest that “Architrenius” is just a thinly veiled epithet for “Johannes,” the author. To my knowledge, this idea has not been put forward by any

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150 “Architrenius iste ab eventu sic dictus est; nam locis fere singulis peregrinacionis sue mundo compatitur sub viciorum fluctibus naufraganti, et lamentis animum et lacrimis oculum impluit et immergit.” (Schmidt, *Architrenius*, 118-9)
modern scholar, but Schmidt records an *explicit*, in a manuscript dated 1396, which proves that at least one medieval reader of the *Architrenius* understood the hero to be the same as the author. From Schmidt’s parenthetical exclamation mark, it seems that he was surprised by this medieval reader’s theory, but there is strong evidence even within the poem for this identification. At two points during the *Architrenius*, characters mention a “Johannes” who seems to be identical to the protagonist, Architrenius. What is more, John’s own self-portrait in *Architrenius* 1.85-94 identifies himself as a young and impoverished scholar indistinguishable from his main character.

John’s/Architrenius’ reflection, described as an allegorical journey, follows the natural order of the life of a twelfth-century scholar from his first encounter with the more primal vices of lust and gluttony in Book 2, to his advanced studies in Paris in Book 3, to his time at court in Books 4 and 5, and to the beginning of his philosophical maturity in Books 6-9. The order of the *Architrenius* could be read as a logical revision of the allegorized *descensus* of Aeneas. Unlike Fulgentius’ and Bernard’s Everyman, who had only just completed his formal education, John/Architrenius had had more life experience before beginning his metaphysical descent. This might help to explain why John minimizes the educational elements of the allegory which so interest Alan. No allegorizations of the first part of Virgil’s Book 6, the temple of Apollo and the golden

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151 “*Johannis Sanvilensis Architrenius explicit qui interpretatur princeps lamentationum et est idem magister qui speram materialem composuit.*” Quoted by Schmidt, *Architrenius*, 97 (manuscript N in Schmidt’s apparatus).

152 *Architrenius* 6.191 and 7.219.

153 “...nodosa meretur / Nondum ruga coli, nondum veneranda senecte / Albet olore coma, non sum cui serviat auris / Turba vel argenti, cui rerum copia mundo / Plaudat adulanti, cui Serum purpura vaatis / Attitulet nomen, cuius facunda smaragdus / Disputet in digitis vulgique assibilet aures / Attonitas gemmis; liber est, non libra, Johannes / Quod canit et Cirre modicum de fonte propinat, / Hiisque magis Phebus ciatis quam Bachus inundat.”
bough, appear at the beginning of the narrative; Architrenius embarks directly upon the 
descensus itself and encounters his education at its proper place in the history of his life.

This reordering is important because, in effect, John rewrites the ages of man 
allegory of the whole Aeneid into the descensus allegory. Not only does John expand 
Book 6 of the allegorized Aeneid into an entire epic, but he fits the major allegorized 
structure of the whole Aeneid back into it. Recall that the Architrenius corresponds to 
Fulentius’ most generalized outline of the allegorized Aeneid as Bildungsroman quite 
well. This is why. Whereas Virgil has Aeneas encounter shades in the underworld in 
reverse chronological order of his last encounter with them in life (e.g. Palinurus, then 
Dido, then Deiphobus), John adopts the natural chronological order of Fulgentius’ total 
allegorization of the Aeneid.

John’s primary focus throughout his epic is examination of vice and virtue. Indeed, John’s main narrative purpose closely corresponds to Fulgentius’ interpretation 
of the descensus, as explained by the ghost of Virgil:

‘Ergo ut antea diximus ramum aureum, id est doctrinam adeptus inferos 
ingreditur et secreta scientiae perscrutatur. Sed in vestibuio inferorum luctus, 
morbos, bella, discordiam, senectum atque egestatem uidet. Quando ergo omnia 
in animo aut corde uiri considerantur nisi percepto doctrinae studio et altiori 
scientia penetrata caligine; tunc enim agnoscitur et inertis somnii uentosa delusio 
et senectutis propinquior ad mortem uicipia et bellum, auaritiae seminarium, et 
morbis, indigestionis et inmodesiae soboles, et scandala, ebrietatis germina, et 
famem, pigritiae et torporis uernaculum. Ergo discendit ad inferos atque illic et 
poenas malorum et honorum retributiones et amantium considerans tristes errores 
oculatus inspiciit testis.’\textsuperscript{154}

‘Therefore as we said before, having obtained the golden bough, i.e. scholarship, 
he enters the underworld and investigates the secrets of knowledge. But in the 
vestibule of the underworld he sees sorrows, diseases, wars, discord, old age, and 
need. For when all things are considered in a man’s mind and heart, and if he goes 
on to penetrate the darkness with deeper knowledge after the study of scholarship 
has been achieved, then he comes to understand the empty delusion of an idle

\textsuperscript{154} Fulgentius, Continentia, 98.
dream, and the nearness of old age to death, and war, the nursling of avarice, and disease, the result of indigestion and immodesty, and scandal, the result of drunkenness, and hunger, the slave of idleness and sloth. Therefore, he descends to the underworld and there he views as an eyewitness the penalties of the wicked and rewards of the good and considers the sad errors of lovers.’

Once he sets out on his quest, Architrenius first encounters the palace of Venus, an event which evokes Dido and the allegorical content of the Aeneid’s fourth book. Here the narrator singles out one of Venus’ women who is especially perfect, describing her head and neck in elaborate detail. In the very first lines of Book 2 of the Architrenius, the narrator pauses to consider Architrenius’ reaction to this sight:

\[
\begin{align*}
Uritur et cecum fovet Architrenius ignem, \\
Spectandoque faces acuit, vultuque ruentes \\
Inserit intuitus; facies presencior estum \\
Asperat et tandem visu sibi pestifer omni \\
Mollibus ad partes alias divertit ocellis. \\
\end{align*}
\]

155

Architrenius is set alight and nourishes an unseen fire, and he increases the flames by watching, and he implants her ruinous image in his eyes. But the nearness of her face intensifies the heat and at last it becomes noxious to his whole sight and he diverts his susceptible eyes to other parts.

These first five lines are reminiscent of the first five lines of Aeneid 4 where Dido’s own growing love for Aeneas is described.156

\[
\begin{align*}
At regina gravi iamdudum saucia cura \\
volumn alit venis et caeco carpitur igni. \\
Multa viri virtus animo multusque recursat \\
genitis honos, haerent fixi pectore voltus \\
verbaque nec placidam membris dat cura quietem. \\
\end{align*}
\]

157

But the queen, long since wounded by grave love, nourishes the wound in her veins and is seized by an unseen fire. The great virtue of the man and the great

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155 Architrenius 2.1-5.
156 There are also reminiscences of Ovid (Met. 8.516, Her. 4.20, Met. 1.496) here, as noted by Schmidt.
157 Aeneid 4.1-5.
honor of his race keep going through her mind. His face and words adhere fixed in her heart nor does her love allow peaceful slumber to her limbs.

The allusion becomes even stronger when Servius’ notes on the opening lines of Book 4 are considered. First, Servius claims that the word *iamdudum* can mean *nimium*, indicating the strength of her love rather than the length of time it has been growing. Servius glosses *cura* to mean love which burns the heart (“*ab eo quod cor urat*”)

According to Servius, Virgil uses the expression “in her veins” because love runs through the veins like poison. Moreover, Servius explains that “*caeco igni*” means that the fire of love becomes stronger when it is covered. This certainly corresponds to John’s use of “*caecum ignem*,” which he follows with “he increases the flames by watching” (spectandoque faces acuit). Finally, when Dido claims to be admiring Aeneas’ virtues and nobility, she is really just moved by his physical beauty (*simulat enim se virtutem mirari, cuius pulchritudine commovetur*). The net effect of these comments transforms Dido into a gawker whose constant staring at Aeneas’ body has poisoned her, just as Architrenius is being poisoned by his gazing on the ideal woman (*visu...pestifer*).

Of course, Virgil’s words originally pertained to Dido’s growing love, not Aeneas’, but this transposition should not be surprising. Even though Virgil narrates much of Book 4 from the perspective of Dido, the commentary tradition tends to read Book 4 as about Aeneas’ succumbing to lust. Dido herself is merely to be interpreted as a manifestation of Aeneas’ *libido*. Architrenius is again placed in the role of Virgil’s Dido when he shifts his view from the ideal woman to Cupid. Just as Dido has been

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158 “VENIS quia per venas amor currit sicut venenum.”
159 “CAECO CARPITUR IGI agit Vergilius, ut inventas frangat declamationes, ut hoc loco rem dixit sine declamatione: unde Ovidius “quoque magis tegitur, tanto magis aestuat ignis”. ’caeco’ ergo ’igni’ possimus ut validiore accipere, cuius natura est, ut compressus magis convalescat.”
captivated by Cupid, disguised as Aeneas’ son Ascanius in the first book of the Aeneid, Architrenius is shot by one of Cupid’s arrows while he gazes at the god.\textsuperscript{161} The ensuing lengthy ecphrasis of Cupid’s body compliments the previous ecphrasis of the ideal woman; here the ideal of male beauty entices Architrenius’ vision.

As we have seen, John has precedent for incorporating material from Books 1 and 4 of the Aeneid into the philosophical descent. Both Fulgentius and Bernard point out that Virgil himself did it, since Aeneas meets Dido in the underworld. Bernard’s expansion of Fulgentius’ short interpretation of Aeneas’ encounter with Dido is especially similar to Architrenius’ encounter with the palace of Venus:

\textit{INTER QUAS: Dum hec varia libidinis genera contemplatur, imaginatio preterite libidinis sue cernitur et hoc est quod inter hec umbra Didonis esse videtur... CAUSA: Nisi enim libidinem relinqueret, ipsa non demigraret. Quamdiu enim libidini assentimus tamdiu et vigorem damus. Unde dicitur: “Accede ad ignem et plus calesces.”}\textsuperscript{162} \textit{INVITUS: Nisi enim secum ipse pugnet, numquam libidinem linquit... TANDEM: Postquam diu imaginaria retratando contemplatus est Eneas Didonom, labitur ab eius memoria... CASU: demigratione PERCUSSUS: permutus. Nequit enim tante perfectionis esse quin aliquando moveatur si recedat quo gaudebat. Unde subdit PROSEQUITUR ET CETERA, id est revertitur ad cogitationem imaginariam.}\textsuperscript{163}

\textit{AMONG WHOM: while Aeneas contemplates the various types of lust, he sees his past lust in his imagination, and thus he sees the shade of Dido among these. ... CAUSE: If he did not abandon his lust, it would not go away, for however long we assent to lust, we give it strength. For this reason it is said, “Go near the fire, and you will grow hotter.” UNWILLINGLY: If he does not fight with himself, he will never abandon his lust. ... AT LAST: After Aeneas has contemplated Dido for a while by recalling her in his imagination, she slips from his memory... SHAKEN: moved BY HER MISFORTUNE: death. For he is not capable of such perfection that he is not moved when what pleased him goes away. For this reason, he added, HE GOES ON, etc., i.e. he returns to contemplation in his imagination.}

\textsuperscript{161} Compare Architrenius 2.71-94 to Aeneid 1.707-22.
\textsuperscript{162} Terence, The Eunuch 85.
\textsuperscript{163} Bernard, Commentary on the Aeneid, 95-7 (ad Aeneid 6.450-76).
Similarly, after contemplating the ideal woman and Cupid, Architrenius, although titillated by their beauty, at last remembers his mission (*cepti memor*) and continues on his way.\(^{164}\)

Next, Architrenius observes gluttony, a vice with no strong parallel in allegorical interpretations of the *Aeneid*; however, gluttony is often closely linked to lust. Bernard even blames Aeneas’ copious feasting at Dido’s court for his strong libido in Book 4.\(^{165}\)

At the end of Book 2, Architrenius suddenly arrives at the schools of Paris where he learns the seven liberal arts. Paris is introduced as the home of Apollo in terms similar to the allegorized temple of Apollo at the beginning of the sixth book of the *Aeneid*.

*Exoritur tandem locus: altera regia Phebi,*
*Parisius, Cirrea viris, Crisea metallis,*
*Greca libris, Inda studiis, Romana poetis,*
*Attica philosophis...*\(^{166}\)

At last, a place appears before him: Paris, a second palace of Phoebus, Cirrhean in men, Chrysaean in metals, Greek in libraries, Indian in learning, Roman in poets, Attic in philosophers...

Given John’s description of Paris and Alan’s lengthy treatments of similar subjects, one might have expected that a long discourse on the seven liberal arts would have followed in the next book; however, the opening lines of Book 3 set the tone for the whole book:

*At diis paulo minor plebes Phebea secundos*
*Vix metit eventus, quicquid serat, undique tortis*
*Vapulat adversis, gemit Architrenius agmen*
*Palladis a miseris vix respirare...*\(^{167}\)

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\(^{164}\) *Architrenius* 2.165.

\(^{165}\) Bernard, *Commentary on the Aeneid*, 24. Dante observes the same order in his *Inferno*: Lust is the first level, Gluttony the second.

\(^{166}\) *Architrenius* 2.481-6.

\(^{167}\) *Architrenius* 3.1-4.
But this Apollonian people, only a little inferior to gods, rarely reap favorable outcomes, for whatever they sow is dissipated everywhere by adverse winds. Architrenius mourns that Athena’s regiment scarcely breathes because of its miseries...

Although all of Book 3 takes place in Paris and is exclusively concerned with Architrenius’ experiences as a student, only lines 136-86 report what he actually studies. This is the only place before Architrenius’ conversation with Nature in the second half of Book 8, where John lists the kinds of facts from the trivium and quadrivium elaborated by Alan in the making of the chariot in Books 2-4 of the Anticlaudianus. As is often the case throughout both epics, John is more concerned with morality and human interactions while Alan is more concerned with facts.

Book 4 describes the Mountain of Ambition, while Book 5 describes the related vices of Presumption and Pride. From John’s examples of each of these vices, it is clear that all three could easily be classified as various types of pride. For instance, the battle of the giants against Jupiter, a commonplace for pride, is cited as an exemplum in all three sections. For John, ambition is specifically pride at court, since Ambition lives on a mountain topped with a royal court. Her sisters Presumption and Pride live on a nearby hill. These other two vices are primarily assigned to members of religious orders, the final exemplum of Pride being the fall of Lucifer.

John suggests several links between the Mountain of Ambition and Virgil’s Tartarus in his description of the royal palace at the mountain’s pinnacle.

Tollitur alta solo regum domus aula deumque
Sedibus audaci se vertice mandat; at umbras
Fundamenta Premunt, regnisque silentibus instat
Ultima Tartareos equans structura recessus.
Radices operis, ne verticis ardua preceps
Sarcina subsidat, Stygias demittit ad undas.
Tartareus iam civis homo, Stygis incola, mortis
Non expectato laqueo venit, illa supremo  
Vis rapitur fato: mavult precedere liber  
Fatorum quam iussa sequi, iam tramite ceco  
Ad Styga rumpit iter, vivus venisse laborat,  
Quo defunctus eat. descendit ad infima mundi  
Centro fixa domus medioque innititur axi. 168

A lofty palace, a home of kings, is elevated from the ground and commends itself to the home of the gods through its bold height, but its foundations extend to the underworld, and its lowest supports encroach upon the silent kingdoms equaling even the depths of Tartarus. To prevent the lofty weight of the tower from crashing down, the roots of the structure descend to the waters of the Styx. Man comes to this realm through the unexpected snare of death when his life has been taken away by his final fate, but even while living, he is a citizen of Tartarus and an inhabitant of the Stygian realms: He prefers to go through life free rather than follow the commands of the fates, and yet even now he blindly forces passage to the Styx and labors to come alive to the very place where he will go when dead. This palace descends to the innermost part of the world where it is rooted to the earth’s core and so rests upon the middle of the earth’s axis.

Fulentius explains that Virgil intended all of Tartarus to represent pride. 169 Virgil himself had described Tartarus as defended by “an iron tower extending high into the air” (stat ferrea turris ad auras). 170 According to Fulgentius, this tower symbolizes pride because pride is rigid and unbendable. 171 The tower at the top of the Mountain of Ambition similarly stretches far into the air. Moreover, Virgil himself characterizes Tartarus thus:

...Tum Tartarus ipse  
bis patet in precipes tantum tenditque sub umbras,  
quantus ad aetherium caeli suspectus Olympum. 172

Then Tartarus itself lies open downward and stretches down to the shades twice as far as the height of the sky to ethereal Olympus.

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168 Architrenius 4.158-70.  
169 “uide quam euidentem superbiae atque tumoris imaginem designauimus.” (Continentia, 100)  
170 Aeneid 6.554.  
171 “ferrea’ uero ‘turris ad auras’ elatio erecta et incuruabilis dicitur.” (Continentia, 100)  
In lines 158-61, John describes the tower which crowns the peak of the mountain of ambition as rising as high as Olympus but with foundations stretching down into Tartarus. John’s description seems to build on Virgil’s description of Tartarus, inverting it to better fit the allegory. Fulgentius, in fact, quotes these very lines from the *Aeneid*, interpreting them to mean “the full reward of pride, for the punishment for pride is casting down...therefore whoever raises himself up in pride is struck down twice as far.”

Note also the Servian theme that Tartarus exists for us already on earth whenever we pursue vice. Architrenius, like Servius’ Aeneas, does not have to physically descend to find Tartarus. Architrenius can visit it in the form of a palace stretching into the heavens.

Furthermore, John characterized Ambition, who inhabits the tower, as the greatest of the harpies:

\[
\begin{align*}
Hinc & \text{ hominum tortrix, Allecto maior, Erinis} \\
& \text{Summa, potestates urget violencius, ardor} \\
& \text{Arduus, Ambicio, soliteque accendere corda} \\
& \text{Nobiliora faces, indignatusque caminus} \\
& \text{Degeneres animos timidosque invadere votis,} \\
& \text{Integrum imperium summamque capessere mundi} \\
& \text{Et diis esse pares supernumque instare favori,} \\
& \text{Fortuneque sequi tollentis in ethera dextram.}
\end{align*}
\]

From here that torturer of men, a greater Allecto, the most powerful of the Furies, Ambition, that laborious passion, more violently urges her powers and her torches accustomed to enflame the more noble hearts, and her furnace did not deem it to be worth invading common and timid spirits with her gifts, but rather to have captured all power and the whole world and to be equal with the gods and to pursue the favor of divinities, and to follow Fortune’s right hand raising her into the heavens.

173 “*nam illud quod diximus: Tartarus ipse bis patet in praecipit tantum*, considera plenum superbiae meritum; poena enim superbiae deiectio est; quanto enim elatus contemnit, tanto sprebit sitatis dejectione torquetur; ergo exaltatus quis in superbia duplum eliditur.” (* Continentia*, 100)
This brings to mind the fury Tisiphone who sits on the top of the tower guarding Virgil’s Tartarus.\textsuperscript{175} According to Fulgentius, Aeneas “is terrified by the noise, for the pious man flees and fears the call of pride and the penalties of wickedness.”\textsuperscript{176} After viewing the Mountain of Ambition, Architrenius voices the same contempt for earthly vice and the same fear of future judgment before fleeing the mountain.

\begin{quote}
\textit{Crastina celamur, hodiernis utimur, iram
Judicis expectat incauti audacia mundi,
Conscia delicti; suadet presencia clausos
Expositura metus series occulta futuri.}\textsuperscript{177}
\end{quote}

“We hide from tomorrow’s worries and consider only today’s business. Though aware of its sins, the audacity of an incautious world awaits the wrath of judgment. The present commends itself to us, but the unseen sequence of the future is about to expose our hidden fears.”

In the second half of Book 5, Architrenius encounters the last vices of his journey: Covetousness and her offspring, Greed. The final extended episode of this section is Architrenius’ observation of a battle between the forces of Generosity and Greed as well as a lengthy discussion with Sir Gawain (5.343-6.12). This battle is the only psychomachia in the \textit{Architrenius}. While Architrenius is observing the battle being fought by such characters as Terror, Discord, and Audacity, Sir Gawain suddenly appears in front of Architrenius, and they introduce themselves to each other. Gawain explains that, together with king Arthur, he is battling the forces of greed led by the Vatican.

Within the narrative of philosophic descent, this whole episode owes many debts to Aeneas’ encounter in the underworld with Greek and Trojan soldiers and to his discussion with Deiphobus. In both \textit{Aeneid} 6 and the \textit{Architrenius}, this is the only place

\textsuperscript{175} \textit{Aeneid} 6.555-6. Cf. also \textit{Aeneid} 6.570-2.
\textsuperscript{176} “Denique Aeneas hoc strepitu terretur, uir enim pius superbiae uoces et malorum poenas effugit ac pauescit.” (\textit{Continentia}, 101)
\textsuperscript{177} \textit{Architrenius} 4.210-3.
where the protagonist comes across armed soldiers from two opposing sides. Those
fighting on the side of good, as seen from the perspective of the protagonist, are in both
cases, remarkably, Trojans. Gawain introduces himself saying:

“Tros genus et gentem tribuit Lodonesia, nutrix
Prebuit irriguam morum Cornubia mammam,
Post odium fati Frigiis inventa smaragdus.”

“My race is Trojan and my clan hails from the province of Lothian. Cornwall, that
emerald discovered by the Trojans after the animosity of fate, was my nurse; she
offered me her breast, overflowing in morals.”

Besides their Trojan ancestry, Gawain and his companions are, from the perspective of
the author, dead historical figures and compatriots of himself and his patron. Thus,
Architrenius, a living scholar recently graduated from the Parisian schools of the late
twelfth-century, is witnessing the deeds of long-dead soldiers and conversing with one of
their number. Even the description of Gawain, “covered in dust” (pulverulentus) has
something in common with a ghost, which like the horribly mutilated ghost of
Deiphobus, presents the same visage as it had in life.

Gawain’s recitation of history is quite in keeping with the historical content of
Deiphobus’ speech, which relates the final hours of the Trojan war as Aeneas was leaving
the city. Gawain begins his tale by referencing the fall of Troy and explaining how
Corineus, the “terror of Achilles and the Atrides” (Achillis / Atrideque timor), went on to
choose Cornwall to be “the all-producing nursling of Troy” (alumpnam omnigenam
Troie). Gawain’s story not only appropriates the Aeneid’s epic theme, but even

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178 As A.G. Rigg notes, Lodonesia is a province in eastern Scotland near the English border, not the city of London as Winthrop Wetherbee translates it on p. 137 of his translation. See Rigg’s review of Wetherbee’s translation in Speculum 72 (1997), 497-8.
179 Architrenius 5.384-6.
180 Compare Architrenius 5.379-80 to Aeneid 6.494-9. When the ghost of Hector appears to Aeneas in Book 2, he is similarly described as “aterque cruento / pulvere” (Aeneid 2.272-3).
181 Architrenius 5.387-90.
encourages the reader to relate Corineus’ exploits to those of Aeneas. Gawain describes Corineus’ battles in Italy and ultimately northern Europe (*Architrenius* 5.394-429) accompanied by his trusted friend Brutus, a second Achates (*Bruto comitatus Achate*). In reference to the noble blood line of the Cornish, Gawain further mentions both Iulus and Anchises, carefully omitting any direct mention of Aeneas. Just as Deiphobus’ speech contains Iliadic resonances, so Gawain’s speech refers to the *Aeneid*.

At the beginning of Book 6, Architrenius arrives at an earthly Elysium. Just as Alan chooses to have Prudence enter heaven in Book 6, so John has his hero enter the far-off isle of Thylos, where spring is eternal and beauty never fades (*numquam labitur ... venustas*). John’s decision to set his Elysium on the isle of Thylos may have been influenced by Servius, for Servius twice notes that philosophers, aware that there is in fact no underworld, locate the real Elysium on earth in the “isles of the blessed” (*insulae fortunatae*). What is more, Servius argues that Virgil directly alludes to this interpretation. The environment is also similar to the “happy places and pleasant lawn” (*locos laetos et amoena virecta*) which meet Aeneas’ eyes when he enters Elysium. In any case, the fact that both Alan and John chose the sixth book of their epics for this important moment cannot be coincidental. Only Virgil, out of all of the *auctores* available to Alan and John, prominently sets a scene in Elysium/heaven in the sixth book.

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182 *Architrenius* 5.407.
183 *Architrenius* 5.430-3: “Nobilis a Frigie tanto Cornubia gentem / Sanguine derivat, successio cuius Iulum / in generis partem recipit, complexa Pelasgam / Anchiseque domum.”
185 Servius ad *Aeneid* 5.735 and 6.640.
186 Servius ad *Aeneid* 6.638: “adludit autem ad insulas fortunatas: nam et sequenti hoc indicat versu.”
187 *Aeneid* 6.638.
188 Of course, Lucan chose his sixth book for the necromancy scene, but there is no sign of heaven here, only hell. Lucan was almost certainly indebted to a tradition of reading Virgil’s sixth book, described by
Upon his entry, Aeneas is quickly surrounded (circumfusos) by a crowd of famous individuals from the past, prominent among whom are Orpheus and Museus.\textsuperscript{189} We might assume today that Virgil singled out these men for their fame as poets, but Servius identifies each as a theologian (theologus).\textsuperscript{190} Servius even goes so far as to claim that Virgil intended the character of Museus as an allusion to Plato.\textsuperscript{191} In line with the main thrust of his commentary on Book 6, Servius seems to be shifting the importance of these characters away from poetry and toward philosophy. If we follow Servius in seeing Aeneas as surrounded by famous philosophers from antiquity, then a remarkable parallel with the \textit{Architrenius} emerges, for as soon as Architrenius enters Thylos, he is suddenly surrounded by a circle of ancient philosophers among whom are Socrates, Plato, Cicero, Seneca, and Boethius to name only a few:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Hic, ubi planicies patulum lunatur in orbem,}
\textit{Philosophos serie iunctos circumspicit. (Architrenius 6.26-7)}
\end{quote}

Here, where the plain is curved into a wide ring, he sees philosophers joined together in a row.

It would be typical of John’s learned wordplay if he used the words “\textit{lunatur in orbem}” in reference to Servius’ assertion that ancient theologians located Elysium in the lunar sphere, in contrast to philosophers who located it somewhere on earth in the isles of the blessed.

In the \textit{Aeneid}, Musaeus leads Aeneas to his father Anchises, just as the crowd of philosophers in the \textit{Architrenius} ultimately parts its ranks to reveal Nature on her throne.

\begin{flushright}
Servius, whereby Aeneas was actually practicing sciomancy, not descending to the underworld himself. See Servius ad \textit{Aeneid} 6.149 and discussion in Wilson-Okamura, \textit{Virgil in the Renaissance}, 158-60.\textsuperscript{189} \textit{Aeneid} 6.666.\textsuperscript{190} Servius ad \textit{Aeneid} 6.645, 6.667, 6.669.\textsuperscript{191} Servius ad \textit{Aeneid} 6.668: “\textit{UMERIS EXTANTEM quasi philosophum, ac si diceret Platonem: adludit enim poetæ, namque Plato ab umerorum dictus est latitudine. athleta enim fuit, qui post omnium victoriam se philosophiae dedit.”}
\end{flushright}
However, before Nature can be revealed to Architrenius, the philosophers discourse on various topics of moral philosophy (Books 6 and 7). The purpose of their arguments is to calm Architrenius’ mind in preparation for his meeting with Nature. He begins fiercely angry at Nature, but by midway through Book 7 he is merely sad, interrupting the philosophers with his sobbing and lamentation. The philosophers further calm him down and are convincing enough that Architrenius cries tears of happiness rather than anger when he finally sees Nature. Thus, Books 6, 7, and 8 take the form of a consolation in clear imitation of Boethius’ *Consolatio*, itself, according to Bernard Silvestris, indebted to *Aeneid* 6.

At last, when Nature appears before Architrenius, she immediately begins a lengthy speech on the structure and motion of the universe. Her discourse starts half way through Book 8 and ends part way into Book 9. The parallel to the *Aeneid* is obvious, for as soon as Aeneas has exchanged greetings with his father, Anchises explains to Aeneas the nature of the universe and of the soul (6.713-51). After this, Anchises shows Aeneas his future descendents through marriage with Lavinia. In the *Architrenius*, Nature does better than simply show Architrenius that his future marriage will be a source of future happiness. Instead, Nature herself marries Architrenius to his destined bride, Moderation, the end goal of his journey. Like Aeneas, Architrenius does not know about his marital destiny until he has heard it from his creator. One might even see some connection between Fulgentius’ characterization of Lavinia as the “path of toil” and the virtue of Moderation. To John of Salisbury, Aeneas makes his *descensus ad inferos* in order that “*discat alia uia incedendum esse his qui uolunt ad dulces Lauiniaec complexus et fatale regnum Italiae quasi ad quandam arcem beatitudinis peruenire***” (he may learn the paths
that must be taken by those who wish to attain the sweet embraces of Lavinia and the fated kingdom of Italy, allegorically the citadel of blessedness).\textsuperscript{192}

The grand wedding which fills out the last couple of hundred lines of the \textit{Architrenius} is an obvious gesture to the \textit{De nuptiis} of Martianus Capella, but it also ends the epic the way readers of Virgil have often felt that the \textit{Aeneid} should have ended: with the marriage between Aeneas and Lavinia which had been foretold by Jupiter, Anchises, and the dying breath of Turnus. The \textit{Roman d'Enéas}, which probably slightly predates the \textit{Architrenius}, actively changes Virgil’s ending by including Aeneas’ marriage to Lavinia. In this respect, both the Architrenius and the \textit{Roman d'Enéas} anticipate Maffeo Vegio’s thirteenth book of the \textit{Aeneid}.\textsuperscript{193}

\section*{Interpreting the structure of the \textit{Architrenius}}

Many modern scholars who have written about the \textit{Architrenius} have seen a major structural problem—specifically chaos. Schmidt considers the poem to be a heterogeneous mix of episodes only united by the thread of the protagonist’s journey.\textsuperscript{194} Similarly, Jung and Wetherbee describe the \textit{Architrenius} as largely structureless with book divisions placed without regard to content, in order to divide the poem into nine books; according to Jung, John is imitating Martianus Capella’s \textit{De nuptiis}, but in

\textsuperscript{192} \textit{Policraticus} 8.24.
Wetherbee’s opinion, he is copying the *Anticlaudianus*. It is true that, in comparison to the rigidly structured *Anticlaudianus*, John’s book divisions appear at first haphazard – on the surface perhaps more akin to the *Metamorphoses* than the *Aeneid*. This is because, like Ovid and sometimes Virgil, John prefers to link the books of his epic together by finishing episodes several lines into a new book. Thus, John almost invariably begins each book with a few lines connecting or finishing the thoughts with which the previous book had ended. The classical precedent is clear (e.g. the beginning of *Aeneid* 7), and Servius himself commends Virgil’s use of this technique at the beginning of Book 5 of the *Aeneid* and again at the beginning of Book 6.

Moreover, as my analysis has shown, the *Architrenius* has a clear narrative structure with episodes largely contained within each book. Whereas Schmidt, Jung, and Wetherbee see an incoherent mass of unrelated episodes, I have described a single narrative which progresses logically through distinct episodes to the end. The essential plot arc of Fulgentius’ and Bernard’s allegory of philosophical descent in *Aeneid* Book 6 could as easily describe the basic plot of the *Architrenius*: contemplation of vice in order, ultimately, to come to know creation and the creator. Just as Aeneas is said by the allegorists to have been reflecting upon his past vices in the underworld, so Architrenius/John relives his life in his allegorical wanderings. The organization of the first five books follows the natural order of the life of a twelfth-century cleric from his first encounter with sexual desire (Book 2), to his schooling (Book 3), to his time at court (Book 4), and finally to his time spent with the clergy (Book 5). Unlike the allegorized

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196 Servius approves of Virgil’s decision to have the first seven lines of book 5 continue to discuss the fate of Dido: “INTEREA dum fleetur aut sepelitur Dido: et hoc sermones librum, ut solet, superioribus iunxit.” Then, at the beginning of Book 6, he writes, “sane scienendum, licet primos duos versus Probus et alii in quinti reliquient fine, prudenter ad initium sexti esse translatos; nam et coniunctio poematis melior est.”
Aeneas, however, Architrenius/John relives his past in its natural chronological order. Books 6, 7, and 8 contain a consolation of philosophy as Roman and Greek philosophers first preach about vice (Book 6 to half way through Book 7) and then extol virtue (half way through Book 7 to half way through Book 8) in order to prepare Architrenius/John for his audience with the creator—the philosophical ascent. The goddess Nature, a second Anchises, then unveils the secrets of the universe and marries Architrenius/John to Moderation, his Lavinia and the ultimate goal of life. Thus, assuming the allegorized Aeneid as a model can at once highlight the purpose and structure inherent in this otherwise chaotically interpreted text.

I argued in my introduction that although phrases and themes common to both the Anticlaudianus and the Architrenius suggest influence, it is impossible, given the Anticlaudianus’ and Architrenius’ close physical and temporal proximity, to know for certain the direction of this influence. As one might expect of competing poets who are drawing upon the same tradition, Alan and John emphasize different aspects of the Virgilian allegorical tradition. John revels in his contemplation of the vices, while Alan largely omits this crucial portion of the allegorical Aeneid, instead emphasizing that vice is something to be defeated in battle, not contemplated. In fact, Alan seems to be suggesting that it is possible to ascend to an understanding of the divine without the preliminary contemplation of vice which the traditional allegoresis of the Aeneid dictates. Alan’s bow to the tradition by discussing the pride of Lucifer and the fallen angels at the start of Prudence’s journey is a meager showing compared to John’s lamentations, but at the same time John’s paradise in which philosophers discuss how to avoid vice lacks the loftiness of Alan’s extensive description of the heavens. The net result is that the
Anticlaudianus and Architrenius, paired together, cover most of the philosophical ground contained in Dante’s Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso. John focuses on hell and purgatory; Alan on heaven.

If the modern reception of the Anticlaudianus and Architrenius is any indication, then the “complete” Aeneid of the late twelfth century has become so foreign as to be entirely overlooked as Virgilian at all. By restoring a picture of an Aeneid that is at once literal and allegorical, I hope to expand studies of Virgil’s reception to include a wider range of medieval materials and also to help us better interpret these texts. The Anticlaudianus and Architrenius, and by extension the vast number of vernacular allegories likely inspired by them, have been greatly misinterpreted by a modern readership that is unfamiliar with the Virgilian tradition. It is my hope that the evidence presented above will encourage more scholars to look to the Virgilian tradition, in its own right, as a major influence on medieval allegorical poetry.
Chapter 2: Truth Behind Lies

Historia and Fabula in the Alexandreis and Ylias

The lying poet is, of course, a topos of antiquity as much as of the Middle Ages (it is in no way a strictly Christian conceit), but modern scholarship has tended to overlook precisely how poets were thought to have lied in Latin epic.¹ Many scholars have explored how Latin literary theories of history and fiction relate to medieval romance, but because these studies usually bring together a wide range of Latin sources and apply them to vernacular texts, the distinctive interpretation of Latin epic commentary, when it is mentioned, is often misconstrued or lost.² The Virgilian commentaries reveal that specific instances of lying in the poetic narrative were a major topic of interest—often thought to hold the key to correct interpretation. Below I discuss two distinct ways in which the commentators claimed that Virgil lied: by falsifying history and by introducing divine characters or nature-defying events into the narrative.³ In matters of both historical fiction

¹ I am not aware of any studies specifically devoted to lying in Latin poetry. Curtius does not treat the topos in European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages; for Greek poetry, see Louise Pratt, Lying and Poetry from Homer to Pindar: Falsehood and Deception in Archaic Greek Poetics (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993). Nevertheless, many studies have addressed the pre-modern interest in distinguishing between poetic fiction and truth (see note 2 below).


³ Cf. Isidore, Etymologieae, 8.7.10: “Officium autem poetae in eo est ut ea, quae vere gesta sunt, in alias species obliquis figurationibus cum decore aliquo conversa transducant.” Strictly speaking, of course, we should also include other forms of poetic license such as coinage of new words, grammatical error metri causa, etc., but these two, historical fiction and myth, seem to be foremost in the minds of both the defenders and detractors of ancient and medieval poetry.
and myth, the commentaries generally assume that Virgil intentionally altered the truth, and they often suggest ways, usually via allegory, that a “true” historical perspective may be recuperated from the *Aeneid*.4

One of Servius’ most astute readers in the early twelfth century was an anonymous *Aeneid* commentator, identified by Manitius as Anselm of Laon and more recently associated with Hilary of Orléans.5 Although A. B. Kraebel finds the evidence insufficient to assign this commentary confidently to either Anselm or Hilary, he finds it most likely that the commentary originated in the region of Northern France.6 This anonymous commentary became one of the more important *Aeneid* commentaries for the Middle Ages—although still far less common than Servius.7 The twelfth-century commentary’s *accessus* specifically singles out historical falsehoods and divine characters as Virgil’s primary fictions.


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Est autem carmen hoc heroicum constans ex diuinis humanisque personis, continens uera cum fictis. Nam eneam at italiam uenis manifestum est. Venerem uero cum ioue loquutam, missumue ad didonem mercurium hoc totum constat esse compositum et ficticum. Et ecce secundum capitulum.8

Namely, after the fall of Troy, he reached Italy after many wanderings by ship. And he engaged in wars there against the resisting Rutulians and Latins, but because he wrote to praise Augustus, he appropriately served up certain figments by poetically concealing many historical truths. For Aeneas did not end the war in the slaying of Turnus, as Virgil tells it, but rather perished long before [the end of the war], submerged in the Numicus river. Alluding to this, Juvenal, speaking of Hercules and Aeneas, said, “the one was sent to the heavens by water, the other by fire.” But if he were exclusively following the historical truth, he would seem to be not a poet but a historian. And this is the first section.

This poem is, moreover, heroic insofar as it consists of divine and human characters, containing true things mixed with fictions. For it is true that Aeneas came to Italy, but it is obvious that Venus’ conversation with Jove or Mercury’s being sent to Dido’s court is completely made up and fictitious. And that is the second section.

The commentator says that Virgil wrote in order to praise Augustus, a fact itself mentioned in Servius’ introduction, but he goes farther than Servius in suggesting that it is for this reason alone that Virgil “served up certain figments properly enough by poetically concealing many historical truths.”9 Although Servius never makes so sweeping a claim in his introduction, the medieval commentator’s judgment can be viewed as a logical inference from several of Servius’ later comments, which note instances where Virgil has carefully avoided saying anything to offend Augustus.10 Through his use of the terms “poetice” (after the manner of poets) and “satis

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8 Edited by Baswell in Virgil in Medieval England, 313.
9 Servius famously claims that Virgil’s intention is to imitate Homer and to praise Augustus through his ancestors: “intentio Vergilli haec est, Homerum imitari et Augustum laudare a parentibus; namque est filius Atiae, quae nata est de Iulia, sorore Caesaris, Iulius autem Caesar ab Iulo Aeneae originem ducit, ut confirmat ipse Vergilius a ‘magno demissum nomen Iulo.’”
10 A particularly clear example of this is Servius’ comment on Aeneid 6.841: “MAGNE CATO Censorium dicit, qui scripsit historias, multa etiam bella confectit: nam Uticensem praesente Augusto, contra quem pater eius Caesar et dimicavit et Anticatores scripsit, laudare non poterat.” Certainly, throughout the commentary Servius points out numerous places where Virgil overtly praises Augustus. For examples, see Robert Kaster, “Honor Culture, Praise, and Servius’s Aeneid,” in Reception and the Classics, eds. William Brockliess et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 45-56.
“competenter” (properly enough), it is clear that the medieval commentator counts Virgil’s historical fictions as completely appropriate to epic convention, yet still requiring defense. The medieval commentator’s quip that, if Virgil had followed true history alone, then he would have been a historian, not a poet, has been drawn from Servius’ pronouncement on Lucan and will be discussed later in the section labeled “fabula.”

The examples of Virgil’s ahistoricity cited by the anonymous medieval commentator—Aeneas’ death in the Numicus river and the “true” chronology of the war in Latium—were derived from several of Servius’ notes and will be discussed at length later in this chapter. As we shall see, throughout his commentary, Servius elaborates upon many instances where Virgil violates or plays with the historical truth.

Likewise, the medieval commentator’s second section is a close paraphrase of a passage from Servius—in this case from his introduction:

Qualitas carminis patet; nam est metrum heroicum et actus mixtus, ubi et poeta loquitur et alios inducit loquentes. est autem heroicum quod constat ex divinis humanisque personis, continens vera cum fictis; nam Aeneam ad Italiam venisse manifestum est, Venerem vero locutam cum Jove missum Mercurium constat esse conpositum.

The quality of the poem is manifest: it is a heroic poem and a mixed narrative where sometimes the poet speaks and sometimes he causes others to speak. Moreover, it is heroic because it consists of divine and human characters, containing true things mixed with fictitious things, for it is true that Aeneas came to Italy, but it is obvious that Venus’ conversation with Jove or Mercury’s mission has been made up.

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11 Servius ad Aeneid 1.382.
12 See Servius ad Aeneid 1.259, 4.620, 6.88, 7.150, and 7.797.
13 Quintilian mentions that it was the role of the grammarian to so elaborate on historical matters at Institutio Oratoria 1.8.18: “His accedet enarratio historiarum, diligens quidem illa, non tamen usque ad superuacuum laborem occupata: nam receptas aut certe claris auctoribus memoratas exposuisse satis est.”
14 Servius, introduction to his commentary on the Aeneid (Thilo and Hagen, 4).
Influenced by Servius, Anselm perceives essentially the same two ways that Virgil tells lies. This is true for the commentary tradition as a whole: Virgil lies by describing things that historically never happened and by describing impossible events such as divine characters physically interacting with human characters.

Servius is generally careful to distinguish between these two types of lies.\(^{15}\) He defines his terms in his comment on *Aeneid* 1.235:

\[
\text{et sciendum est, inter fabulam et argumentum, hoc est historiam, hoc interesse, quod fabula est dicta res contra naturam, sive facta sive non facta, ut de Pasiphae, historia est quicquid secundum naturam dicitur, sive factum sive non factum, ut de Phaedra.}
\]

It should be understood that the following is the distinction between myth (*fabula*) and evidence (*argumentum*), i.e. history (*historia*): myth (*fabula*) is something said contrary to nature, whether done or not done, as in what is said about Pasiphae; history (*historia*) is whatever is said in accordance with nature, whether done or not done, as in what is said about Phaedra.

For Servius, *fabulae* are stories contrary to nature (*contra naturam*), whether factual at heart or not, while *historia* includes any plausible stories whether they happened or not. Servius cites the story of Pasiphae as an example of *fabula* presumably because of her unnatural half-bull offspring. Servius later gives a rationalized “historical” account of this story in his comment on *Aeneid* 6.14 in which Taurus is merely the name of Pasiphae’s illicit (but completely human) lover.\(^{16}\) He goes on to explain that when Pasiphae gave birth to twins, they were referred to as the Minotaur because one was the son of Minos and one was the son of Taurus. For Servius, impossible elements in a story make it *fabula* even if a real historical event lies behind the myth. Similarly, Servius classifies Phaedra

\(^{15}\) See the discussion of Servius’ remarkably consistent usage of *historia* and *fabula* in David B. Dietz, “*Historia* in the Commentary of Servius,” *TAPA* 125 (1995): 61-97.

\(^{16}\) Servius first gives the version of the story according to “*fabula*” but then says: “*dicendo autem Vergilius ut fama est ostendit requirendam esse veritatem, nam Taurus notarius Minois fuit, quem Pasiphae amavit, cum quo in domo Daedali concubuit, et quia geminos peperit, unum de Minoe et alium de Tauro, enixa esse Minotaurnum dicitur, quod et ipse paulo post ostendit dicens ‘mixtumque genus.’”
as *historia* because she is always identified as the fully human offspring of Minos and Pasiphae.¹⁷ No rationalization is necessary to make her existence plausible—whether or not she really existed.

Because *historia* merely signals plausibility, Servius uses the term “*vera historia*” to distinguish the historical events from the plausible fictions created by the poet. Other authorities, such as Cicero and Quintilian, define *fabulae* similarly but often use the term “*argumentum*” to describe plausible but fictional stories (such as the plots of comedies), thereby freeing *historia* to mean stories that really happened (i.e. Servius’ *vera historia*).¹⁸ Indeed, this tripartite system appears to have been more widely used in the Middle Ages than Servius’, but even in this system, the essential characteristic of *fabula* as “*contra naturam*” remains fairly constant.¹⁹ Consider, for instance, Ralph of Longchamp’s commentary on the *Anticlaudianus* in which he paraphrases Cicero’s definition and example of *fabula*: the idea that Medea’s chariot was pulled by dragons.²⁰

Further muddying the waters, medieval authors are not consistent in reserving *fabula* for mythological material.²¹ Bernard, for instance sometimes labels a false historical account as *fabula*, even if plausible—just as in English, we might speak of a

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¹⁷ My explanation of why Phaedra counts as *historia* is different from that offered by Dietz in “*Historia,*” 67. Dietz believes that the absence of fabulous elements in stories about Phaedra’s later life qualifies her to be *historia*, but I believe that we should look for Phaedra’s connection to *fabula* in her half-brother, the Minotaur, an impossible creature which must be de-mythologized by Servius. Of course, both Dietz’ and my own reasons might have been in Servius’ mind.

¹⁸ Quintilian, *Inst.* 2.4.2; Cicero, *De inventione* 1.19. Servius’ use of *argumentum* is quite different, meaning something more akin to a “proof” or “probability.” See discussion of *argumentum* in Dietz, “*Historia,*” 64-66.

¹⁹ See also Isidore’s similar definitions discussed in Curtius, *European Literature*, 452-7.


²¹ For the various meanings of “*fabula*” in the twelfth century, see Dronke, *Fabula*, 5 and 13-78.
fictional historical event as a “myth.”22 Therefore, when reading medieval authors, we must be cautious in applying Servius’ specific meanings to *fabula* and *historia*, but, as we shall see, similar modes of reading classical poetry appear in Bernard and other medieval commentators even if their terminology differs from Servius’.

The ancient and medieval Virgilian commentary tradition is perhaps most at odds with modern Virgilian scholarship in its treatment of history, myth, and allegory. It stands to reason, therefore, that when medieval authors imitated the *Aeneid’s* use of history, myth, and allegory (as they understood it), their resulting epics might strike us today as un-Virgilian and un-classical because Virgil’s commentators, by explaining how the *Aeneid* ought to be read, shaped how any epic which sought to rival the *Aeneid* would have to be constructed. As I shall demonstrate below, this is exactly what we find in the *Alexandreis* and the *Ylias*. In effect, the concerns of Virgil’s commentators have been absorbed into the text of these two medieval epics.

John of Salisbury’s use of Virgil in the *Policraticus* provides a good example of how fully the *Aeneid* might have been integrated with its commentary tradition in the minds of not only our twelfth-century Latin epicists, but their intended audience as well.23 John of Salisbury was a nearly exact contemporary of Alan of Lille—both were probably born sometime between 1115 and 1120.24 John probably received much of his early education at Exeter (just as Joseph of Exeter probably did). Like Alan, Walter, and probably John of Hauville, John studied in Paris (c.1136-48). Between 1171 and 1176,

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22 For instance, see Bernard, *Commentary on the Aeneid*, 15: “*Est enim historia quod Greci Troiam deicerunt: quod vero Enee probitas enarratur fabula est. Narrat enim Frigius Dares Eneam civitatem prodidisse.*”


John was working at Canterbury and Exeter, so Joseph could well have met him there.

Finally, John and Walter of Châtillon had a common patron in William of the White Hands, to whom Walter dedicated his Alexandreis. Thanks to William, John spent the years 1176-80 (during which time these epics may have begun taking shape) as bishop of Chartres.

John frequently quotes from Servius without citation in his writings, but when he does cite his source, he nearly always attributes the information to Virgil—whether or not any of the concepts being attributed to Virgil actually appear in the Aeneid proper.\(^{25}\) One such striking example occurs at Policraticus 2.15:

\[
\textit{Dum autumnus adultus est aut praeruptus, somnia frequentius euanescunt.}
\]
\[
\textit{Arborum namque labentibus foliis insomniorum uanitas dominatur, quod et Virgilius in libro in quo totius philosophiae rimatur archana sensisse uisus est, dum labentia folia apud inferos uariis somniis oneravat.}
\]

When autumn is at its peak or just ending, dreams quite frequently disappear, because when the leaves of the trees are falling, the emptiness of sleeplessness reigns. In the book where he investigates the mysteries of all philosophy, Virgil seemed to have perceived this when he loaded the falling leaves in the underworld with various dreams.

Virgil says no such thing, but Servius’ commentary on the sixth book of the Aeneid, which as we have seen also characterizes the sixth book as Virgil’s investigation into philosophy, does contain the discussion to which John refers in a comment on Aeneid 6.282-4. Even when John cites the text of the Aeneid, Servius (or Macrobius) is usually the source for not just his interpretation but also any “Virgilian” science contained therein. For instance, at Policraticus 2.3, John quotes Aeneid 1.382 where Aeneas

explains that he was pursuing his fate with his “goddess mother showing the way,” but, John, silently following Servius’ interpretation of this line (discussed at length below), explains that Aeneas is here referring not to the goddess but to the planet Venus. In the context of John’s argument concerning the meanings invested by humans in the heavenly bodies, this line of the Aeneid is useless without the interpretation given by Servius. For John, Virgil and his commentators can be one and the same.

For the purposes of this chapter, I have used Servius’ distinction between the meaning of historia and fabula as a convenient way to divide the material between matters of historia (both true and false but always plausible) and matters of fabula (the divine apparatus or implausible events in the narrative). In the section headed “historia,” I explain how the commentaries’ incessant corrections (and occasional commendations) of Virgil’s historical accuracy led Walter and Joseph to base their epics upon histories which their culture construed as trustworthy and accurate. Read as a whole, the Virgilian commentaries build a historically accurate and “true” hypo-Aeneid, construed as authorially sanctioned, which inspired readers to expect historical truth from epic narrative.

In the section headed “fabula,” I argue that the commentaries had so thoroughly allegorized the divine machinery of the Aeneid that the gods of the Aeneid would have appeared to medieval readers as virtually identical to the personification deities found in Walter’s and Joseph’s epics. What is more, Walter and Joseph carefully follow most of Servius’ prescriptions for how fabulous events and divine characters must be read—even when such readings might seem (at least from a modern perspective) at odds with Virgil’s
intentions. That is to say, the *Aeneid* commentary tradition, as much as Virgil, defined what was possible and impossible in the narratives of the *Alexandris* and *Ylias*.

**Historia**

As we have seen in the quotations from Servius and the anonymous medieval commentator, for ancient as much as for medieval readers, the essential premise of the *Aeneid* was historically factual—Aeneas really existed and fled Troy in order to found a new city. Although this pre-modern conception is well known, most scholarship today still tends to classify the *Aeneid* as “mythological” epic, in contrast to, say, Lucan’s *Pharsalia* or Silius’ *Punica*, which are labeled “historical” epic. This distinction reflects the modern divide between myth and history—not the ancient one.

Feeney, in *The Gods in Epic*, makes a greater effort than many to incorporate the ancient understanding of myth and history into his own interpretation of epic. In his sixth chapter, Feeney gives an excellent summary of modern research showing that heroes at Troy, and even earlier, were considered as real as Alexander the Great by most ancient historians. What is more, Feeney also offers compelling evidence that the Homeric

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26 A relatively recent overview, exemplifying the typical interpretation today, may be found in Kurt Raaflaub, “Epic and History,” in *A Companion to Ancient Epic*, ed. John Miles Foley (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 55-70. Throughout Raaflaub’s article, “history” means the modern conception of what counts as history and what counts as myth. On page 56, Raaflaub argues, “More properly, ‘historical epics’ were a specialty of Rome as well. Ennius’s *Annals* and Lucan’s poem about Caesar’s civil war (*De bello civili*) offer good examples, and the question of the treatment of history here is again very different from that in ‘mythical epics’.” Of the *Aeneid*, Raaflaub explains that “it is not in any meaningful sense a historic epic” (page 68). Feeney sees more room for ambiguity, but nevertheless observes a similar division between “epic of history: Lucan’s *Bellum Civile* and Silius’ *Punica*,” the title of Chapter 6, and “epic of myth: Valerius Flaccus’ *Argonautica* and Statius’ *Thebaid*,” the title of Chapter 7, in *The Gods in Epic: Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

27 Feeney, *Gods in Epic*, 252-62. For instance, Feeney argues on p. 253, “we are not talking here about accepting the Trojan war as an event, but about, for example, regarding as an actual person such a minor player in Homer as Elpenor, or estimating the number of Agamemmon’s army from Homer’s catalogue (Thucydides 1.10.3-5).”
divine machinery found in Silius’ *Punica* was probably the norm for ancient historical epic—in contrast to Lucan’s practice. In fact, many other ancient epics which employ the divine apparatus, most prominently Statius’ *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* as well as Valerius’ *Argonautica*, would have been read as historical—just like the *Aeneid*—in the Middle Ages.28

As Feeney has shown, the modern divide between epics of myth and epics of history often results in radically anachronistic interpretations of ancient epic. Similarly, many of the pronouncements of modern scholarship on the *Alexandreis* and the *Ylias* still reflect modern biases between the historical existence of Alexander the Great and, say, Achilles. As we shall see, however, this distinction is completely modern and, if we want to understand ancient and medieval epic as its first readers did, misleading. Certainly, mythological epics were composed, i.e. epics of pure “fabulae”—Claudian’s *De Raptu Proserpinae* and Alan’s *Anticlaudianus* are good examples—but most epics of antiquity and the Middle Ages describe people who were believed at the time to be historical. The following section of this chapter will offer a reconstruction of pre-modern readings of

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28 For the major events of the *Thebaid* as historical, see David Anderson, “Mythography or Historiography?: The Interpretation of Theban Myths in Late Mediaeval Literature,” *Florilegium* 8 (1986): 113-39. Anderson’s article includes citations from many late ancient authorities, such as Orosius and Isidore, as well as medieval chronicles, which unambiguously treat Oedipus’ family as historical. For the voyage of the Argo as historical, consider that Dares Phrygius’ account of Troy—believed to be a true eyewitness account in the Middle Ages—begins with the voyage of the Argo. Although the *Argonautica* was less well known in the Middle Ages, it was not unknown. Joseph of Exeter had almost certainly read it, and excerpts in florilegia together with a surviving page from a twelfth-century northern French manuscript of the *Argonautica* prove that people in Joseph’s general vicinity were copying the work in the twelfth century. For Joseph’s possible verbal echoes of the *Argonautica*, see Thomas Gärtner, *Klassische Vorbilder mittelalterlicher Trojaepen*, 12 n.13. For a brief overview of the evidence that the *Argonautica* was copied in twelfth-century France (probably more than once), see Andrew Zissos’ introduction to Valerius Flaccus’ *Argonautica Book 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), lxix-lxx. See especially W. Ehlers, “Neue Arbeiten zur Datierung und Überlieferung der *Argonautica* des Valerius Flaccus,” in *Ratis omnia vicit: Untersuchungen zu den Argonautica des Valerius Flaccus*, eds. M. Korn and H. Tschiedel (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1991), 17-34; Frank Coulson, “New Evidence for the Circulation of the Text of Valerius Flaccus?,” *Classical Philology* 81 (1986): 58-60.
ancient and medieval historical epic using Servius’ characterization of the *Aeneid’s* relationship to history.

**Servius on creative anachronism**

Servius criticizes the historical veracity of Virgil’s narrative throughout the *Aeneid*, and so implies the historicity of the characters involved. One of the longest and most famous explanations of Virgil’s anachronism is introduced during the course of Jupiter’s speech to Venus. Servius argues that Aeneas’ and Ascanius’ future is not in fact what Jupiter claims. This discussion becomes a lengthy digression about the wider inaccuracies in Virgil’s version of events:

*secundum Catonem historiae hoc habet fides: Aeneam cum patre ad Italiam venisse et propter invasos agros contra Latinum Turnumque pugnasse, in quo proelio perìt Latinus. Turnum postea ad Mezentium configisse eiusque fretum auxilio bella renovasse, quibus Aeneas Turnusque pariter rapti sunt. migrasse postea in Ascanium et Mezentium bella, sed eos singulares certamine dimicasse. et occiso Mezentio Ascanium Iulum coeptum vocari... ab hac autem historia ita discedit Vergilius, ut aliquibus locis ostendat, non se per ignorantiam, sed per artem poeticam hoc fecisse, ut illo loco “quo magis Italia mecum laetere reperta” : ecce ἐνδύεται Anchis... ostendit tamen Anchis ad Italiam pervenisse. sic autem omnia contra hanc historiam ficta sunt, ut illud ubi dicitur Aeneas vidisse Carthaginem, cum eam constet ante LXX. annos urbis Romae conditam, inter excidium vero Troiae et ortum urbis Romae anni inveniuntur CCCXL.*

According to Cato, the truth of history is the following: Aeneas came to Italy with his father and, because of invading their fields, fought against Latinus and Turnus; it was in this battle that Latinus perished. Afterwards, Turnus fled to Mezentius and, relying on his military aid, renewed the fighting, during which Aeneas and Turnus both were killed. After this, the war fell to the command of Ascanius and Mezentius, but they fought each other in single combat. And once Ascanius had killed Mezentius, he began to be called Iulus... But Virgil departs from this [i.e. Cato’s] history, in such a way that he demonstrates in several places that he does this not through ignorance but through poetic skill, as in this place “so that you

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*Servius ad *Aeneid* 1.267.*
might rejoice with me at discovering Italy." He said this ambiguously but nevertheless showed that Anchises had made it to Italy. But of course, everything is fiction contrary to this [i.e. Cato’s] history, such as the part when Aeneas is said to have seen Carthage, since it is known that Carthage had been founded seventy years before Rome, but 340 years intervened between the fall of Troy and the birth of Rome.

Servius is usually careful, as here, to point out that Virgil was well aware of his own historical liberties and that Virgil proves his knowledge by providing subtle hints which allude to the historical version of events. In this case, the plot of the Aeneid has Anchises die before arriving in Latium, but Virgil subtly alludes to the fact Anchises did in fact set foot in Latium by having the ghost of Anchises refer to it. For Servius, it is almost unbelievable that Virgil would have made a historical “error” unintentionally, and, crucially, he believes that Virgil often shows us the “true” history if we know how to look for it.

Servius contrasts Virgil’s story with “true history” in this same way throughout the commentary, frequently repeating historical information. For instance, he mentions Aeneas’ real death in the Numicus river five times and at least twice describes the “real” way that the war with Turnus and Mezentius ended. Given the number of these comments—not to mention the extent to which they undermine Virgil’s narrative—it is

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30 Aeneid 6.718.
31 For an excellent discussion of the significance of Aeneas’ death in the Numicus river to Servius and the plot of the Aeneid, see Julia Dyson, King of the Wood: The Sacrificial Victor in Virgil’s Aeneid (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 50-73. For Aeneas’ death in the Numicus river, see Servius ad Aeneid 1.259, 4.620, 6.88, 7.150, and 7.797. The comments in Books 6 and 7 do not give an alternative version for the death of Aeneas and the comments in Book 7 specifically mention that Aeneas’ body (cadaver Aeneae) was found in the river. The note on Aeneid 4.620 is especially instructive about both Aeneas’ death and the “true” history of the war in Latium: “Cato dicit iuxta Laurolauinium cum Aeneae socii praedas agerent, proelium commissum, in quo Latinus occissus est, fugit Turnus; et Mezentii auxilio comparato uictus quidem est ab Aenea, qui tamen in ipso proelio non conparuit. Ascanius postea Mezentium interemit. alii dicunt quod uictor Aeneas, cum sacrificaret super Numicum fluuium lapsus est nec eius cadauer inuentum est; unde dictum est ’mediaque inhumatus harena.’ postea dictus est inter deos receptus.” See also Servius ad Aeneid 9.742.
small wonder that the anonymous medieval commentator chose to highlight Aeneas’ “historical” death and the events of the war in Italy as Virgil’s chief historical fictions.

Similarly, Servius explains that Virgil’s Dido is the victim of extreme character assassination, for the historical Dido was chaste and threw herself on a pyre to avoid marriage with Iarbas, the king of Libya.\(^\text{32}\) Macrobius presents the same information in \textit{Saturnalia} 5.17.4-6 where, after telling the full story of the historical Dido, he waxes eloquent about the power of Virgil’s version:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Tantum valuit pulchritudo narrandi, ut omnes Phoenissae castitatis conscii, nec ignari manum sibi iniecisse reginam, ne patetur damnun pudoris, conniveant tamen fabulae, et intra conscientiam veri fidem frementes malint pro vero celebrari quod pectoribus humanis dulcedo fingentis infudit.}
\end{quote}

The beauty of Virgil’s tale was so powerful, that everyone, though aware of the Phoenician queen’s chastity and the fact that she killed herself to keep her honor, chooses not to censure the mythical version (\textit{fabula}) and, grumbling in their conscience at the assurance of truth, prefers to celebrate as true what the charm of a fabricator has communicated to human hearts.\(^\text{33}\)

Once again, the commentators show that the “historical reality” provides crucial information to help us understand Virgil’s text. How else would we understand properly the role of Iarbas, the origin of Dido’s funeral pyre, or even why Virgil calls the queen of Carthage “Dido” (meaning \textit{virago}, heroic maiden, in Phoenician)?\(^\text{34}\) When Anna addresses her sister for the last time, Virgil says that she calls her sister by name

\(^{32}\) Servius ad \textit{Aeneid} 4.36 and 4.674. The chaste “historical” Dido, in contrast to Virgil’s fictive one, was known to medieval readers through multiple avenues. For a discussion of many of these, see Mary Louise Lord, “Dido as an Example of Chastity: The Influence of Example Literature,” \textit{Harvard Library Bulletin} 17 (1969): 22-44, 216-32. See also Marilynn Desmond, \textit{Reading Dido: Gender, Textuality, and the Medieval \textit{Aeneid}} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 23-73.

\(^{33}\) Cf. Augustine, \textit{Conf.} 1.13: “quia, si proponam eis interrogans, utrum verum sit quod Aenean aliquando Karthaginem venisse poeta dicit, indoctores nescire se respondebunt, doctores autem etiam negabunt verum esse.”

\(^{34}\) Servius ad \textit{Aeneid} 4.36 and 4.674. Sergio Casali also discusses Servius’/Virgil’s “metapoetics” in the context of Dido. He offers suggestions for the function of some of Servius’ comments on the “historical” Dido (preceding their incorporation into Servius’ commentary) in “‘Ecce ἡμίφοιλας… dixit’: allusioni ‘irrazionali’ alle varianti scartate della storia di Didone e Anna secondo Servio,” in \textit{Servio: stratificazioni esegetiche e modelli culturali}, eds. Sergio Casali and Fabio Stok (Brussels: Latomus, 2008), 24-37.
(morientem nomine clamat), but Servius notes that Virgil does not say by what name Anna called her. Servius suggests that she could have said either “Elyssa” or “Dido.” Dido’s given name was Elyssa, but, at this point in the “real” history, the queen was about to kill herself in order to protect her chastity and was thus in the act of earning the title, “Dido,” meaning virago. Thus, to the commentator, the boundary between the fictive Aeneid and the real historical Aeneid is so thin that it is permeable even to the speech of its fictive/historical characters who seem to inhabit both worlds simultaneously.

The net effect of all such historical observations is that Servius and other commentators, including Macrobius, undermine the credibility of Virgil’s Aeneid as a historical text even while building up Virgil as an excellent historian. The result is similar to twelfth-century integumental allegory: if you know how to read Virgil correctly, you can uncover the “hidden” historical truth where the characters all behave according to their portrayals in the historians. We can see Servius’ method especially well in his comment at Aeneid 9.742:

VULNUS SATURNIA IVNO DETORSIT VENIENS plerique, sed non idonei commentatores dicunt, hoc loco occisum Turnum, sed causa oeconomiae gloriam a poeta Aeneae esse servatum: quod falsum est. nam si veritatem historiae requiras, primo proelio interemptus Latinus est: in de ubi Turnus Aenean vidit superiorem, Mezentii imploravit auxilium: secundo proelio Turnus occisus est, et nihilo minus Aeneas postea non conparuit: tertio proelio Mezentium occidit Ascanius. hoc Livius dicit et Cato in Originibus.

SATURNIAN JUNO CAME TO DEFLECT THE BLOW Several commentators, though not the best ones, say that Turnus died in this place but that the glory of Aeneas was saved for the sake of the proper arrangement of the plot (oeconomia). But this is false. For if you look into the truth of history, Latinus was killed in the first battle. Then, when Turnus saw that Aeneas was superior, he sought the aid of Mezentius. In the second battle, Turnus was killed, but nevertheless Aeneas did

35 ad Aeneid 4.674: “NOMINE CLAMAT aut Didonem vocat, ut supra diximus, Poenorum lingua viraginem: nam Eliissa dicta est; sed virago est vocata, cum se in ignem praecipitavit. aut ’nomine clamat’ nominat.”
36 See Jeaneau, “L’usage de la notion d’integumentum,” 35-100; Dronke, Fabula, passim.
not appear after this. In the third battle, Ascanius killed Mezentius. Livy says this and so does Cato in his *Origines*.

Here, Servius acknowledges that some commentators have suggested that the real Turnus died at this spot in Book 9 of the *Aeneid*, but that Virgil allowed Turnus to live on until the end of Book 12 in order to make a better plot arch (*oeconomia*) by giving Aeneas the glory of slaying Turnus as a grand finale. Servius has no problem with the underlying assumption that Virgil altered history just to praise Aeneas and make for a better story—indeed he uses this sort of logic throughout his commentary—but he does object to the idea that Turnus “really” died in Book 9. His reasoning is telling. He appeals to the same historical version that he had invoked in his note on 1.267: Turnus and Aeneas do not die until the end of the first Latin war. Therefore, he argues, Turnus does not actually die in this book but in Book 12 (or later).

Thus, Servius constructs a “real historical” *Aeneid*, one with a fair degree of internal consistency, which he refers to throughout the commentary. That is to say, in Servius’ commentary, there is a consistent picture of how the *Aeneid*’s plot would have unfolded—book by book—if Virgil had stayed true to the historical version. By showing how Virgil had this hypo-*Aeneid* in mind while composing the poem, Servius essentially imbeds a perfectly true historical poet within the text of the often fictional historical poem. Both the *Alexandreis* and the *Ylias* show a close adherence to historical sources in a way that looks much more “Virgilian” in light of Servius’ characterization of Virgil.

**The *Aeneid* and Joseph’s “true” history of Troy**

Joseph refers explicitly to Virgil’s historical fictions in the exordium of his *Ylias*. 
Oh sacred faith of truth, why do you hide for so long outlawed by the crowd of ancient poets? Or do you lie hidden because you were spurned, and still angry with former times do you, who ought to be known, flee us? With me, O famous one, with me, you will come forth and dignify my common trumpet, smoothing out the wrinkles in your brow, and let unproductive antiquity blush when you come adorned and freely show your face... Should I admire old Homer and Latin Virgil or the Phrygian priest, who, as an eyewitness, a more reliable source, recounted the war which myth does not know?

In the part of his exordium which I have presented above, Joseph emphasizes that his own source, Dares, is more historically accurate than Homer and Virgil because he was an eyewitness. Joseph was not alone in holding such a high opinion of Dares. Dares’ account was believed to be a genuine first-person account of the Trojan War throughout the Middle Ages and well into the Early Modern period. No less a figure than Isidore of Seville had pronounced it to be the earliest work of history ever written by a pagan. At the same time, Joseph points out that no ancient poet had written an epic based on Dares’ account. By doing so, Joseph justifies the composition of his epic in a manner similar to

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37 I adopt A.K. Bate’s punctuation here in preference to Gompf’s. My understanding (and my translation) of this period and the following one also owe a great debt to Bate’s translation.
38 Ylias 1.6-13, 24-6.
40 “Apud gentiles vero primus Dares Phrygius de Graecis et Trojanis historiam edidit, quam in foliis palmarum ab eo conscriptam esse ferunt. Post Daretem autem in Graecia Herodotus historiam primus habitus est.” (Etymologiae 1.42)
Walter whose preface proclaims, on the authority of Servius, that no ancient poet ever attempted an epic about Alexander the Great.\textsuperscript{41}

Virgil’s description of the last night of the Trojan War in Book 2 was one of the most famous parts of the \textit{Aeneid} in the Middle Ages, but it was equally well-known that Virgil’s version disagreed with that of the eyewitness: Dares Phrygius. In his commentary on the \textit{Aeneid}, Bernard, like Joseph, contrasts Virgil’s historical accuracy with that of Dares.

\textit{Quoniam ergo in hoc opere et poeta et philosophus perhibetur esse Virgilius, primo poete intentionem et modum agendi et cur agat breviter dicamus. Intendit itaque casus Enee aliorumque Troianorum errantium labores evolvere atque hoc non usque secundum historie veritatem, quod Frigius describit; sed ubique ut Augusti Cesaris gratiam lucraretur, Enee facta fugamque ficmentis extollit.}\textsuperscript{42}

Therefore, since, in this work, Virgil is considered to be both a poet and a philosopher, we should state first the intention of the poet, the mode he uses and why he uses it. He intends to elaborate the misfortunes of Aeneas and the deeds of the other wandering Trojans but not entirely according to the historical truth, which Phrygius describes, but everywhere he extols the deeds and flight of Aeneas with fictions in order to win the favor of Augustus Caesar.

Insofar as Virgil was a poet, he wrote a historical narrative describing events that really happened, but he often altered the truth to reflect better on Aeneas and thereby curry favor with Augustus. Like the anonymous medieval commentator, Bernard too attributes the \textit{Aeneid}'s historical fictions to Virgil’s political necessity—implying that otherwise the \textit{Aeneid} would have followed history more accurately.

In his comments on the second book of the \textit{Aeneid} (where Aeneas describes to Dido how Troy fell), Bernard articulates the same distinction between Virgil’s account and that found in Dares:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{41} Colker, \textit{Alexandreis}, 5.
\item \textsuperscript{42} Bernard, \textit{Commentary on the Aeneid}, 1.
\end{itemize}
Quoniam quidam sermo verus, quidam falsus, ideo in hac narratione per hoc quod veritati historie falsitas fabule admiscetur hoc idem figuratur. Est enim historia quod Greci Troiam devicerunt; quod vero Enee probitas enarratur fabula est. Narrat enim Frigius Dares Eneam civitatem prodisse.  

Since some speech is true, some false, so in this narrative it is represented as the same, since the falsity of myth is mixed with historical truth. For it is historical that the Greeks conquered Troy, but when the goodness of Aeneas is described, it is mythical. For Dares Phrygius tells that Aeneas betrayed his city.

What is most fascinating for our purposes in these two excerpts is how Bernard seems to imply that Virgil would have told Dares’ version of the Trojan War if he had not been prevented by politics.

In fact, Servius sows the seeds of Joseph’s and Bernard’s rejection of Virgil’s account of the Trojan War in favor of a version closer to that found in Dares. We have already seen where Servius points out Virgil’s many distortions of history, so it should come as no surprise that Servius is also at pains to point out Virgil’s falsifications of the events of the Trojan War. Indeed, at least twice in his commentary, he corrects Virgil’s account with the “truth of history” (historiae veritas) in regard to the whole course of events of the Trojan War.  

At *Aeneid* 10.91, Servius gives both the fictional version and the historical version of how the Trojan War started:

10.91 FOEDERA SOLVERE FVRTO legitur in historiis quod Troiani cum Graecis foedus habuerunt. tunc etiam Paris est susceptus hospitio et sic commisit adulterium. ergo ‘foedera solvere furto’ amicitias adulterio dissipare: nam furtum est adulterium, unde est ‘et dulcia furta’ (Georg. 4.346). et eversi Iii haec est vera causa: nam foedera quae inter Graecos et Trojanos fuerunt, ita soluta sunt. Hercules cum expugnato Ilio filiam Laomedontis Hesionam, Priami sororem, Telamonii dedisset, profecti sunt legati cum Priamo et eam minime repetere potuerunt, illis dicentibus se eam habere iure bellorum. unde commotus Priamus misit Paridem cum exercitu, ut aliquid tale abduceret, aut uxorem regis, aut filiam. qui expugnata Sparta Helenam rapuit. hinc ergo Vergilius utrumque

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44 ad *Aeneid* 1.526 and 10.91. Servius Danielis also records an instance at *Aeneid* 1.651.
**tangit, et istam historiam quam modo diximus, et propter iudicium Paridis: quamvis fabula sit illa res et a poetis composita.**

BREAK THE BONDS OF PEACE BY TREACHERY: We read in histories that the Trojans had a treaty with the Greeks. At that time, Paris was received as a guest, and in this way committed adultery. Therefore ‘break the bonds of peace by treachery’ means to dissolve friendly relations by adultery: for adultery is treachery, whence is ‘and sweet treacheries’ (Georg. 4.346). But the following is the true cause of the fall of Troy: for the treaty, which existed between the Greeks and Trojans, was dissolved in this way. After the sack of Troy when Hercules had given Hesione, the daughter of Laomedon and sister of Priam, to Telamon, ambassadors set out with Priam, but they were not successful in bringing her back since the Greeks claimed that she was a lawful spoil of war. Therefore Priam became angry and sent Paris with an army to abduct someone: either the wife of the king or his daughter. Then Paris, after laying siege to Sparta, stole away Helen. Here, therefore, Virgil alludes to both causes: the historical account which we have just related and the version containing the judgment of Paris—although this version is a fiction invented by the poets.

In his typically dense and abbreviated style, Servius presents two different versions of the start of the Trojan War. Both versions involve violations of a peace treaty between Troy and the Greeks. According to Servius, the existence of the peace treaty is itself a historical fact, but there is disagreement about how the treaty was violated. In the first version, the Spartans receive Paris as a guest, who then flees back to Troy as an adulterer with a complicit Helen. Servius associates this version, at the end of the comment, with the fictional one containing the judgment of Paris. Servius identifies the second version as the “true cause” (*vera causa*) of the Trojan War.

Much of Servius’ “historical” account, the “*vera causa,*” is consonant with the version of events given in Dares. For instance, Dares reports that, after sacking Troy, Hercules gave Hesione to Telamon in marriage. Likewise, Dares claims that the Trojans sent ambassadors to the Greeks in order to reclaim Hesione. After the failure of this embassy, Priam put Paris in charge of a fleet of ships with which to abduct Helen. In fact,
the only major element that differs here between Servius and Dares is that Helen was abducted unwillingly from Sparta in Servius’ account, but willingly from Cythera in Dares’.

More important than the similarity of Servius’ and Dares’ accounts, however, is the fact that they are both interested in giving a true account, one omitting *fabula*. Servius specifically contrasts his own truthful account with the mythical version containing the judgment of Paris. Dares also depicts events free of any directly described divine agency; the goddesses appearing in the judgment of Paris are carefully confined to a dream vision. Both Servius and Dares, then, are in complete agreement about the nature of historical reality—there are no divinities or “impossible” events in it. Servius is quite concerned to show that Virgil shares this view as well, but because of Virgil’s special license as a poet, he often mixes the historical reality with fiction. Servius usually demonstrates this by pointing out the places where Virgil “touches on” (*tangit*) the historical truth. Servius’ conclusion is that Virgil means to allude to both the fictional and historical versions of events.

Of course, Servius was not alone in pointing out the discrepancies between Virgil’s account of the Trojan War and the other versions. In eleventh century France, someone decided to copy Dares’ account, together with Servius, in the exterior column of a manuscript of the *Aeneid*. In fact, at least ten manuscripts survive which contain both the *Aeneid* and *Dares*—either bound together or with Dares copied in the margins as a

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45 Manuscript Paris, BNF, lat. 10307 and Bibl. Apostolica del Vaticano, Reg. lat. 1625. This manuscript is given the siglum Pt and described by Louis Faivre d’Arcier in *Histoire et géographie d'un mythe: la circulation des manuscrits du De excidio troiae de Darès le Phrygien (VIIIe-XVe siècles)* (Paris: École des chartes, 2006), 105. This manuscript is also mentioned by Sarah Spence in “*Felix Casus:* The Dares and Dictys Legends of Aeneas,” in *A Companion to Vergil’s Aeneid and its Tradition*, eds. Joseph Farrell and Michael C. J. Putnam (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 140. Neither Sarah Spence nor Louis Faivre d’Arcier note the correspondence between Servius and Dares in the explication of Virgil.
gloss on the *Aeneid*.\(^{46}\) Such scholarly scrutiny of the *Aeneid* vis-à-vis *Dares* accounts for the urgency that Joseph expresses in the need to reconcile the accounts of Homer and Virgil with that of Dares. Joseph’s *Ylias* itself is in many ways a reintegration of the marginalized prose Dares into the poetic text of the *Aeneid*. At the same time, it is a resolution of the tension between myth and history in Servius’ conception of the *Aeneid*.

Joseph follows Dares in including Aeneas in the plot to let the Greeks into Troy, but even Aeneas’ treachery—often cited by medieval authors as the major point of contrast between Dares and Virgil—is mentioned in Servius. Servius shows that Virgil did not ignore the stories that claimed Aeneas was in fact a traitor to his homeland who helped the Greeks to sack Troy. The first mention occurs in Servius’ comment on *Aeneid* 1.242:

\[\textit{ANTENOR POTVIT non sine causa Antenoris posuit exemplum, cum multi evaserint Trojanorum periculum, ut Capys qui Campaniam tenuit, ut Helenus qui Macedonian, ut alii qui Sardiniam secundum Sallustium; sed propter hoc, ne forte illud occurreret, iare hunc vexari tamquam proditorem patriae. elegit ergo similem personam; hi enim duo Troiam prodisisse dicuntur secundum Livium, quod et Vergilius per transitum tangit, ubi ait “se quoque principibus permixtum agnovit Achivis”, et excusat Horatius dicens “ardentem sine fraude Troiam”, hoc est sine proditione: quae quidem excusatio non vacat; nemo enim excusat nisi rem plenam suspicionis. Sisenna tamen dicit solum Antenor prodisisse. quem si velimus sequi augemus exemplum: si regnat proditor, cur pius vagatur? ob hoc autem creditur Graecis Antenor patriam prodisisse, quia sicut superius dictum est, et auctor reddendae Helenae fuit et legatos qui propter Helenam venerant suscepti hospitio, et Ulixen in mendici habitu agnitet non prodidit.}\]

\[\textit{ANTENOR WAS ABLE not without cause did she give Antenor as an example, although many of the Trojans escaped the danger such as Capys who held Campania, Helenus who held Macedonia, and others who according to Sallust held Sardinia; but for this reason—lest it should happen that he sailed by a treaty as a traitor to his country. She therefore chose a similar character; for these two}\]

Aeneas and Antenor] were said by Livy to have betrayed Troy, something Virgil alludes to in passing when he says “he recognized also that he was mixed up with the Greek princes,” and Horace excuses saying, “Troy burning without deceit,” i.e. without betrayal: And this excuse is not idle, for a person excuses a situation only if it is full of suspicion. Sisenna nevertheless says that Antenor had betrayed Troy alone. And if we wish to follow his account, we may add this point: if the betrayer reigns, why would the pious one fly? For this reason, Antenor is believed to have betrayed his country to the Greeks, because as was said above, he was both the instigator of returning Helen, and he received hospitably the legates, who had come on account of Helen, and he declared that Ulysses was not known to be in the habit of lying.

Servius mentions Aeneas’ potential treachery again in his note on Aeneid 1.488 where, in the ecphrasis of Dido’s temple, “either Virgil alludes in a hidden manner to the treachery of Aeneas...or he wants to show his virtue.” Later, in his comment on Aeneid 1.647, Servius claims that Virgil chose his words carefully to avoid implying that Aeneas betrayed Troy as Helen and Antenor did. Yet again, in his comment on Aeneid 2.298, Servius explains that Virgil is careful to have Aeneas, who of course is the narrator of Book 2, claim to have escaped because his house was far from the fighting—not because he was traitor. Servius implies that Virgil was well aware of the ‘historically’ treacherous Aeneas but had to be careful to avoid or bend the truth so as not to offend his patron.

Thus, Joseph’s decision to write an epic based on Dares’ account of the war, in explicit contrast to Virgil, was at least partly inspired by the Virgilian commentary tradition itself. We might even surmise that Joseph would have concluded from the commentary tradition that Virgil would have followed a more ‘historical version’ of the Trojan War, along the lines of Dares, if he had not been bound to distort the truth for the

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47 “SE QUOQUE PRINCIPIBUS PERMIXTUM AGNOVIT ACHIVIS aut latenter proditionem tangit, ut supra diximus; ut excusatur ab ipso in secundo ‘Iliaci cineres’ et cetera; aut virtutem eius vult ostendere.”
48 “laborat [poeta] hoc sermone probare, ab Aenea non esse proditam patriam, si ornatus Helenae, quam cum Antenore Troiam prodidisse manifestum est, ex incendio eripuit bellorum casu, non pro praemio proditionis accepit.”
sake of his patron. In this light, Joseph’s careful adherence to Dares, rather than Virgil, could be seen as ‘fixing’ the *Aeneid*, not as rejecting it outright. That is to say, Joseph may have considered his version of the Trojan War to be as much an homage to Virgil as a replacement.

*Historia* in the *Alexandreis*

Like Joseph, Walter chose to follow the most trustworthy history of his subject available to him: Quintus Curtius Rufus’ *History of Alexander the Great*. Although modern historians now criticize Curtius for his inaccuracies, Curtius’ was actually among the most accurate accounts, even by modern standards, available to Walter. As is often noted, Walter ignores the more fantastic elements of the Alexander romance tradition throughout his epic, preferring Curtius’ more realistic account.\(^{49}\) Heinrich Christensen has established Walter’s extensive use of Curtius, and Maura Lafferty has established Walter’s attention to many problems inherent in historical interpretation, but less attention has been paid to the way in which Walter occasionally bends Curtius’ account in order to show his hero in a somewhat better light—much as the commentary tradition shows Virgil doing in the *Aeneid*.\(^{50}\)

We have seen that Virgil was thought to have omitted certain historical facts from the *Aeneid* in order to better praise his hero (and patron). In similar fashion, Walter often revises history by omitting scenes in Curtius that would have reflected badly on Alexander. For instance, Walter is silent about the fate of Betis, who was dragged around

\(^{49}\) For Walter’s close reliance on Curtius and exclusion of most elements from the Alexander romance tradition, see Christensen, *Das Alexanderlied*, 102-40.

\(^{50}\) Ibid.; Lafferty, *Walter of Chaâillon’s Alexandreis*. 
the walls of Gaza. Even more noticeable is the total absence of Thais at whose encouragement Alexander destroyed Persepolis.\footnote{These omissions, together with others, are noted by R. Telfryn Pritchard in the introduction to his translation, \textit{The Alexandreis} (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986), 10.} Because of Curtius’ lengthy and salacious account of Thais, Walter could have chosen to imitate the medieval understanding of Virgil’s Dido episode, showing Alexander distracted by illicit love, yet Walter chose to omit any extended reference to Alexander’s “destructive” lust. The closest that Walter comes to exploring Alexander’s sexual liaisons is his description of Alexander’s encounter with Thalestris, queen of the Amazons, but she is no Dido.\footnote{See \textit{Alexandreis} 8.8-48. For discussion of this episode, see David Townsend, “Sex and the Single Amazon in Twelfth-Century Latin Epic,” in \textit{The Tongue of the Fathers: Gender and Ideology in the Twelfth-Century Latin}, eds. David Townsend and Andrew Taylor (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 136-55.}

Certainly, Walter mentions Alexander’s corruption by the city of Babylon, but he generally avoids giving specific details about Alexander’s excesses.\footnote{\textit{Alexandreis} 6.8-21.}

Sometimes, however, Walter alerts the reader to his omissions in ways that sound more like Servius’ interpretations of Virgil’s subtle allusions than Virgil’s allusions themselves. For instance, Walter mentions at \textit{Alexandreis} 3.57-8 that he should pass over in silence what reward Parmenion received for his service to Alexander. Later at \textit{Alexandreis} 5.76-9, Walter repeats the sentiment, this time pointing out his silence about Clitus’ unjust treatment by Alexander.\footnote{“\textit{sed que prouenerit illi / Gratia pro meritis magis arbitror esse silendum}.”} At \textit{Alexandreis} 9.3-8, Walter even suggests that Alexander’s treatment of Clitus, Hermolaus and Callisthenes be taken as a moral exemplum of the fickle friendship of monarchs.\footnote{Cf. Lafferty’s discussion of this passage in \textit{Walter of Châtillon’s Alexandreis}, 58.}

At least in these cases, Walter seems to be subscribing to Servius’ idea that an epicist is supposed to show the protagonist in the best light possible—but, perhaps
because he is not hampered by Virgil’s political necessities, Walter praises his hero within the bounds of historical accuracy. In contrast to the medieval understanding of Virgil, Walter never creates fictions in order to make his protagonist look better than he was. Instead, Walter limits himself to rhetorical devices: omission, as we have seen, and also active interpretations in the voice of the narrator—functioning rather like commentary.

For instance, the narrator explains that it is ambiguous (as Servius so often says), whether it was really so bad that Alexander annihilated the city of Persepolis (an act which Curtius condemns). At precisely this moment, Walter chooses to tell the story of the Greeks who had been mutilated by the Persians—the most shocking war atrocity that Curtius attributes to the Persians. Walter seems to be using the same rhetorical trick that the early thirteenth-century commentator on the Anticlaudianus, Ralph of Longchamp, attributes to Virgil. Ralph explains that Virgil chose to tell how Aeneas carried his father on his shoulders out of Troy in order to divert the audience’s attention from his “dishonorable deed” (turpi facto). Ralph leaves Aeneas’ dishonorable deed unspecified, but it seems safe to assume that he is speaking of Aeneas’ alleged treachery.

In spite of Walter’s great care in avoiding historical fictions, it is often claimed that Walter’s Alexandreis contains a degree and kind of anachronism not found in

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56 Alexandreis 6.196-8: “Dixeris indignam dignamue his cladibus urbem / Ambigitur, nam cum subiturus menia Magnus / Pergeret, occurrit agmen miserabile uisu.”
57 Alexandreis 6.199-296.
58 Ralph of Longchamp, Commentary on the Anticlaudianus, 148-9: “Et tunc insinuanda est benevolentia per translationem...ut si quis pro turpi facto alicuius personae eius nobilitatem opponat, vel pro persona personam, ut si dicit: ‘Memento patris eius’ etc., vel rem pro re, ut Vergilius pro turpi facto Aeneae opponit quomodo ‘ipse patrem in humeris sustuli.’” Ralph is here referring to the famous last line of the second book of the Aeneid (804): “cessi et sublato montis genitore petivi.” Ralph’s interpretation does not appear in Servius, but it corresponds quite closely to the sentiment found in Servius Danielis ad Aeneid 2.804: “ubique inventa opportunitate pietatem suam erga patrem vult ostendere.”
classical epic. For example, Lafferty, speaking of anachronism in the simile at 

*Alexandreis* 8.168-171:

> “Anachronism is, of course, not absent in classical epic, but it tends to be carefully placed in a context such as prophesies, Aeneas’ shield or Anchises’ underworld speech that ease the departure from the narrative time of the epic into the future. It is frequent even in the main narrative in the *Alexandreis*, and often serves to remind the readers of a specifically Christian future (see, for example, Paul’s appearance in the description of Corinth, *Alex.* 1.205-9).”

We have seen that there is nothing un-classical about anachronism within the narrative of Latin epic (such as Dido and Aeneas meeting); however, I do not think that Walter himself intentionally includes any instances of this sort of anachronism—in fact, he goes to great lengths to avoid anachronistic fiction. The examples of Walter’s anachronism cited by Lafferty do not occur within the plot of the *Alexandreis*, but rather are spoken in the voice of the narrator in similes or descriptions, as an aid for the reader. This specific device (not something I would call an anachronism since it is restricted to the voice of the narrator) is just as much a part of Virgil’s technique as it is of Walter’s. I suspect that what lies behind many claims about Walter’s anachronism is modern discomfort over the fact that the *Alexandreis* mixes Biblical history with “classical” history. As we shall see

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59 Jean-Yves Tilliette claims, without presenting evidence, that the *Alexandreis* is an “Énéide christianisée et féodalisée” in “L’influence de l’Énéide,” 140. To my knowledge, no one has yet disputed Joseph’s chronological scrupulousness; Tilliette even goes so far as to call the *Ylias* the “only” medieval classicizing epic to avoid anachronism in “L’influence de l’Énéide,” 141. Contra Tilliette, Joseph and Walter share the same interest in avoiding anachronism while at the same time introducing comments relevant to their medieval readers. Consider Joseph’s comparison of prince Henry, son of Henry II of England, to Hector at *Ylias* 5.533-7.


61 For instance, at *Aeneid* 8.336-69 when Evander shows Aeneas the future site of Rome, the narrator often points out the future significance/identity of the features of the landscape in terms of Virgil’s Rome. I see little difference between this Virgilian example and the narrator’s mention, at *Alexandreis* 1.205-9, that Corinth would one day be converted by the Apostle Paul. The same can be said for anachronistic prophecies uttered by divine figures in both the *Aeneid* and the *Alexandreis*—such as Jupiter’s prediction of Rome in the first book of the *Aeneid* or Leviathan’s prediction of Christ in Book 10 of the *Alexandreis*. 
below, Biblical history was not divorced from the *Aeneid* commentary tradition in the Middle Ages.

**Historia in the ecphrases of the *Alexandreis***

In Servius’ view, there was another major dimension to Virgil’s historical project in the *Aeneid*. Servius records the fact (no doubt greatly distorted in the echo chamber that is ancient Virgilian criticism) that Virgil’s epic was once titled, “A *History of the Romans (Gesta populi Romani).*”

*DIXERAT ANCHISES* ante dicta de reversione animarum probatio huc tetendit, ut celebrat Romanos et praecipue Augustum: nam qui bene considerant, inveniunt omnem Romanam historiam ab Aeneae adventu usque ad sua tempora summam in celebrasse Vergilium. quod ideo latet, quia confusus est ordo: nam eversio Ilii et Aeneae errores, adventus bellumque manifesta sunt: Albanos reges, Romanos etiam consulesque, Brutum, Catonem, Caesarem, Augustum et multa ad historiam pertinentia hic indicat locus, cetera, quae hic intermissa sunt, in ἔπιθωμα commemorat. unde etiam in antiquis invenimus, opus hoc appellatum esse non Aeneidem, sed gesta populi Romani: quod ideo mutatum est, quia nomen non a parte, sed a toto debet dari. 62

ANCHISES HAD SPOKEN His earlier discussion about the return of souls to the body has stretched this far in order to celebrate the Romans and especially Augustus. Those, who have given careful consideration to it, have discovered that Virgil celebrated all of Roman history, from the arrival of Aeneas up to his own time. But it is hidden because the order is jumbled up, for the escape from Troy and the wandering of Aeneas, as well as his arrival and the war are obvious [i.e. part of the narrative], but this place shows the Alban kings, the Romans and consuls, Brutus, Cato, Caesar, Augustus, and many things pertaining to history. The rest, which are left out here, Virgil commemorates in the shield-making scene. For this reason, we find that in earlier times this whole work was not called the *Aeneid*, but *A History of the Romans*. But the title was changed because the name of a work ought to derive, not from a part, but from the whole.

What Servius says for the *Aeneid* could as easily be applied to the *Alexandreis* and its lengthy historical ecphrases—especially when read with the extensive historical glosses

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which often accompany the text of the ecphrases in manuscripts. Through the lens of Servius, we may read Walter as imitating Virgil’s sweeping and nearly annalistic historical documentation in the ecphrases of the shield of Darius, which displays the history of the Persian Empire, and in the tomb of Darius’ wife, which epitomizes much Old Testament Biblical history. Certainly, both Virgil and Walter display great ambition in trying to recount histories far beyond what pertains to the short time span of the narrative.

Walter derives much of his methodology in the ecphrases from Servius’ own analysis of Virgil’s ecphrastic methods. Servius interprets the famous “enarrabile textum” of Aeneas’ shield as meaning that Virgil excerpted just a few scenes out of the complete annals of Roman history (omnem Romanam historiam) which it was his intention to evoke. In a phrase which echoes Servius as much as Virgil, Walter says that Darius’ shield related “uirum monimenta priorum” of the Persian Empire, before describing a few scenes mostly associated with the Hebrews (Alexandreis 2.495). Given what we have seen of Servius’ interpretation of Aeneas’ shield, it should come as no surprise that Walter goes on to describe only the scenes on Darius’ shield that he thinks his medieval audience would want to know, i.e. those relating to Biblical history.

Walter is even more explicit about his choices in his ecphrasis of the tomb of Darius’ wife. Here, he tells the reader that the kings of Greece and Jewish history are

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64 “Bene ‘non enarrabile’: cum enim in clipeo omnem Romanam historiam velit esse descriptam dicendo ‘illic genus omne futurae stirpis ab Ascanio pugnataque in ordine bella,’ carptim tamen paucia commemorare, sicut in primo (1.456) ait ‘videt Iliacas ex ordine pugnas,’ nec tamen universa descripsit.”

65 Cf. Fulgentius’ description of Aeneas’ shield as “omnes Romanorum depicteae virtutes sunt.”
present on the tomb—then goes on to describe only the scenes from Jewish Biblical history, starting with Genesis. Walter has clearly taken to heart Servius’ interpretation that the narrator selects a few scenes from the many actually present on the artwork.

Walter’s attitude towards the portrayal of history here can be read as an indication of the method he himself uses throughout his own epic. Walter explicitly takes on the role of the epic commentator by describing a few of the scenes that the artist has omitted from the shield of Darius.

*Ne tamen obscurent ueterum preconia regum*  
*Quorundam maculae, sculptoris dextera magnam*  
*Preterit seriem quam pretermittere uisum est.*  
*Inter tot memoranda ducum regumque triumphos,*  
*Agresti uictu pastum et fluuialibus undis*  
*Turpe fuit regem uersa mugire figura.*

But lest the stains of particular personages mar the praise of ancient kings, the sculptor’s hand omitted many things which it seemed best to overlook. Among so many memorable deeds of generals and triumphs of kings, it was a shameful thing that a king, his shape transformed, should moo while grazing upon pasture and drinking from streams.

This passage refers to the temporary insanity of Nebuchadnezzar, recounted in Daniel 4:33 and 5:21, during which time he lived in the wilderness like an animal and grazed like a cow. Similarly, the narrator explains how Apelles, a Jewish artist, omitted certain “infamous” scenes when he sculpted Jewish history on Darius’ wife’ tomb.

*Ne tamen infamet gentem et genus, ydola regum,*  
*Sordes Samariae, fraterni numina regni*  
*Preterit, et funus Iezabel de turre cadentis*  
*Morsque tacetur Achab et uinea sanguine parta.*

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67 *Alexandreis* 2.514-21.
68 *Alexandreis* 2.514-19.
69 *Alexandreis* 4.242-8.
70 *Alexandreis* 4.242-5.
But lest he bring infamy upon his clan and race, he omitted the idols of the kings, the baseness of Samaria, the divinities of the fraternal kingdom, and the death of Jezabel falling from the tower. The death of Achab and the vineyard purchased with blood are unmentioned.

Walter shares Servius’ concern that, while artists must necessarily praise their subject matter, it is important for the reader to be aware of the bigger picture; the audience needs to know the good and the bad for a balanced reading—and to appreciate the skill of the artist all the more. Thus, it is no surprise that Walter, in commenting on the great panegyric art he imagines, feels that for it to be truly great, the hypothetical artist would have omitted whatever facts would have reflected badly on the patron. In turn, in order for him to be a great reader/commentator like Servius, Walter must point out the artist’s omissions.71

Because the history depicted on the shield of Darius and the tomb of Darius’ wife is drawn from Biblical history, readers today might feel that Walter has inserted an anachronistic Christianity into a classical epic set in a pagan world; however, medieval readers of Walter’s ecphrases would have considered the portrayed events to be both historically and chronologically accurate. By hypothesizing that Apelles (a real artist known to have been in Alexander’s entourage) was Jewish, Walter goes to great lengths to explain how Jewish history actually could have been displayed on the tomb of Darius’ wife.72 What is more, Walter stops short of placing any events, which happened after Alexander’s lifetime, on the shield or tomb. In his respect for the time limit of the

71 Indeed, Servius himself points to an omission in the parade of heroes in the underworld. He claims (correctly) that this is Cato the Censor, not Cato Uticensis whose presence would have offended Augustus. Of course, Cato Uticensis does appear on the shield of Aeneas, but Servius reinterprets him to be, again, Cato the Censor. See Servius ad Aeneid 6.841 and 8.670. For discussion, see Richard Thomas, “Servius and the Emperor,” in Servio: stratificazioni esegetiche e modelli culturali, eds. Sergio Casali and Fabio Stok (Brussels: Latomus, 2008), 102-11: 110.

72 For Walter’s interpretation of the classical artist Apelles as Jewish, see Lafferty, Walter of Châtillon’s ‘Alexandreis,’ 117-8.
narrative action, Walter again shows considerably more chronological care than Virgil, who anachronistically placed the future history of Rome on Aeneas’ shield.

The Biblical history also serves to help a medieval audience, better versed in Biblical history than Ancient Greek, to place the events of the classical world in a more familiar context. We can see this sort of interest manifest in the anonymous twelfth-century commentary on the *Aeneid* discussed earlier. An example is the following comment on *Aeneid* 1.265-271:

> refert enim beatus augustinus excidium troie fuisse in illo tempore in quo moyses duxit israeliticum populum per rubrum mare.\(^{73}\)

The blessed Augustine said that the fall of Troy happened at the same time that Moses led the Israelites through the red sea.

Another equally interesting attempt to relate the *Aeneid* to Biblical history is this gloss on Jupiter’s prophecy of the *pax romana* under Augustus (comment on *Aeneid* 1.292):

> Augusto remanente fuit pax per uniuersum orbem, quam rem fabulose ascripserat augusto. Sed fuit propter actorem pacis qui natus per ihesum christum scilicet CANA FIDES.\(^{74}\)

While Augustus ruled, there was peace throughout the whole world, and he had mythically ascribed this to Augustus, but in fact, the creator of the peace was HOARY FAITH, which came into the world with the birth of Jesus Christ.

Such comments show that already by the time when Walter was composing his epic, readers were attempting to understand the history described in the *Aeneid* through the framework of Biblical history.\(^{75}\)

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\(^{73}\) Transcribed by Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England*, 341 n.111.

\(^{74}\) Ibid., 341, n.113.

\(^{75}\) For an in-depth discussion of the connections between this anonymous *Aeneid* commentary and contemporary Biblical exegesis, see Kraebel, “Biblical Exegesis.”
**Fabula: The divine apparatus in Virgilian commentary**

We have seen that Virgilian commentary treats the human characters of the *Aeneid* as historical personages acting within a narrative perhaps best described as historical fiction. Critically, however, Virgil is thought to have alluded to the historically accurate version of events throughout—as long as we know how to read his subtle hints. I believe that this helps to explain the great emphasis on historical truth that we find in the *Ylias* and the *Alexandreis*. At the same time, both of these epics employ *fabulae*, i.e. impossible characters and situations, discretely confined to a strongly Virgilian divine apparatus. Walter’s and Joseph’s divine apparatus also bears the imprint of the Virgilian commentary tradition, which tends to read Virgil’s gods as alluding to a more plausible historical narrative. It might strike the modern reader as contradictory that an author could be at once concerned with writing accurate history while simultaneously employing a divine apparatus, but the reason lies in the ancient conception of what distinguishes epic from mere history. As Feeney persuasively argues, “it is important to acknowledge that the quintessence of the epic effect *qua* epic was felt to be located in the mythic elements which were imposed upon the ‘facts’ of history and tradition—from which one receives the first explanation of the paralysis of ancient critics when faced with the *Bellum Civile* of Lucan.”

Even though Servius explicitly accepts that Virgil was required by the epic genre to include divine characters, Servius again appeals to a hypotext, just below the surface of the *Aeneid*, where all of the divine characters can be incorporated into the rational reality of the ancient historians. Later commentaries on the *Aeneid* follow suit. In this historical

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76 Feeney, *Gods in Epic*, 45.
reality—where Aeneas dies in a river instead of ascending to heaven—divinities do exist, but they do not interact directly with humans in human form. Therefore, in this hypotext, Virgil’s divine characters must really be a mixture of natural phenomena (such as winds or planets), personifications of human thoughts and emotions, and humans who are believed to be gods by the other characters. As we shall see later, supernatural phenomena—such as Aeneas’ descent to the underworld—are likewise frequently reinterpreted as dreams or other more ‘believable’ events.

Servius states unequivocally in a comment on Aeneid 1.254 that “it is customary for poets to give the quality of the elements to divinities” (poetarum enim est elementorum habitum dare numinibus). In his important study of allegory in Servius, Julian Ward Jones counts thirty-five separate notes, where Virgil’s gods have been equated to elemental or planetary forces. Many of Servius’ allegorizations of the gods make use of etymology, and in fact, Servius himself comments on Aeneid 1.144 that “the names of gods very often were created logically from the elements which our ancestors wanted to be called divinities” (nomina deorum plerumque de causis sunt ficta ab elementis, quae numina dici voluere maiores).

At the first appearance of a god in the narrative, Servius provides an elemental interpretation based upon etymology:

**ET SOROR ET CONIVNX physici Iovem aetherem, id est ignem volunt intellegi, Iunonem vero aerem, et quoniam tenuitate haec elementa paria sunt, dixerunt esse germana. sed quoniam Iuno, hoc est aer, subjectus est igni, id est Iovi, iure superposito elemento mariti traditum nomen est. Iovem autem a iuvando dixerunt; nulla enim res sic fovet omnia, quemadmodum calor.**

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78 Servius ad Aeneid 1.47.
BOTH SISTER AND WIFE The natural philosophers take Jove to be understood as the upper air, i.e. fire, but Juno as the lower air, and since these elements are equal in thinness, they called them siblings. But since Juno, i.e. the lower air, was subject to fire, i.e. Jove, logically the name of husband has been given to the element on top. Moreover, they said that Jove comes from aiding (iuvando), for nothing so supports all things as much as heat.

Such physical allegorizations of deities are often sustained throughout the commentary. Servius returns several times to his characterization of Juno as the lower air—all the while claiming that it is Virgil who is sustaining the allegory.

TU MIHI QUODCUMQUE HOC REGNI rediit ad physicam rationem. nam motus aeris, id est Iunonis, ventos creat, quibus Aeolus praeest.\textsuperscript{79}

Virgil returns to the reasoning of the natural world, because the motion of the lower air, that is of Juno, creates the winds, which Aeolus rules.

Servius again refers to Juno’s role as the lower air when she makes the storm that drives Aeneas and Dido to seek shelter in the cave.\textsuperscript{80}

We must also bear in mind that virtually all ancient and medieval allegorists allow for multiple meanings at the same time. Bernard Silvestris pauses his allegorical commentary on the Aeneid to remind the reader that allegories can use the same characters to represent different things or different characters to represent the same thing. Bernard gives the example of Anchises and Jupiter who can both represent God, but explains that Jupiter can sometimes also represent the planet.\textsuperscript{81} Many of the same arguments are made again in Bernard’s commentary on Martianus Capella, where he mentions that, in the Aeneid, Juno can mean either the lower air or the practical life.\textsuperscript{82} For

\textsuperscript{79} Servius ad Aeneid 1.78.
\textsuperscript{80} Servius ad Aeneid 4.166.
\textsuperscript{81} Bernard, Commentary on the Aeneid, 10.
\textsuperscript{82} The Commentary on Martianus Capella’s De Nuptiis Philologiae Et Mercurii Attributed to Bernardus Silvestris, ed. Haijo Jan Westra (Toronto, Ont., Canada: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986), 24-25 (quoted with translation): “Notandum est integumenta equivocationes et multivocationes habere. Verbi gratia: apud Virgilium nomen Iunonis ad aerem et ad practicam vitam equivocatur. Quod enim ibi legitur Iunonem venire ad Eolum, significat aerem nativitatem hominis iuvare. Quod vero dicitur venisse
Bernard, context must determine how the reader should interpret an allegorical character at any given point in the narrative.

The same principle operates throughout Servius’ commentary. Indeed, in a note on *Aeneid* 4.114, when Juno is persuading Venus to cause Dido and Aeneas to consummate a union, Servius allegorizes Juno as marriage, Venus as sex:

*PERGE SEQUAR bene aliud agens aliud ostendit: ante est enim Iunonis officium ex matrimonio sic usus Venerius.*

DO IT, I WILL FOLLOW [Venus’s words to Juno] It is excellent how while meaning one thing, he shows another: for the office of Juno comes first, since after marriage comes the function of Venus/sex.

Once in the very same note (on *Aeneid* 4.166) Servius allegorizes Juno as both the lower air (in its role as creator of storms) and marriage. Obviously, Servius is aware that Virgil’s gods still behave like the anthropomorphic characters of myth, but, when he can find evidence that Virgil is alluding to natural or euhemeristic allegorizations, he almost always commends Virgil for his learned allusion. Note Servius’ “*bene*” in the comment cited above at 4.114, a frequent occurrence when pointing out a double meaning. For Servius, such double meanings are at the heart of what it means to be a great writer of epic.

In a note on *Aeneid* 3.46, Servius explicitly states that it is “blameworthy” (*vituperabile*) for a poet to write fiction which is entirely devoid of truth. That is why, he claims, Virgil is especially to be censured for describing the transformation of the Trojan ships into nymphs, the physical descent to the underworld, and Iris cutting a lock

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*cum Pallade et Venere ad iudicium Paridis, figurat vitam practicam et theoreticam necnon etiam voluptatem, ut de his iudicet, sensui se proponentes.* For Juno as representing the practical life (in the Judgment of Paris), see Fulgentius, *Mythologiae*, 38.

83 *vituperabile enim est, poetam aliquid fingere, quod penitus a veritate discedat.*
from Dido’s hair. As we shall see later, the direct interaction of human and divine makes these “fabulae” especially problematic for Servius and the epic tradition. We should note, however, that in all of these instances save for the transformation of the ships, Servius still finds ways to “exonerate” Virgil by allegorizing these events into depictions of natural phenomena.

Moreover, Servius often suggests that Virgil has been compelled by the epic genre itself to employ the divine apparatus. In his note on Aeneid 1.297, Servius points out, as if apologizing for Virgil’s generic constraints, that “in the matter of the gods, the myths have to be followed, for truth is disregarded.” But in the eyes of Servius, Virgil makes a virtue of necessity by using the divine apparatus as a poetic covering for not only natural/physical truth but also historical truth. We can see the natural and historical truth combined in Servius’ allegorization of Aeneid 1.382:

MY GODDESS MOTHER SHOWING THE WAY In this place he alludes, in passing, to a historical incident, which by the rules of poetic art he cannot write openly. For Varro, in the second book of his Divine Antiquities, says that “from the moment Aeneas left Troy, he saw the planet Venus everyday throughout the day, until he came to Laurentine lands, at which point he did not see the planet any more: from this he learned that these lands were his destiny.” Whence Virgil

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84 “denique obicitur Vergilio de mutatione navium in nymphas; et quod dicit per aureum ramum ad inferos esse descensus: tertium, cur Iris Didoni comam secuerit.”
85 “sed in deorum ratione fabulae sequendae sunt, nam veritas ignoratur.”
in this place said “his goddess mother showing him the way” and “take flight, son”, and likewise “I will never leave” and “I descend with a god leading” and “already Lucifer was rising from the peaks of highest Ida.” And Virgil himself shows that this is the star of Venus: “just as when Lucifer, whom Venus rejoiced in before all the other fires of the stars, having washed in the water of Ocean...”

But there is no doubt when we said that he was prevented by poetic art from writing this story openly. Indeed, for that reason, Lucan does not deserve to be numbered among the poets, since he seems to have composed history, not a poem.

Servius argues that even though Virgil himself knew that, historically, Aeneas had been guided to Italy by the planet Venus, Virgil felt compelled to present the mythological version.

In this same note, Servius famously describes Lucan as a historian, not a poet. This judgment must be understood, however, not only in its immediate context (from which it is often extracted), but also in the wider context of Servius’ other comments—which are rather evenly balanced between elaborating on Virgil’s skills as a poet and as a historian. Indeed, Servius’ pronouncement was well-known in the Middle Ages partly through Servius himself and partly through Lactantius and Isidore. Servius’ remark does not mean that Virgil was not also seen as a historian or Lucan also as a poet—probably not in antiquity and, as Peter von Moos has shown, certainly not in the Middle Ages. For instance, Otto of Freising, in his *Gesta Frederici*, declares that he intends to imitate the style of Virgil and Lucan who both told historical

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86 Isidore, *Etym. 7.7*; Lactantius, *Inst.* 1.11.25.
87 See Feeney, *Gods in Epic*, 263-64. Feeney points out that the statement in question may have been ultimately excerpted from Suetonius, citing Augusto Rostagni, *Suetonio De Poetis e biografi minori* (Torino: Chiantore, 1944), 13-4.
88 For Lucan as both poet and historian in the Middle Ages, see Peter von Moos, “Poeta und Historicus im Mittelalter: Zum Mimesis-Problem am Beispiel einiger Urteile über Lucan,” *Beiträge* 98 (1976): 93-130.
matters (res gestae) and myth (res fabulosae) which often concealed secrets of
philosophy no matter whether they wrote in high or low style (a reference to the different
genres of Virgil’s Eclogues, Georgics, and Aeneid).  

Similarly, Arnulf of Orleans, in his
commentary on the Pharsalia, describes Lucan as “not purely a poet, but a poet and a
historian” (non est iste poeta purus, sed poeta et historiographus). Many other medieval
elements could be cited as well. Servius’ judgment might have prompted medieval
readers, such as Arnulf, to point out that Lucan contains less mythology compared to the
other classical epic poets, but I have found little practical difference between how
medieval authors read and commented upon Lucan and Virgil as poetical historians. The
reason for this blurring of distinction may have been partly due to Servius’ (and others’)
interest in the Aeneid as a historical text, but there was another, perhaps complimentary
reason for this change. Between late antiquity and the twelfth century, the divine
apparatus had all but disappeared from Latin epic.

Contextualizing the divine apparatus in later Latin epic

Although it would be going too far to say that Servius’ comments remove the
gods from the Aeneid, Virgilian commentary as a whole does tend to downplay their roles

89 Otto of Freising, Gesta Friderici I imperatoris, 12: “Nam et Lucanus, Virgilius caeteripue Urbis
scriptores non solum res gestas, sed etiam fabulosas, sive more pastorum vel colonorum summissius vel
principum dominorumque orbis altius narrando, stilum tamen frequenter ad intima quedam philosopbiae
secreta sustulerunt.”

to say: “Nam historiam suam sequitur et nihil fingit, unde poeta non simpliciter dicitur, sed poeta et
historiographus. Nam si aliquid ficticii inducit, non ex sua parte sed ex aliorum hoc inducit, apponit enim
uel ut philosophat, uel ut dicunt, uel ut memorant.”

91 Especially telling is an anonymous twelfth-century accessus to Lucan edited by Robert B. C. Huygens in
Accessus ad auctores (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 44. The anonymous author applies Servius’ own definition of
Virgil’s epic mode to Lucan: “Metrum istud est heroycum, quia constat ex humanis divinisque personis
continens vera cum fictis et ex dactilis constat... Ex humanis constat personis, scilicet ex Iulio Cesare et
Pompeio; aliquando etiam de divinis in hoc agitur, continet et vera quadam ad phisicam et quadam ad
historiam cum falsis et fabulosis.”
and demote them from being autonomous characters to mere personifications. It is thus significant that while Virgil’s divine apparatus was being read as merely poetic embellishment of historical narrative, Latin epic increasingly was being purged of its divine apparatus. Lucan had (mostly) dispensed with it. Statius and Valerius Flaccus retained the divine apparatus, although as Feeney shows, these authors were using the divine apparatus in a much more obviously allegorical manner than their forebears. The same could be said for Claudian in the late fourth century. In the early fourth century, the Biblical epicist, Juvencus, uses no divine apparatus at all. By the fifth century, the mythological divine apparatus of Homer and Virgil had almost entirely vanished from Latin epic. The near disappearance of the divine apparatus can be linked to the distaste for pagan gods in the newly Christianized empire, but the transformation may well have been helped along by voices coming from within the genre itself, including Lucan and Virgilian commentary. There is nothing overtly Christian in Servius—indeed his general outlook on the epic genre has its roots in the earliest Homeric criticism—yet as we have seen, Servius is no champion of the divine apparatus. Servius usually seems to view the appearance of gods in epic as something of a necessary evil which must be interpreted away by the commentator.

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93 Sidonius Apollonaris (a Christian) was among the very few (surviving) Latin poets in the fifth century to use any kind of divine apparatus in Latin epic/epyllia. The divine apparatus does not appear in the sixth-century Latin epics of Corippus. For a discussion of the way that mythology is introduced into Corippus’ epics, see Ch.O. Tommasi, “Exegesis by Distorting Pagan Myths in Corippus’ Epic Poetry,” in Poetry and Exegesis in Premodern Latin Christianity: The Encounter between Classical and Christian Strategies of Interpretation, eds. Willemien Otten and Karla Pollmann, *Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae* 87 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 173-98.
The gods—either as mythological beings or as personifications—certainly continue to surface now and again in medieval and early modern Latin epic, but the vast majority of later Latin epics entirely eschew the divine apparatus. Indeed, it became something of a commonplace to point out in the exordia of new epics that the author would not be including a divine apparatus or other elements of myth. One typical twelfth-century example can stand for many:  

*Ista nihil fictum, nil tegmine fraudis amictum,  
Sed puri ueri referet narratio fructum.*

*Ista nihil fictum, nil tegmine fraudis amictum,  
Sed puri ueri referet narratio fructum.*

95

This account shall set forth no fiction, nor anything shrouded in the cloak of deceit, but rather the fruit of pure truth. Here we do not wish for the cups of Pegasus’ fountain, nor the chattering caves of Mount Parnassus, nor are we pleased to bring down the Muses from the Aonian summit, those nine whom mendacious antiquity invented for itself, but we beseech the glory of God the three-in-one to moisten our parched lips with the dew of his light, etc.  

96

This excerpt is taken from the invocation by the so-called Charleville Poet in an epic about the first crusade. We might expect Biblical epics, hagiographical epics, and Crusade epics to avoid even personified divinities, but for epic about secular heroes, the absence of the divine apparatus should come as something of a surprise. For instance, the

*Historia Vie Hierosolimitane* 1.13-20. Cf. Proba’s *Cento* whose invocation the Charleville Poet partly quotes. Cf. Gilo’s invocation at 1(4).2-6: “*Hoc pro laude Dei, licet impar materiei, / Carmine perstringo facili nec ludicra fingo. / Christe, mee menti tua bella referre volenti / Adsis, laus cuius series est carminis huius, / Vt bene proueniat et te duce carmina fiant.*”

Waltharius and Ruodlieb contain no hint of a divine apparatus at all—neither Christian nor pagan.

In light of this norm for later Latin epic, Walter’s and Joseph’s choice to include an extensive divine apparatus takes on a significance that has not, to my knowledge, been recognized by previous scholarship. Such a decision announces in no uncertain terms that both of these epics will eschew the main epic tradition of the time (which looks to us quite Lucanian—devoid of divine beings) in favor of resurrecting an earlier style of epic exemplified by Homer, Virgil, and Statius. While the gods of the Alexandreis and Ylias do not appear exactly like those found in the Ilias Latina, Aeneid, or Thebaid, when we take into account how the gods of ancient epic were read in the Middle Ages, striking similarities emerge.

**Walter’s invocation in the Alexandreis**

Unlike many of his predecessors, Walter makes no claims to avoid “fabula” anywhere in his epic or prologue. Instead, he begins by invoking “Musa.”

\[\text{Gesta ducis Macedum totum digesta per orbem,} \\
\text{Quam large dispersit opes, quo milite Porum} \\
\text{Vicerit et Darius, quo principe Grecia uictrix} \\
\text{Risit et a Persis rediere tributa Chorintum,} \\
\text{Musa refer.}\]

Recount, O Muse, the deeds of the Macedonian general, which were distributed throughout the whole world, how generously he dispersed his wealth, with what army he conquered Porus and Darius, with what prince Greece rejoiced as victor and tribute returned to Corinth from the Persians.

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98 Cf. the exordium of the earlier twelfth-century epic on the first Crusade cited above.
99 Alexandreis 1.1-5.
Even more remarkably, Walter never invokes God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit, in spite of the fact that it had long since become a commonplace to invoke at least one person of the Christian Godhead in place of the classical Muses.\textsuperscript{100} It is not as if Walter’s contemporaries would have concluded that Walter was a neo-pagan, but it seems likely that they would have perceived an alignment to the ancient Virgilian/Homeric style of epic rather than to later epic devoid of such “\textit{fabulae}” as the divine apparatus. The medieval glossators of the \textit{Alexandreis} certainly made a point of noting the specifically Virgilian resonance of invoking “\textit{Musa}” in the exordium (\textit{Aeneid} 1.8).\textsuperscript{101}

Not only does Walter invoke Virgil’s Muse, but he also corrects Virgil’s order at the opening of the epic according to Servius’ censure.

\begin{quote}
\textit{sane in tres partes dividunt poetae carmen suum: proponunt invocant narrant. plerumque tamen duas res faciunt et ipsam propositionem miscent invocationi, quod in utroque opere Homerus fecit; namque hoc melius est. Lucanus tamen ipsum ordinem invertit; primo enim proposuit, inde narravit, postea invocavit, ut est “nec si te pectore vates accipio”}.\textsuperscript{102}
\end{quote}

Poets properly divide their poem into three parts: They propose, invoke, and narrate. Most, however, only make two divisions and mix together their proposition and invocation because Homer did this in both of his works; for truly, this is better. Lucan, however, inverted the order; first he proposed, then he narrated, and only after that invoked when he said, “but if I, as a prophet, take you into my heart, etc. (1.63)”

Walter proposes (\textit{Gesta ducis Macedum}, etc. = \textit{Arma virumque}, etc.) and invokes (\textit{Musa refer} = \textit{Musa mihi causas memora}) within the same grammatical period. The result is a form of exordium closer to Homer, identified by Servius as “\textit{melius}”:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{101} A thirteenth-century gloss in MS Erfurtensis Amplon. 8” 17, edited by Colker on p. 304 of his edition of the \textit{Alexandreis}, reads: “\textit{MVSA In hoc imitatur Virgilium, qui Musas inuocavit}.” Cf. the nearly identical gloss in MS Vindobonensis Nationalbibl. 568, edited by Colker on p. 354 of his edition of the \textit{Alexandreis}.
\textsuperscript{102} Servius ad \textit{Aeneid} 1.8.
\end{flushright}
O goddess, unfold for me the anger of proud Achilles which inflicted sad funerals upon the suffering Greeks and dragged the brave souls of heroes to Orcus...

With consummate cleverness, however, Walter postpones his mention of “Musa” until the end of his proposition. That is to say, although “Musa” is properly the subject of the period in which the proposition is given, the subject is withheld until the end of the period. In this way, Virgil’s order is preserved but Servius’ recommendation is also followed. I would suggest that Walter begins his epic by alluding not just to Virgil and Homer but also to Servius’ recommendations for how to write an epic.

Walter’s Homeric combination of the proposition and the invocation clearly confused his medieval commentators, who expected the more Virgilian system of separate proposition, invocation, and narration—in that order. To preserve the Servian/Virgilian order, the commentaries suggest that Walter’s invocation of the Muse is a “secondary invocation” while his dedication to his patron is read as the “principal invocation”. Thus, most of the commentaries transcribed by Colker argue that Walter’s

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103 *Ilias Latina* 1.1-5. Walter could not have known the exordium of the *Odyssey*—in Latin or Greek—but, unwittingly, he created an exordium even closer to the *Odyssey* than to the *Iliad*.

104 Otto Zwierlein points out a certain similarity between Lucan’s first line and Walter’s in *Der prägende Einfluss des antiken Epos auf die “Alexandreis” des Walter von Châtillon* (Mainz: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, 1987), 82. Zwierlein notes that the first word of Walter’s epic, “gesta”, corresponds to Lucan’s first word, “bella.” Alexander’s deeds occur throughout the whole world (*totum digesta per orbem*), whereas in Lucan, Caesar’s battles happen in the Emathian fields (*per Emathios...campos*). I do not disagree, but I believe that the Virgilian/Homeric resonances are much stronger in Walter’s invocation. Lucan invokes no Muse, closing his first period with “canimus” (itself echoing the *Aeneid*’s “cano”), and later, with great fanfare, invoking Nero in place of a Muse. I can think of no more pointed rejection of Lucan’s poetics than invoking “Musa” at the beginning of an epic.

105 The scholia on MS Vindobonensis Nationalbibl. 568 even put a Lucanian spin on Walter’s “primary” invocation of his patron (edited by Colker, *Alexandreis*, 355): “Ita Musam meam invocai AT TV CVI. Sciendum quod principalem invocacionem facit ad episcopum Remensem, secundarium autem ad Musam. Non autem ideo inovacat ut indigeat sed ut obseruet poetarum consuetudinem dicens AT TV. Descripcio est archiepiscopi Remensis, scilicet Gwilermi, et commendat eum a nobilitate et sapiencia et a pluribus aliis,
epic conforms to Virgil’s order of proposition, invocation, and narration. Yet, Walter’s dedication never explicitly asks for help in inspiring the narrative; he only seeks his patron’s blessing. This rather awkward reinterpretation of Walter’s exordium may represent an effort on the part of the commentaries to downplay Walter’s “pagan” invocation. At the very least, it shows a tradition taking considerable pains to read the *Alexandreis* according to the Servian/Virgilian paradigm.

We can conclude that Walter’s unequivocal invocation of “Musa” would have immediately suggested to Walter’s audience that the *Alexandreis* was probably going to include some form of the Homeric/Virgilian divine apparatus. After all, even Lucan famously denied the existence of the Muses and refused to invoke them in his exordium—instead invoking Nero for inspiration (sarcastically, according to Arnulf’s twelfth-century commentary on Lucan).

The gods in the *Alexandreis*

As we might suspect from the exordium, in great contrast to Lucan and the majority of later epics, Walter fills the *Alexandreis* with numerous deities. Some of these deities are naturalized by the poet in Servian fashion. A good example of such explicit naturalizing may be seen at *Alexandreis* 4.292-307. Here the Persians make so much

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106 MS Erfurtensis Amplon. 8° 17 (edited in Colker, *Alexandreis*, 302) argues that “*Proponit ubi dicit ‘GESTA DVCIS,’ invoquant ubi dicit ‘AT TV CVI,’ narrat ubi dicit ‘NONDVM PRODIERAT.’” The accessus to MS Vindobonensis Nationalbibl. 568 and MS Vaticanus lat. 1479 argue the same adherence to this sequence.
noise that Echo redoubles their shouts, fearful that war with the giants has resumed. Atlas can hardly support the heavens due to the shaking of the earth. Meanwhile, night comes early because Apollo is tired of seeing so much slaughter and swiftly hides his chariot in the sea.

Note that these divinities go beyond simple metonymic equivalencies, such as the convention of Ceres for bread noted, for instance, by Geoffrey of Vinsauf in his *Summa de coloribus rhetoricos*. Instead the poet shows the gods expressing emotion, even while making the allegory obvious. Consider also *Alexandreis* 5.348-9 where the river nymphs are amazed by the number of corpses. In *Alexandreis* 10.273-4, Alexander even receives a cuirass from the king of Sicily made by the Cyclopes. Certainly, it is not hard to spot the voice of the allegorizing Virgilian commentator in Walter’s descriptions of these divine beings, but nevertheless Walter often gives even minor divinities some degree of autonomous emotion or motivation.

Relative to other medieval epicists, Walter goes particularly far in the direction of the Virgilian apparatus by allowing his divinities to speak. Mars, Bellona (disguised as Athena), Fortune, Nature, Leviathan (i.e. Satan), and Victory all give speeches recorded by the poet. This is all the more relevant in light of Servius’ interpretation of Virgil’s invocation of the Muse, for Servius claims that a poet only needs to invoke a Muse if that poet intends to describe things beyond mortal knowledge. Servius’ example of such an

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108 Fortune makes an appearance at *Alexandreis* 2.186-200 responding to the outcry of the Greeks with a monologue about her own nature. Bellona is mentioned slaughtering the Persians at *Alexandreis* 3.131 and again at 5.205.
impossible scene is Juno’s speech at the beginning of the *Aeneid*, for, he claims, how can a mortal know the thoughts of a goddess?\(^{109}\)

Especially noteworthy is the fact that a divine character even once speaks directly to a human character (something Joseph of Exeter is careful to avoid). In 5.220-240, Bellona and Mars, described as brother and sister, greet each other on the battlefield. Mars then asks Bellona to deliver a message to Alexander that he should desist in his efforts to kill Darius single-handedly in the battle since the Fates will not allow him to achieve his goal. Bellona relays the message in the form of Pallas Athena, at once paying homage to the epic convention of gods disguised as other gods and staying true to epic allegoresis since the content of the message conveys wisdom, best represented by Athena. Walter makes it absolutely clear that Alexander physically receives this message from the divine being because Alexander promptly chases after the goddess and gives a retaliatory speech addressed to the fleeing goddess.\(^{110}\) Alexander even remarks that Mercury himself could not have convinced him to desist. Like so many ancient epic heroes before him, the character of Alexander is aware of epic conventions and not in the least bit troubled by conversing directly with a deity.

**Walter’s Servian katabasis**

Walter also includes two lengthy scenes comprised exclusively of divine characters. Just as Servius often points out the purely fictional nature of such scenes, the

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\(^{109}\) Servius ad *Aeneid* 1.8: “*sane observandum est, ut non in omnibus carminibus numen aliquod invocetur, nisi cum aliquid ultra humanam possibilitatem requirimus... bene ergo invocat Vergilius, non enim poterat per se iram numinis nosse.*”

\(^{110}\) *Alexandreis* 5.241-55.
scholia on the *Alexandreis* in MS Vindobonensis Nationalbibl. 568 both times alert the reader to the fact that here Walter digresses from *historia* in order to narrate “*figmenta.*” The first of these *figmenta* is a description of the house of Victory in 4.401-53 in obvious debt to Ovid, Claudian, and others. The second divine set-piece is especially dramatic, replete with particularly strong Virgilian themes. Here Nature goes to the underworld in order to convince Satan to have one of his minions kill Alexander. We have already seen how important and ripe with allegory Aeneas’ journey to hell was for twelfth century readers, so it should not surprise us to find that Walter has included a katabasis in his own epic. Yet, in stark contrast to Virgil, Walter does not allow his human protagonist to make this journey. A divine being, Nature, makes the descent in his stead. One possible reason for this change emerges when we examine what Servius says about Aeneas’ katabasis.

Servius brackets off Aeneas’ journey from the main historical narrative with two comments, one at the entrance to the underworld, at *Aeneid* 6.282, one at the exit, at *Aeneid* 6.893. At 6.893, Aeneas leaves the underworld through the ivory gate of false dreams (*portae somni*—Servius says “*somni*” stands for “*somniorum*”). Servius interprets this as Virgil’s way of showing that Aeneas’ journey to the underworld was meant to be

111 On the house of Victory at *Alexandreis* 4.401: “*In hoc loco competenter auctor digreditur ab hystoria ad figmentum, etc.*” (Colker, *Alexandreis*, 425). On the katabasis of Nature at *Alexandreis* 10.6: “*Hic incipit secundum capitulum, in quo facit auctor figmentum poeticum scilicet quomodo Natura descendit ad inferos et inpetravit a dyabolo ut Alexandrum interficeret*” (Colker, *Alexandreis*, 475). We see the same kind of note in Servius when the Trojan ships are transformed into nymphs at *Aeneid* 9.81: “*IPS A DEUM FERTUR GENETRIX figmentum hoc licet poeticum sit, tamen quia exemplo caret, notatur a criticis: unde longo prooemio excusatur, nam ideo et prisca ratione religionis et Iovis beneficio dicit esse perfectum, ut naves mutarentur in nymphas, quo vel aliqua ex parte posit esse verisimile. sane quidam ‘fertur’ reprehendunt, quod dicendo auctoritatatem rei detraxerit. alii laudant, quod dicendo ‘fertur’ incredibili rei auctoritatatem dare noluerit.*”

Servius also finds evidence in Virgil’s text to suggest that Aeneas had entered by this same gate, because at Aeneid 6.282 he claims:

\[
\text{IN MEDIO aut vestibulo: aut absolutum est, et intellegimus hanc esse eburneam portam, per quam exiturus Aeneas est. quae res haec omnia indicat esse simulata, si et ingressus et exitus simulatus est et falsus.}
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IN THE MIDDLE either in a vestibule or it is absolute and we understand that this is the ivory gate, through which Aeneas would exit. And this indicates that everything is imaginary if both the entrance and the exit is imaginary and false.

Thus, we find Servius making a similar distinction to that made by Walter’s medieval commentators—both alert the readers to the fact that the katabasis is fictional. Although Servius leaves it to the reader to infer that Aeneas’ experience of the underworld is a vision, he labels Aeneas’ descensus as sciomancy—consulting with spirits rather than entering the underworld. Macrobius more specifically identifies Aeneas’ experience as a kind of dream. Medieval scholars naturally combined Servius’ and Macrobius’ opinions on the subject.

Regardless of how we choose to interpret the gate of false dreams in the Aeneid, Virgil really did describe his human hero making a trip to the underworld. Walter goes a step further and does not allow his hero to enter the underworld at all. Instead he solves

\[113\] Servius ad Aeneid 6.893: “et poetice apertus est sensus: vult autem intellegi falsa esse omnia quae dixit.”
\[114\] Servius ad Aeneid 6.149.
\[115\] See Macrobius’ discussion in his commentary on the Somnium Scipionis, 1.3.17-20. For Macrobius, the ivory gate represents a dream in which the truth has been veiled: “hoc uelamen cum in quiete ad uerum usque aciem animae introspicientis admittit, de cornu creditur, cuius ista natura est ut tenuatuis uisui perultur sit, cum autem a a uero hebetat ac repellit optatum, ebur putatur cuius corpus ita densatum est ut ad quamuis extremitatem tenuetis erasum nullo uisui ad ulteriora tendente penetratur.”
\[116\] John of Salisbury borrows from both Servius and Macrobius in his interpretation of Virgil’s gates of horn and ivory (Policraticus, 2.14). Bernard Silvestris also accepts the interpretation of Aeneas’ descensus as sciomancy at Commentary on the Aeneid, 30. See also discussion of Servius’ and Macrobius’ interpretations in Wilson-Okamura, Virgil in the Renaissance, “The Gates of Sleep,” 153-8. Compare also Ralph of Longchamp’s claim in his Commentary on the Anticlaudianus, 58: “per portam enim eburneam signatur illud genus apparitionis quo anima concepitis in somnium et phantasma. Nec sine ratione: ebur enim licet tenuissime rasum non praebet ingressum visui; similiter talis apparitio non importat aliquid certitudinis, divinationis aut veritatis.”
Servius’ implicit problem with Aeneas’ katabasis—that a human cannot go to the afterlife and return—by depicting divinities engaging in the journey instead of the human protagonist. Divinities, being fictional, may engage in whatever fictional activity they like. Today we tend to view Homer’s and Virgil’s katabasis of the protagonist as one of the narrative staples of the epic genre. However, perhaps in part because of Virgil’s commentary tradition, the katabasis of a human protagonist was viewed in the Middle Ages and Renaissance as inappropriate to how the epic genre was expected to describe reality.

In fact, so strong were the voices against depicting such a physical katabasis that, as far as I can find, no surviving Latin epic after Ovid recounts a human corporeally visiting the afterlife and returning. Like Servius, Lucan does not allow for human characters to visit the underworld, but unlike Walter, Lucan never describes a voyage to the underworld—not even one made exclusively by divinities. Instead, Lucan chooses an option which Servius considers at least plausible, i.e. historia—having a witch resurrect a corpse. Statius includes necromancy and even allows a character to physically descend to hell but not to return. Claudian, one of Walter’s many models for Nature’s katabasis, employs the same technique as Walter in his In Rufinum by only allowing Allecto, a divine being, to journey to the underworld and leave. It is worth noting that Dante was attacked by at least one early modern critic for not making it more clear that his own katabasis was meant to be a dream or vision.\footnote{In 1572, Ridolfo (or Anselmo) Castravilla wrote the following: “Nobody will believe that a living man, in the flesh, could make a voyage through the three regions of the other world. The verisimilitude of our times cannot admit such an action.” The quotation comes from Wilson-Okamura, Virgil in the Renaissance, 153 where he cites Bernard Weinberg, A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), vol. 2, 833. For discussion of this quotation and the wider context of}
By understanding the generic expectations held by Walter’s readers, I would argue that we can attain a more intimate appreciation of his artistry. For instance, Walter himself could be seen as reprimanding Virgil by quite literally having Nature block Alexander from visiting and returning from the underworld. In the underworld, Nature explains to Leviathan that her journey was made in order to keep the living Alexander from transgressing the bounds of the universe and coming physically alive to hell. We might well interpret this scene as a metaphor for Nature keeping the epic protagonist from transgressing the bounds of the epic genre by entering the underworld and returning.

The gods in Joseph of Exeter’s *Ylias*

Compared to Walter, Joseph takes an even more self-conscious view of the divine apparatus. As we have seen, Joseph begins his exordium by emphasizing that his version of the Troy story will be new insofar as it will be more historically accurate than Homer’s or Virgil’s. His exordium continues by pointing out that he has no need of invoking the gods:

\[\text{Hunc ubi combiberit avide spes ardua mentis,}\]
\[\text{Quos superos in vota vocem? Mens conscientia veri}\]
\[\text{Proscripsit longe ludentem ficta poetam.}\]
\[\text{Quin te Cicropii mentita licentia pagi}\]
\[\text{Et ledant figmenta, pater...} 119\]

When the lofty hope of my mind has eagerly drunk from this source, what gods should I invoke? My mind, aware of the truth, has banished far away the poet playing with fictions lest the lying license of the Athenian countryside and their figments offend you, father [Baldwin]...

critical discomfort with Dante’s non-visionary trip to the underworld, see Wilson-Okamura, *Virgil in the Renaissance*, 153-63.

119 *Ylias* 1.27-31.
Perhaps because of Joseph’s disavowal of an invocation of the Muses, the author of the anonymous commentary on the *Ylias* in MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fonds Latin 15015, argues that Joseph omitted entirely the requisite Virgilian invocation:

> Et notandum cum sit auctorum commune opus susceptum in tria partiri, scilicet in propositionem, invocationem, et enarrationem, iste medium omittit, scilicet invocationem. Paganismum enim incideret si Phebum vel Musarum aliquam more aliorum invocaret.\(^{120}\)

And it must be noted that although it is an authorial commonplace for the beginning of a work to be divided into three parts, namely into the proposition, invocation, and narration, he omits that middle part, namely the invocation, for he would fall into paganism if he were to invoke Apollo, or one of the Muses in the manner of other authors.

Again we see the importance placed on beginning an epic according to the Virgilian formula; the boldness of Walter’s invocation of the Muse is also apparent. Perhaps this particular commentator would have thought Walter in danger of lapsing into paganism!

The rest of his exordium would appear to confirm Joseph’s disdain for pagan deities. While poetic license (*licentia*) and fictions (*ficta*) are ambiguous terms which could refer to historical fictions, mythology, or even the grammatical liberties associated with poetry, the term “figments” (*figmenta*) usually (though not always) refers to mythological material rather than historical fiction. Strengthening this association, Joseph’s reference to the “Athenian countryside” echoes the common ancient and medieval opinion that Greek mythology, their gods and “fabulous” stories, were invented in the distant past by Greek rustics to help them explain their world.

From his exordium, we might conclude that Joseph has not only banished the gods from his invocation (*quos superos in vota vocem*) but from his epic in the manner of most of his medieval predecessors. Such a decision would be in keeping with Joseph’s

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\(^{120}\) Riddehough, “Bellum Troianum,” 320.
primary source, Dares, who mentions the gods only once in the narrative (not counting prayers by characters) when he explains the judgment of Paris as a dream vision. An anonymous medieval hexametric paraphrase of Dares signals the absence of the gods in its account by claiming that although “poetic figments cloud the history of Troy, I should not be called a poet because I do not lie.”121 This anonymous author echoes Servius’ judgment of Lucan and seems to imply that a proper poetization of Dares would have to include a divine apparatus. Joseph, though disavowing poetic fiction, never denies that he is a poet—a hint that Joseph’s retelling of Dares will chart a different course from strict paraphrase.

In the seventh line of his epic, Joseph gives us another hint that this epic will not be so devoid of poetic figment as his protestations suggest. Joseph apostrophizes the historical truth (Veri sacra fides).122 Context transforms Truth into a personified divinity, since she will “smooth out the wrinkles in her brow” and “show her face.”123 Here we have the invocation declared missing by the Paris commentator. Joseph does not invoke the God of traditional Christian epic nor Virgil’s Muse but instead straddles the divide by invoking a personification deity, Truth.

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121 “historiam Troye figmenta poetica turbant, / non ego sum, quoniam nil fingo, poeta vocandus.” From the exordium of the Historia Troyana Daretis Frigii, quoted by von Moos in “Poeta und Historicus im Mittelalter,” 110.

122 The Paris commentator explains: “Autor ueram traditurus historiam ad ipsam rerum veritatem apostrophat, dicens UTH QUID, id est, quare O SACRA FI. UERI, id est, o veritas, et est circumlocutio ueritatis.” See Riddehough, “Bellum Trojanum,” 322. As Gompf and Thomas Gärtner have noted, “veri sacra fides” is almost certainly a phrase borrowed from Claudian’s Gothic War (line 554). In this context, the phrase refers to the fact that oracles only ever tell the truth after the event. That is, since soothsayers always issue a prophecy vague enough to be interpreted in multiple and contradictory ways, only the outcome will determine what the prophecy “really” meant. Modern editions of Claudian’s Gothic War print “veri sera fides,” but Gärtner has noted that Joseph’s text of Claudian may well have contained the variant “veri sacra fides” which appears, for instance, in the 1482 Vincenza edition of Claudian. See Gärtner, Klassische Vorbilder, 15.

123 Ylias 1.9-13.
Remarkably, Joseph incorporates even more of the classical divine apparatus into his epic than Walter. Joseph’s gods are usually personifications of natural or human phenomena, but they often have their mythological personae and names, such as Juno, Aeolus, Neptune, Apollo, Minerva, and Venus—not just the personification names of Walter’s primary deities such as Natura, Bellona, Victoria, and Fortuna. Joseph even narrates or alludes to many of the myths associated with the gods. To a much greater degree than Walter, Joseph allegorizes and euhemerizes these divinities, frequently taking on roles usually left to the commentator.

Joseph’s epic is as much an aetiology of how the pagan gods came to be worshipped (and incorporated into epic) as it is a retelling of the first pagan historical account. In explaining the origins of the classical gods, Joseph acts like a commentator who perhaps finds ways that the poet “touches upon” the realities behind the gods in the epic narrative. Nowhere is this more apparent in the Ylias than at the beginning of the narrative. In fact, one could say that Joseph depicts the “real” beginning of the Aeneid. The wind fills the sails of the Argo, just as it does for the happy Trojans on their way to Italy. Instead of Juno’s wrathful speech, which occurs at this point in the Aeneid, the narrator substitutes a similar speech of his own. He curses the Argo and pleads with the forces of nature to destroy the ship with rocks and winds, but fate pays him no more heed than it had Juno. Recall that although Juno has summoned a storm, Aeneas becomes terrified and utters a lament akin to a prayer. Soon after, Neptune senses the disturbance and commands the winds to desist in time to save all but one of the Trojan ships. In the

124 The other important model for Joseph’s opening scene is surely Valerius’ storm scene at Argonautica 1.574-656, itself closely modeled on the Aeneid’s opening storm scene. Indeed, Valerius’ treatment—in which a storm suddenly appears and is just as suddenly calmed by Jupiter, helps to explain Joseph’s own otherwise rather incongruous scene in which the sailors are terrified by the possible onset of a storm which is never described.
Ylias, the terror instilled in the Argonauts by the newness of the sea causes them to pray to the gods, begging the aid of Aeolus and Neptune by name. When the weather proves to be amenable, the men on the boat think that their prayers have been heard, and, through this very belief, they bring the gods into existence. According to Joseph, this moment replays how the gods first came into existence and explains why people continued to worship them:

...Contemptus in antris
YPotades, in aquis Triton, in carcere Chorus
Hac rate prerepta summnos senuisset in annos.
quippe deum genitore metu mens ceca creavit
Ditem umbris, celo superos et numina ponto.\(^\text{125}\)

If this ship [the Argo] had been destroyed, then Aeolus in his caves, Triton under the waves, and Caurus in his prison would have grown old, forever spurned. In truth, the mind, blind with fear—the generator of the gods—created Dis in his shadows, gods in the sky, and divinities in the sea.

From this moment on, the gods assume their positions in the divine apparatus of Joseph’s epic. Joseph describes Neptune making the sea calm and Aeolus giving the Argonauts a gentle breeze—much as Virgil shows the gods doing at the end of the storm in the first book of the Aeneid. Thus, Joseph essentially presents the gods from the dual perspective of his ancient pagan characters and his contemporary medieval audience versed in the allegorized divine apparatus of Virgilian epic. For instance, in the episode just recounted, after explaining how the gods came into being, Joseph says that the gods “rejoiced upon being called” and seems to show them actually doing the things that were asked of them.\(^\text{126}\) This then becomes a theme throughout the Ylias—that the gods are real insofar as the Greeks and Trojans believe them to be real. In fact, Joseph is at pains to make their beliefs plausible by showing that the Greeks and Trojans never found cause to

\(^{125}\) Ylias 1.104-8.
\(^{126}\) Ylias 1.113: “dei gaudentque vocati.”
stop believing in them. It just so happened through fate that most of their prayers appeared to have been heard and most of their prophecies turned out to be true. Joseph strengthens this connection by using *dii* (the gods) interchangeably with *fata* (the fates) throughout.

Joseph’s style of personification strikes the modern reader as evoking a double vision to such an extent that A.G. Rigg has suggested that the narrator might consist of two personae—a Christian medieval narrator and a pagan narrator. Rigg offers a careful and thorough reading of all of the gods in the *Ylias*, and I agree that there is a double perspective; however, I prefer not to see the epic as containing two different narrator personae, since, as Rigg acknowledges, Joseph does not distinguish between the two voices. Instead, I suggest that Joseph intends the epic’s divine apparatus to be read with the same “double” vision seen in the commentators: the gods have real names, loyalties, and histories, but at the same time they represent the full panoply of allegorical meanings from personifications to various manifestations of fate. Since Joseph has imitated the divine apparatus of classical epic, it seems logical to conclude that he expects his readers to apply the same range of allegorical readings to it that they would to, say, Virgil’s gods. It is as if the narrator of the *Ylias* is reading an ancient epic along with the medieval reader and commenting upon it.

We can see a good summary of the kind of meaning that I believe Joseph expects us to assign to his divine apparatus in a gloss from a twelfth-century manuscript of the

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Aeneid. This lengthy comment begins as an allegorizing explanation of what it means for Juno to love and dwell in Carthage, but the glossator uses the opportunity to explain how the whole divine apparatus should be interpreted. After explaining Juno and Jupiter in terms similar to Servius’ note on Aeneid 1.47 (cited above), the gloss goes on to offer a generalization:

Constat tamen apud philosophos rerum universitati deum unum preesse, sed per subiectas potestates diversa operari, quas ideo deos fabulose finxerunt ut et diversa per eos fieri ostenderent et rerum archana sub figmenti velamine obtegerent. Per Minervam enim sapientiam, per Venerem libidinem, per Iunonem fertilitatem et divitas dicunt amministrari. Greci ergo quando diviciis habundabant, Iuno eis favere perhibetur. Notandum quod quociens dii diversi inter se dicuntur non ad deum referendum. Nam numquam propriis discordat operibus, sed propter diversa hominum opera sic videntur. Quod autem ipse potestates nil per se possunt, sed omnia ex divino nutu disponantur. Ex hac littera conicitur: “siqua fata sinunt [Aeneid 1.18].”

It is agreed, however, among the philosophers that one god presides over the universe of things, but that he carries out various things through subordinate powers, which they represented fictively as gods, so that they might show various things to come to pass through them, and so they might hide the secrets of things under the veil of fiction. For they say that wisdom is administered through Minerva, lust through Venus, fertility and riches through Juno. Thus when the Greeks are abounding in riches, Juno is said to favor them. And it should be noted that, whenever the gods are said to differ among themselves, this should not be referred to God. For He is never discordant in his own works, but he seems so on account of the diverse works of men. Because, moreover, these powers can do nothing by themselves, but all things are disposed through the divine will. This is inferred from this phrase: IF THE FATES ALLOW.

Similarly, when Troy has been magnificently rebuilt after the first sacking, Joseph describes how the gods flock to the city from all regions and take up residence there.

Undique siderei maiestas conflua mundi
Yliacum dignata solum iuga, menia, pontum
Vestit et astrifero dat respiramina collo.
Ydeos Cibele colles colit, ipsa superbis

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128 Cambridge, Peterhouse College, MS 158. This manuscript and its Virgilian content is discussed at length by Christopher Baswell in Virgil in Medieval England, 84-135.

129 Transcription by Christopher Baswell in Ziolkowski, The Virgilian Tradition, 723.

130 Translation by Christopher Baswell in Ziolkowski, The Virgilian Tradition, 724.
Regnatura iugis reliquos tibi, Delia, saltus
Donat et Ydeis pensat venatibus orbem.
Pampineum te, Bache, nemus, te spicea cingit
Silva, Ceres. Neptunus aquas, navalia Phebus,
Arces Pallas habet et habetur Pallade fatum.\textsuperscript{131}

The majesty of the celestial universe, coming together from everywhere to dignify the Trojan realm, \textit{covers} (\textit{vestit}) the mountains, the walls, and the sea and gives relief to the star-bearing neck [i.e. Atlas]. Cybele cultivates the hills of Ida to reign on the loftiest peaks, but she gives to you, Delia, the remaining groves and repays you with the hunts of Ida. A grove of grapes encircles you, Bacchus. A forest of wheat surrounds you, Ceres. Neptune inhabits the waters; Phoebus, the port; Pallas the citadel where the fateful Palladium is held.

Just as the anonymous glossator argues that Juno is said to favor the Greeks when they are abounding in riches, Joseph uses the gods’ inhabitation of Troy to show that Troy has become prosperous again. Note in particular Joseph’s word “\textit{vestit}” to describe how the gods “cover” the physical features of the land and the city. Joseph seems to be alluding to the divine apparatus which is often described as a fictional poetic “covering” (\textit{integumentum}) over the true history. Indeed, just as the gods dignify (\textit{dignata}) and lend their majesty (\textit{maiestas}) to the realm of Troy, so the divine apparatus gives epic gravitas and poetic ornament to Joseph’s verse.

Joseph uses the full range of allegorizing found in Servius to account for the presence of the gods in the Trojan War. Some of Joseph’s allegorizations even seem to have been inspired directly by Servius’ commentary. For instance, at \textit{Aeneid} 2.396, Virgil describes how the Trojans disguised themselves as Greeks “going with gods not their own.”\textsuperscript{132} Servius explains “with gods not their own” as referring to the fact that the shields of the Greeks and Trojans each bore pictures of their supporting deities: Neptune for the Greeks, Minerva for the Trojans. Thus, the Trojans, by outfitting themselves in

\textsuperscript{131} \textit{Ylias} 1.536-44.
\textsuperscript{132} “\textit{Vadimus immixti Danais haud numine nostro...}”
Greek arms, bore the image of the Greek god, Neptune (not their own god, Minerva) on their shields. At *Ylias* 6.579-88, Joseph appears to have expanded Servius’ idea into a description of how the gods actually “appeared” in combat. Joseph first uses the idea that the Greeks and Trojans had their own favored divinities on their shields but changes the deities to better reflect his own version of the story. According to Joseph, the classical gods appear in combat insofar as the Trojans bear images of Cybele and Venus while the Greeks have shields and helmets painted with Minerva and Mars. Thus, Joseph explains that, when the Trojans and Greeks meet on the battlefield, it looks as if the gods are fighting in the midst of the battle alongside their favorite human warriors. In reality, the gods are merely decorations on their defensive gear.

A specific allegorization found in Servius can also help to explain a mythological reference in Joseph’s description of Helen that, at first, seems entirely out of place and shockingly unVirgilian. After a standard description of Helen’s comely body at *Ylias* 4.193-207, Joseph equates Helen’s body to a city:

\[
Haut minus insignes latebras secretius ornat
Vitalesque colit thalamos et digerit urbem
Interior natura suam. Cor principi motu
Libratum disponit opus, modulamina lingue
Limat pulmo loquax, modico dispensat hiatu
Splen risum, facili fel castigatius ira
Uritur. At teneri titillat mollius equo
Pruritus iecoris meriteque insignia fame
Mergens nativi titulos incestat amoris.
Hoc monstrum non ales edax, non labile saxum,
Non axis torquens, non mendax vicerit unda;
\]

133 “HAUD NVMINE NOSTRO aut diis contrariis: aut quia in scutis Graecorum Neptunus, in Troianorum fuerat Minerva depicta.”
Cum bene fracta tepet moriturque sepulta libido,
Respirant plenis incendia pristina fibris.
Sic Helenen totam pars unica mergit et ipsum
Excitat in cladem regnis certantibus orbem.

More secretly but no less does her interior nature adorn her excellent insides, nourish her vital rooms and direct her own city. Her heart sets the balanced work in order with principal motion; her talkative lung makes melodious sounds with her tongue; her spleen dispenses laughter in correct measure; her gallbladder, showing restraint, burns with a courteous anger. But the itch of her tender liver tickles with greater flexibility than equilibrium requires, and, overwhelming the achievements of well-earned renown, it defiles the glories of her natural love. No voracious bird, no rolling stone, no turning wheel, no deceitful water could subdue this monster. When her diminished libido cools, dies down, and is buried, then the original fires grow back with full fibers. Thus a single part overwhelms Helen’s whole body and incites the world itself to destruction through the fighting of kingdoms.

Neil Wright identifies this passage as one of the most unVirgilian moments in all of the Ylias and goes on to share his own aesthetic reading:

Suddenly, however, Joseph’s pen is transformed into a scalpel, as he literally cuts Helen open before our astonished eyes, ghoulishly praising her fine heart, lungs, and spleen. Yet it is by the liver, the seat of love, that all is revealed, for it is a monster that not even Tityos’ vulture can subdue. According to Marlowe, it was Helen’s face that launched a thousand ships. Joseph knows better: it was her liver, her own internal hell that brought a world to ruin. After that, it is not surprising to learn that Joseph’s favourite Classical model is Lucan, though in this case Joseph has managed to out-Lucan him.  

Wright finds the closest correspondence to Joseph’s description in that most “ghoulish” of classical epics, the Pharsalia, but this passage contains a strong Servian intertext which might guide our interpretation in a different, more Virgilian, direction.

When Virgil describes Tityos in Tartarus, Servius provides the following allegorization:

\begin{align*}
\text{PER TOTA NOVEM CUI IVGERA CORPUS PORRIGITUR quantum ad publicam faciem, magnitudinem ostendit corporis; sed illud significat, quia de amatore loquitur, libidinem late patere, ut ait supra “nec procul hinc partem fusi monstrantur in omnem lugentes campi.” sane de his omnibus rebus mire reddiT.}
\end{align*}

\footnote{Wright, in “Virgil in Twelfth-Century Epic?,” 14.}
rationem Lucretius et confirmat in nostra vita esse omnia quae finguntur de inferis. dicit namque Tityon amorem esse, hoc est libidine, quae secundum physicos et medicos in iecore est, sicut risus in splene, iracundia in felle: unde etiam exesum a vulture dicitur in poenam renasci: etenim libidini non satis fit re semel peracta, sed recrudescit semper, unde ait Horatius “incontinentis aut Tityi iecur.”

WHOSE BODY IS STRETCHED OUT ACROSS NINE ACRES He shows how great the size of his body is in external aspect; but because he is talking about a lover, it signifies that lust is wide-ranging, as he said above “the fields of mourning are shown to be spread out far and wide not far from this area.” Lucretius provides a wonderful suggestion about all of these things and confirms that all of those things which are described in the underworld are actually in our own life. For he says that Tityos is a lover, that is lust, which, according to physicians and doctors is in the liver, just as laughter in the spleen, anger in the gall-bladder. And for this reason, it is said to be eaten by a vulture and reborn as punishment: because lust is never satisfied for once it is finished, it always grows back, whence Horace says “or the liver of immoderate Tityos.”

Although the liver was well-known to be the seat of lust, Joseph must have borrowed the wider interpretation from Servius because only this Virgilian intertext can explain why, in lines 202-3, Joseph suddenly alludes to the captives tormented in Virgil’s Tartarus: Tityos, Ixion, Sisyphus, and Tantalus. What is more, Virgil says of Tityos’s liver at Aeneid 6.600, “nec fibris requies datur ulla renatis” (nor is any rest given to the regrown fibers). Joseph seems to have adapted this passage to describe Helen’s liver in lines 204-5 (Cum bene fracta tepet moriturque sepulta libido, / Respirant plenis incendia pristina fibris). We might deduce that, for Joseph, Helen’s liver is like the liver of Tityos because Tityos represents a lover, who is not suffering in the underworld but rather is being tormented during his own life-time because of self-inflicted lust. Once again, we see that the Servian gloss is so completely embedded in the Virgilian text that, to our eyes, this allusion to the Aeneid refers far more to the Servian interpretation than to the strictly Virgilian context.

136 Servius ad Aeneid 6.596.
The thirteenth-century Paris commentator on the *Ylias* does not explicitly note these resonances as Virgilian here, but he correctly identifies all of the Virgilian information to which Joseph refers. He explains “hoc monstrum” (this monster) as “*libidinosum iecoris pruritum*” (the libidinous itch of the liver) and identifies the punishments of Tityos, Ixion, Sisyphus, and Tantalus. Most interestingly, he glosses “*fibris*” (fibers) as “*ut dicunt phisici sunt eminentie iecoris*” (as physicians say, these are protuberances of the liver), quoting Servius’ gloss on Virgil’s “*fibris*” in *Aeneid* 6.600, “*fibrae sunt eminentaiiae iecoris*” (fibers are protuberances of the liver). Thus, although he does not draw attention to the Virgilian allusion (*Aeneid* 6.600) which I have described above, he quotes Servius’ commentary on the same word. This anonymous medieval reader sees nothing “ghoulish” about Joseph’s description of Helen, instead detecting the same sort of natural and moral philosophy that Servius finds in Virgil.\(^\text{137}\)

Besides such subtle allegorization of myth, Joseph also overtly introduces euhemerizing commentary into his text—again playing the role of both commentator and poet. One of the most dramatic examples is the story of the death of Castor and Pollux. Joseph takes his cue from Dares, describing how Castor and Pollux drown in the ocean when their boat sinks. Joseph then declares, in language strongly reminiscent of his exordium:

\(^{137}\) Compare also Bernard Silvestris’ similar allegorization of the city of Troy as Aeneas’ body at *Commentary on the Aeneid*, 15-6: “Civitas ergo Enee est corpus humanum quod spiritus humanus incolit et regit ideoque eius civitas dicitur. Ierum quemadmodum in civitate sunt quattuor mansionum divisiones et quattuor hominum ordinis illas mansiones incolentes, ita quoque in humano corpore quattuor sunt mansiones et potentie sedem in illis habentes. Prima civitatis mansio est arcs, quam sapientes incolunt; ita in corpore prima et eminientior mansio et arcs corporis est capud, in quo sapientia sedem habet, et in eo sunt instrumenta sensuum et tres ingeni et rationis et memorie cellule. Secunda civitatis mansio est mililum; ita secunda corporis mansio est animositatis in corde, scilicet quemadmodum illa est animosorum. Tercia mansio civitatis est cupidinariorum; ita tertia est in corpore cupiditatis; hec autem est in renibus. In ultimo civitatis est suburbium sedes agricolarum; ita in extremit corporis sunt manus et pedes ad agendum. Ideo civitas corpus dicitur. Huius civitatis incendium est prime etatis fervor naturalis, quo relictio venitur in Antandrum.”
Desine, Cicropii funesta licentia pagi,
Incestos generare deos! Non fabula celum,
Sed virtus non ficta dabit.\textsuperscript{138}

Stop creating impure gods, oh deadly license of the Athenian countryside! Not myth but non-fictional virtue will grant you heaven.

In the course of explaining that the Greeks did not find their bodies and so created the story that they had turned into gods, Joseph in fact tells the mythic version of the story as well. He concludes the discussion (and the book) by comparing the myth to the “laughable” belief of the Britons who think that King Arthur will one-day return.\textsuperscript{139}

Again, we see a similar interest to the medieval Virgilian commentators who sometimes situate issues raised by the Aeneid within their own contemporary discourse—such as the Aeneid’s historical relationship to Christian history.

Joseph’s euhemerization of the myth of Castor and Pollux has many analogies in Servius’ commentary. We have seen how Servius repeatedly denies that Aeneas ascended to heaven as Jupiter promised Venus. Instead, according to Servius (and highlighted in the anonymous medieval commentator’s accessus), Aeneas met an ignominious death in the Numicus river. Another analogy may be found in Servius’ comments on the myth of Daedalus at Aeneid 6.14. After outlining the traditional myth, Servius explains that Virgil uses the phrase “\textit{ut fama est}” to signal to his reader that he is about to tell something fictional from which the “truth would have to be sought out” (\textit{requirendam esse veritatem}).\textsuperscript{140} Servius then gives the “true” historical account in which Pasiphae’s illicit

\textsuperscript{138} Ylias 3.454-6.
\textsuperscript{139} Ylias 3.472-3: “\textit{Sic Britonum ridenda fides et credulus error / Arturum exspectat exspectabitque perenne}.”
\textsuperscript{140} Servius mentions this interpretation of what modern scholars call the “Alexandrian footnote” several times but first in his comment on Aeneid 1.15: “\textit{FERTUR dicitur, et ingenti arte Vergilius, ne in rebus fabulosis aperte utatur poetarum licentia, quasi opinionem sequitur et per transitum poetico utitur more, vel certe \textit{fertur} creditur.” For discussion of the “Alexandrian footnote,” see Stephen Hinds, \textit{Allusion and Intertext Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2.
love was merely Minos’ secretary, named Taurus, and Icarus did not drown by falling from the sky but rather from falling off a boat. Servius concludes by showing that Virgil himself alluded to the true version—death from sailing rather than flying—by using the phrase “oarage of his wings” (*remigium alarum*).

Joseph’s criticism of the “*Cicropii licentia pagi*” looks at first glance like Christian ranting against the pagans—and indeed to some extent it is, but Servius does exactly the same kind of euhemerizing. Moreover, Servius claims that Virgil himself has alluded to many of these rationalizations in his text, but whereas Virgil (according to Servius) only implies such rationalizations, Joseph assimilates the role of the narrator to the role of the commentator—providing the traditional myth while at the same time decrying its untruthfulness and giving the “true” historical account which had inspired the myth.

The only lengthy set-piece where Joseph introduces the gods as speaking characters is in the judgment of Paris. Joseph carefully sets this scene within a speech which in turn relates a dream. In Dares, the judgment of Paris originates in a dream vision. Joseph follows the suggestion in Dares and expands Paris’ s dream to nearly four hundred lines, occupying the entire second half of Book 2 (2.237-613). Just as Servius attempts to circumvent the impossibility of human travel to the underworld by placing it in a dream, so Joseph safely confines his major mythological set-piece to a dream. What is more, he has Paris narrate the whole story. As we have seen, Servius claims that whenever Virgil uses the term “*fertur*” or other similar expressions such as “*ut fama est,*” he is signaling to the reader that something fictional is about to be told. According to

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Servius, by placing a myth within reported speech, Virgil also removes himself from accountability for the fiction by assigning it to others. Thus, by having Paris tell the story, Joseph has put the divine conversations at not just one but two removes from the reality of history. It is as if Joseph has done the work of a commentator here—no need for his commentators to signal the fiction—Joseph does it himself.

Joseph’s care in only allowing the gods to speak to humans or other gods in dreams sets him apart from Walter who causes Fortune to speak to Alexander on the battlefield and records the conversation between Nature and Leviathan quite independent of the historical narrative. Joseph does allow a divine character to give a monologue once, for Allecto gives a speech modeled primarily on Juno’s at *Aeneid* 1.37-49. She is not, however, witnessed by any other gods or humans. With the exception of this one monologue and Paris’ dream vision, Joseph’s gods are completely silent. These two scenes are also the only ones in which Joseph engages in extended narrative “*figmenta*” analogous to Walter’s description of the house of Victory and the katabasis of Nature.

Joseph still allows the reader a glimpse of the Virgilian underworld, but whereas Walter uses divine beings to avoid violating the “rules” of Latin epic, Joseph’s solution is to place his *katabasis* in a curse uttered by the narrator. Joseph’s decision to remove Tartarus from the direct experience of any character by placing it in a curse might also owe something to Servius’ sense of decorum. Servius notes, with approval, that Virgil keeps Aeneas from directly observing the evils of Tartarus. Instead, the Sibyl describes Tartarus to Aeneas, because, in Servius’ view, it would be unseemly for the hero to be tainted by a visit to Tartarus. In his curse of the slain Paris, the narrator of the *Ylias* gives the reader an equally indirect experience of Tartarus, at the same time making no claims.

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141 *Ylias* 2.7-12. For discussion of Joseph’s models for this speech, see Gärtner, *Klassische Vorbilder*, 71-2.
as to the reality of his very Virgilian description of hell. After seeing the importance of Book 6 to Alan of Lille and John of Hauville, it should come as no surprise that Joseph’s closest approximation of a Virgilian katabasis appears in the middle of the sixth book of his epic.

\[
\text{Vade, nocens, quo noxa trahit! Te sexta meretur}
\]
\[
\text{Tenaree spelunca domus. Si quartus amores}
\]
\[
\text{Tractus habet quintusque viros, at adultera vitant}
\]
\[
\text{Funera et incesto congressos Marte tirannos.}
\]
\[
\text{Te plaga sulphureas Titanum amplexa catenas,}
\]
\[
\text{Demerso clausura sinu nox ultima et ima}
\]
\[
\text{Poscit humus, etc.}\]^{142}

Go, criminal, where your crime takes you! The sixth cave of hell is what you deserve. Although the fourth division holds lovers and the fifth men [i.e. heroes], both reject the adulterous dead and tyrants who fought a sinful war. The region holding the sulfurous chains of the Titans, the final night, and the deepest part of earth demand you to be enclosed in its buried interior, etc.

The passage continues for another eight lines in which the narrator describes the rivers of Virgil’s hell and the torments of the Titans held in Virgil’s Tartarus at \textit{Aeneid} 6.595-607. Virgil himself specifies Tartarus as reserved for those like Paris, “\textit{quique ob adulterium caesi}” (whoever is killed because of adultery).^{143} As we should expect, this is not Virgil’s underworld alone, for it arrives in Joseph clearly refracted through the lens of Servius. Francine Mora and her team point out in the notes to their translation of this passage that Joseph owes something to Virgil’s conception of hell, but she and her team do not record any connection to the Virgilian commentary tradition.^{144} At least one of Joseph’s medieval readers knew better. The Paris commentary on the \textit{Ylias} quotes Servius’

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\textit{Aeneid} 6.612.
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\textit{L’Iliade: épopée du XIIe siècle sur la Guerre de Troie}, trans. Francine Mora et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 286-7 n.70.
\end{flushright}
comment on *Aeneid* 6.426 as a gloss on this passage, although it has not been recognized as Servian until now.\textsuperscript{145}

We may be certain that Servius is Joseph’s source, either directly or indirectly, because Virgil never numbers his divisions of hell. What is more, Joseph’s wording throughout this passage uses words found in Servius but not the *Aeneid*. For instance, Servius describes the sixth circle as the place for “*nocentes*” (pernicious), just as Joseph begins the passage by calling Paris, “*nocens*.” The term “*nocens*” does not appear in Virgil’s description of Tartarus and its inhabitants. Moreover, Joseph’s “*quintusque viros*” (and the fifth [holds] men) only really makes sense in the context of Servius’ passage, “*quintum virorum fortium esse dicit*” (he says that the fifth is for brave men).

Servius’ technical term for a hero is “*vir fortis,*” so Joseph’s “*viros*” must be an abbreviation for “*viros fortes,*” i.e. “heroes,” not simply “men.”\textsuperscript{146} In contrast, Virgil describes this region (without numbering it) at *Aeneid* 6.477 as “*quae bello clari secreta frequentant*” (remote places where those famous in war gather). Joseph is not only indebted to Servius, but knowledge of Servius is almost required in order to make sense of the passage, as Joseph’s anonymous medieval commentator recognized.

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\textsuperscript{145} Servius ad *Aeneid* 6.426: “*novem circulis inferi cincti esse dicuntur, quos nunc exequitur. nam primum dicit animas infantum tenere, secundum eorum qui sibi per simplicitatem adesse nequiverunt, tertium eorum qui evitantes aerumnas se necarunt, quartum eorum qui amarunt; quintum virorum fortium esse dicit, sextum nocentes tenent qui puniuntur a iudicibus, in septimo animae purgantur, in octavo sunt animae ita purgatae, ut redeant in corpora, in nono, ut iam non redeant, scilicet campus Elysius*.” For the nearly identical text of the medieval gloss, see Riddehough, “*Bellum Troianum,*” 412. Riddehough makes no note of the gloss’s possible origins.

\textsuperscript{146} Compare Servius ad *Aeneid* 1.196 “*HEROS vir fortis, semideus, plus ab homine habens, ut ait Hesiodus.*” For discussion and further examples in Servius, see Thomas, *Virgil and the Augustan Reception*, 100-1.
Lucanian or Virgilian?

From Servius to David Quint (in *Epic and Empire*), literary scholars have been inclined to see a distinction between Lucanian and Virgilian epic. Currently, most scholars of Medieval Latin read the *Alexandreis* and *Ylias* as indebted more to the Lucanian tradition. In the case of the *Ylias*, little evidence has been offered to support these claims, but many good examples have been marshaled by von Moos and others to show Walter’s extensive use of Lucan.\(^{147}\) I do not dispute most of the evidence offered so far, which primarily consists of small scale echoes, but I feel that larger scale differences have been overlooked. To some extent, there may be an assumption underlying many studies that Walter is writing ‘historical epic,’ in contrast to Virgil’s ‘mythological epic.’ We have seen that Virgil was thought to have been writing history, so the mere decision to narrate ‘true’ history in a medieval epic must not be taken as a sign of Lucanian alignment against Virgil. The same can be said for Joseph’s use of Dares.

More importantly, the presence of the divine apparatus in both the *Alexandreis* and *Ylias* immediately suggests that Lucan is not a primary model for either Walter or Joseph. Another particularly unLucanian feature shared by both the *Alexandreis* and the *Ylias* are their battle scenes. Walter and Joseph employ one-on-one heroic battle scenes in the Homeric/Virgilian style in spite of the fact that their sources, Curtius and Dares, describe these battles as large movements of troops.\(^{148}\) Lucan, of course, intentionally breaks with the epic tradition in order to narrate his battles in the manner typical of prose historians.

Besides such quintessentially non-Lucanian features, the *Alexandreis* also displays many specifically Virgilian features. There is no doubt that the narrative of the *Aeneid* is more like the narrative of the *Alexandreis*, where the deeds of a single epic hero are the central driving force. The *Pharsalia* is neither a “*Pompeid*” nor “*Caesaried*.”

According to Arnulf of Orleans, writing in the early twelfth century, Lucan’s epic is at the same time entirely about Caesar and entirely about Pompey. 149 Although von Moos makes the case for seeing Lucan’s Caesar and Pompey in Walter’s Alexander and Darius, it would be hard to say that Walter’s epic is as much about Darius as it is about Alexander. 150

Besides this, it is no meager similarity, considering the centrality of Virgil’s three grand ecphrases to his *Aeneid*, that the *Alexandreis* also contains three lengthy ecphrases, one of which is a shield. In spite of Raby’s quip that Walter includes a shield ecphrasis because “an epic would not be complete without such a digression,” Walter only would have known two lengthy shield ecphrases in classical epic: Homer’s by way of the *Ilias Latina* and Virgil’s. 151 The shield ecphrasis in the *Ilias Latina* does not depict history, so we can safely conclude that Aeneas’ shield is the unambiguous model for Darius’ shield. What is more, the *Aeneid* is the only surviving Latin epic from antiquity to contain three substantial ecphrases depicting historical (by ancient and medieval standards) scenes. Most contain far fewer, while the *Pharsalia* contains none at all.

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149 “*Materia Lucani in hoc opere est totus Cesar et totus Pompeius, totus Cesar id est ipse et sui complices, totus Pompeius, id est ipse et sui coadiutores.*”

150 *Entre histoire et littérature*, 146. Neil Wright makes a similar parallel between Pompey and Darius in ‘*Virgil and Twelfth-Century Epic*?’. 15. Throughout the third chapter of *Proles vesana Philippi*, Wiener also maintains that Alexander is analogous to Lucan’s Caesar, Darius to Pompey.

Chapter 3: Didactic Heroics

Ethical imitation of the Aeneid in twelfth-century epic

Much of the previous scholarly debate about the relationship between Medieval Latin epic and Classical Latin epic has centered on the role of the epic hero. For instance, Dennis Kratz argues in *Mocking Epic* that certain classicizing Medieval Latin epics, including the *Alexandreis*, intentionally describe heroes who seem to provide “a positive exemplar of *virtus*, but a closer look at the poet’s subtle interweaving of classical and Christian references reveals that his real purpose is to attack the values associated with epic, and that the Christian theme of each narrative lies in the mockery, not the praise of its hero.”

Although she does not go so far as Kratz, Ratkowitsch argues in *Descriptio Picturae* that twelfth-century epic similarly exploits the distinction between pagan and Christian heroic values, criticizing the pagan hero’s search for earthly glory. These scholars build their arguments on the assumption that the Christian perspective of medieval writers and audiences would have made it difficult to appreciate the heroics of pagan epic unless presented from a satirical perspective. Although the distinction between the Christian and pagan interpretation of classical epic is surely an important one, to my knowledge, no one so far has tested this hypothesis by closely examining how twelfth-century readers interpreted the heroics of both Classical and Medieval Latin epic.

A related and also largely overlooked problem in defining the relationship between medieval Latin epic heroes and Virgil’s Aeneas stems from the difficulty in

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1 *Mocking Epic*, 2.
determining how the moral character of Aeneas is to be read. Modern classicists tend to be divided between those who emphasize the many failings in Aeneas’ character, so-called ‘pessimists,’ and those who emphasize Aeneas’ many virtues, so-called ‘optimists.’ As Kallendorf has argued, we must allow for the possibility that similarly diverse interpretations existed in pre-modern readings of Aeneas’ moral character.² What is more, the modern controversy over the interpretation of the Aeneid should remind us that a negative view of Aeneas’ character is not necessarily indicative of an anti-pagan or anti-Virgilian perspective but could also be grounded in a careful philological study of the Aeneid in its historical context. While examining each epicist’s response to Virgil’s conception of heroics, I will continually question whether modern critics of twelfth-century epic are drawing more on their own interpretations of the Aeneid than on the range of interpretations of the Aeneid known to have existed in the twelfth century.

The importance of ethics to the twelfth-century interpretation of epic

Even before Fulgentius wrote his allegory of the Aeneid “according to moral philosophy” (secundum philosophos moralis), an education in ethics was thought to be one of the chief benefits of studying epic. Servius is at pains throughout the Aeneid to show that Aeneas represents an ethical ideal, a claim made even more strongly by his probable contemporary, Tiberius Donatus, in his Interpretationes Virgilianae. Several modern studies have established that, in the Middle Ages (as indeed in the early modern

period), classical epics were especially valued for their ethical content. Thus, it should come as no surprise that Bernard Silvestris describes the “utilitas” of the Aeneid as dual training in poetic style and ethics:

Itaque est lectoris gemina utilitas: una scribendi peritia que habetur ex imitatione, altera vero recte agendi prudentia que capitur exemplorum exhortatione. Verbi gratia: ex laboribus Enee tolerantie exemplum habemus, ex affectu eius in Anchisem et Ascanium pietatis, ex veneratione quam diis exibebat et ex oraculis que poscebat, ex sacrificiis que offerebat, ex votis et precibus quas fundebat quodammodo ad religionem invitamur. Per immoderatum Didonis amorem ab appetitu illicitorum revocamur.

And so there is a double benefit for the reader: the first is the skill of writing which comes about through imitation, the second is the prudence to behave correctly which is attained through the encouragement of exempla. For example, from the labors of Aeneas, we can take the exemplum of endurance; from his love for Anchises and Ascanius, the exemplum of piety; from the veneration which he showed towards the gods, from the oracles that he was consulting, from the sacrifices which he offered, and from the vows and prayers which he made, in a manner, we are encouraged to be religious. Through his immoderate love for Dido, we are recalled from appetite for forbidden things.

Bernard Silvestris goes on to define a third utilitas, one closely related to the ethical utilitas, but which arises specifically from the allegorical meaning of the Aeneid.

Utilitatem vero capiatur homo ex hoc opere, scilicet sui cognitionem; homini enim magna est utilitas, ut ait Macrobius, se ipsum cognoscere. Unde dictum est, “De celo descendit nothis elitos,” id est, cognosce te.

But a person draws his own benefit from this work, namely knowledge of himself; for it is a great benefit, as Macrobius says, for a person to know himself. Whence it is said that the phrase “nothis elitos”, i.e. “know thyself,” comes from heaven.

Given that ancient epics, such as the Aeneid, were regularly read for their ethical content, it follows that these twelfth-century epics would be intended to provide ethical models for their readers as well. The published commentaries on the Ylias,

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4 Bernard, Commentary on the Aeneid, 2-3.
5 Bernard, Commentary on the Aeneid, 3.
Anticlaudianus and Alexandreis confirm this assumption (no equivalent material has yet been published for the Architrenius). The anonymous Paris commentary on the Ylias claims that “the subject of the poem is ethics” (ethice subiacet) and that it is the intention of all authors to provide “a catalog of morals” (morum continentiam).6 Alan himself claims, in the prose prologue to his Anticlaudianus, that his poem’s “moral instruction will train the conscience to perfection”.7 Alan goes on to suggest that “the sharper subtlety of the poem’s allegory will incite the advancing intellect”.8 Alan’s “acutior subtilitas allegorie,” may well be related to the utilitas which Bernard sees specifically in the allegorized Aeneid. Support for this theory linking the utilitas of Alan’s allegory with the utilitas of Virgil’s allegory comes from the only published medieval commentary on the Anticlaudianus, written by Alan’s student, Ralph of Longchamp. Ralph describes the “utilitas” of the Anticlaudianus as “know thyself.”9 This sort of utilitas is obviously enough related to the ethical reading of epic, but Ralph goes on to elaborate the relationship quite clearly:

Est enim maximum et perutile suae originis habere cognitionem. Hanc enim utilitatem consequitur lector in hoc opere, ut sciat, quid ex Deo habeat, quid ex natura contrahat, quid a fortuna recipiat, in quo ei vitium detrahirat.10

For it is especially useful to have an understanding of one’s origin. The reader gets this benefit from the work: that he may learn what he gets from God, what he derives from Nature, what he receives from Fortune, and how he may rid himself of Vice.

Bernard’s explanations for the Aeneid’s moral force as well as Ralph’s claims for the utilitas of the Anticlaudianus contain obvious parallels to some of the published

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7 “In hoc etenim opere... moralis instructio pericientem imbuet sensum...”
8 “acutior allegorie subtilitas proficientem acuet intellectum.”
9 Ralph of Longchamp, Commentary on the Anticlaudianus, 20: “Utilitas sive finalis causa est illud coeleste proverbium “nothis elitos” id est “cognosce teipsum.”
10 Ibid.
scholia on the *Alexandreis*. For instance, an anonymous *accessus* to the *Alexandreis*, published as part of the Verona scholia in Colker’s edition of the *Alexandreis*, argues for the ethical usefulness of the poem:

> Ad hoc enim finaliter utilis est liber ille ut, perlecto libro et exitu Alexandri considerato, inter utramque fortunam tamquam inter duas molas constituti, constanter roboremur ut motus fortune et spinas tribulationis pacienter sustineamus et ne rerum affluencia plus molliamur equo.¹¹

Finally, the book has this benefit: once the book has been read completely and the death of Alexander has been considered, we may stay constantly strong when stationed between each fortune just as between two millstones, so that we may sustain patiently the turns of fortune and the thorns of tribulation and not grow softer than is appropriate in affluent times.

This ethical manner of reading means that the heroes in epic, whether by Christian or pagan authors, tend to be read as exemplifying right and wrong ways of reacting to the various situations which they encounter. The twelfth-century reader is expected to draw moral lessons from the behavior of epic heroes, whether pagan or Christian, and apply them to his or her own life. Given the importance of such ethical readings, if we want to understand how twelfth-century epic imitates and reacts to the *Aeneid*, it is crucial to establish how Aeneas’ moral character was perceived in the twelfth century.

The legacy of antiquity on the moral character of Virgil’s Aeneas

¹¹ Colker, *Alexandreis*, 350. Cf. the nearly identical phrasing in the scholia of another manuscript of the *Alexandreis*, 301: “Ad hec enim finaliter utilis est liber iste ut, perlecto libro et exitu Alexandriconiuncionis considerato, inter utramque fortunam, tanquam inter duas molas, constituti roboremur ut ictus fortune et spinas tribulationis pacienter sustineamus et ne rerum affluencia plus equo muliebriter  emolliamur.”
Despite the popularity of Tiberius Donatus’ *Interpretationes Vergilianae* in the fifteenth century, this work seems to have been largely unknown in the twelfth century.\textsuperscript{12} Servius, on the other hand, was ubiquitous. In accord with his claim that Virgil intends to praise Augustus through Aeneas, Servius frequently shows Virgil making an effort to present Aeneas in as good a light as possible so as not to offend Augustus.\textsuperscript{13} We have seen that Servius was well aware of the tradition that Aeneas betrayed his country, but he usually argues that Virgil intentionally constructed his fictional hero to be more perfect than the ‘historical’ Aeneas. Richard Thomas has shown that Servius’ interpretations tend to make Aeneas into a *vir perfectus* who nearly always behaves ethically.\textsuperscript{14} For example, although modern ‘pessimist’ readers often interpret Aeneas’ killing of Turnus as reflecting poorly on Aeneas, Servius defends Aeneas’ moral character in his comment on *Aeneid* 12.940.

*CUNCTANTEM FLECTERE SERMO COEPERAT omnis intentio ad Aeneae pertinet gloriæ: nam et ex eo quod hosti cogitat parcere, pius ostenditur, et ex eo quod eum interimit, pietatis gestat insigne: nam Euandri intuítu Pallantis ulciscitur mortem.*

HIS SPEECH HAD BEGUN TO SWAY HIM AS HE DELAYED Every intention pertains to the glory of Aeneas: from the fact that he considered sparing his enemy, he is shown to be pious, and from the fact that he killed him, he bears the mark of piety, since he avenges the death of Pallas out of respect for Evander.

Although Servius sees only a positive ethical exemplum in Aeneas’ behavior here, a very different late antique interpretation of this scene could have been known by our


\textsuperscript{14} See Thomas’ discussion of Servius’ reaction to and suppression of earlier ‘pessimistic’ interpretations in *Virgil and the Augustan Reception*, 117-21.
twelfth-century epicists: Lactantius’ discussion of Aeneas’ moral character in the *Divinae institutiones*. Although Lactantius’ *Divinae institutiones* was not frequently copied in the twelfth century, John of Salisbury, at least, was demonstrably familiar with it.\(^\text{15}\) Remarkably, the very twelfth-century manuscript from which he read has survived.\(^\text{16}\) Because John of Salisbury would have had a similar education to these four epic poets and was part of the same literary circle for whom these epics were intended, it seems reasonable to allow for the possibility that Lactantius could have been known by our poets and their readership.

Lactantius’ criticism of Aeneas in *Divinae institutiones* 5.10 has received some recent notoriety in the dispute between modern ‘optimist’ and ‘pessimist’ readers of the *Aeneid*.\(^\text{17}\) In a well-known critique of the pessimist position, Galinsky cites this passage in order to discredit the views of his opponents, characterizing their reading of the end of the *Aeneid* as “Christian” and antithetical to “classical” values.\(^\text{18}\) Although I believe that Lactantius’ Christianity has caused him to be unjustly discounted by Galinsky and others as a “classical” interpreter of Virgil (e.g. charging that his conception of *pietas* is

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\(^\text{15}\) Lactantius primarily seems to have been read and copied in the regions of modern France between the Carolingian period and the fourteenth century, when Lactantius became more widely known. See Braxton Ross, “Audi Thoma... Henriciani Nota: A French Scholar Appeals to Thomas Becket?”, *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 89, No. 351 (Apr., 1974), 333-338: 334.


\(^\text{17}\) Most recently, Michael Putnam deemed Lactantius’ discussion of Aeneas important enough to translate it as part of the evidence offered in his book, *The Humanness of Heroes: Studies in the Conclusion of Virgil’s Aeneid* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 120-1. Curiously, Putnam never offers his own interpretation of Lactantius’ discussion, instead simply juxtaposing it to Servius’ pronouncement on the death of Turnus, which receives much fuller discussion.

Christian, not “pagan”), Lactantius’ Christian viewpoint obviously would have been shared by our medieval authors and readers.19

Lactantius begins by citing Aeneas as the most widely praised example of pagan “piety” in the Empire. Lactantius’ aim, however, is to prove that Virgil’s Aeneas is not always pious in spite of Virgil’s frequent use of the epithet throughout the epic. That is to say, Lactantius demonstrates that Virgil’s Aeneas, in spite of Virgil’s apparent omission of Aeneas’ treachery, was not even pious within the fictionalized construct of the Aeneid. Instead, he argues that Aeneas is only pious in his respect for his father, not in the more general sense that Virgil frequently implies. Although this passage is usually cited by modern scholars as a critique of Aeneas’ killing of Turnus at the end of the Aeneid, Lactantius only directly discusses an earlier scene: Aeneas’ capture of eight young men to sacrifice during Pallas’ funerary rites (Aeneid 10.517-20).

To heighten the rhetorical effect, Lactantius subtly combines his description of this episode with short quotations taken from two other scenes: Aeneas’ slaying of Magus (10.524) and his killing of Turnus (12.946):

adiuratus enim per eundem patrem, et per “spes surgentis Iuli,” nequaquam pepercit,” “Furiis accensus et ira.”20

For, though entreated in the name of that same father and by “your hope in the growing Iulus,” (10.524) he did not spare them, “hot with fury and anger” (12.946).

19 In Pietas from Vergil to Dryden (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), James Garrison shows the extreme critical discomfort that must lie behind Servius’ (and Tiberius Donatus’) protestations of Aeneas’ pietas here. Garrison, who starts from the premise that Virgil’s Aeneas must always be “pius,” sees evidence that the term, pietas, must have come to mean something more akin to “pity” by the fourth century, hence the discomfort of Virgil’s fourth-century commentators. I am more inclined to see Servius and Donatus responding to a divided critical tradition in much earlier Virgilian commentary—a tradition which Lactantius, as a professional gramarian and rhetorician in Rome, would have had access to. Critics of Lactantius who argue that his interpretation of pietas is specifically Christian must remember that Lactantius is not speaking to fellow Christians but to a pagan audience. Clearly, Lactantius expected his pagan audience to agree with his point about Aeneas’ impiety in these instances.

20 Lactantius, Divinae institutiones, 5.10.
Virgil never says that Aeneas acts in anger against the youths or is begged by them in the name of his father and son. These details have been taken from later, though admittedly similar, scenes. Lactantius clearly added these quotations in order to heighten the effect of his criticism by neatly combining three potentially problematic elements for exegetes interpreting Aeneas as a morally *vir perfectus*—all three of which focus on Aeneas’ Achillean rage in the last three books. Aeneas is said to kill Turnus in passionate anger; he executes a suppliant whose invocation of Anchises at *Aeneid* 10.524 reminds the reader of Anchises’ commandment at 6.853 to spare the vanquished (*parcere subiectis*); and he sacrifices eight human captives.

For Servius, this last act is only justifiable as something that happened according to the mores of earlier times.\(^{21}\) Lactantius refers to the same justification (for his conflation of all three potential misdeeds), arguing that some might defend Aeneas by judging him against his own, more ancient and, implicitly, more barbaric time (not Virgil’s). Lactantius responds to such a possible defense by arguing that even if Aeneas cannot be blamed, because he was an “unlettered” man, Virgil was highly learned and should have known better than to describe such a man as pious.\(^{22}\) Lactantius concludes that Aeneas was only pious insofar as he loved his father—in contrast to Virgil’s more general usage of the term.

Although Lactantius’ critique of Aeneas may or may not have been known to our twelfth-century poets, Augustine, who never wrote Virgilian commentary but left many

\(^{21}\) Servius ad *Aeneid* 10.519: “*sane mos erat in sepulchris virorum fortium captivos necari: quod postquam crudele visum est, placuit gladiatores ante sepulchra dimiticare, qui a bustis bustuarii appellati sunt.*”

\(^{22}\) *Divinae institutiones*, 5.10: “*sed haec, ut dixi, culpa non illius fuit, qui litteras fortasse non didicerat, sed tua; qui cum esses eruditus, ignorasti tamen quid esset pietas, et illud ipsum quod nefarie, quod detestabiliter fecit, pietatis esse officium crededisti.*”
discussions of the *Aeneid* scattered throughout his oeuvre, must surely have shaped our twelfth-century poets' views on the moral character of Aeneas. Augustine’s attitude toward Virgil has been well documented and has been shown to vary over the course of his life and throughout his literary output. To generalize, however, Augustine was not inclined to co-opt Virgil as a mouthpiece for Christian values. In contrast to many contemporary Christians, Augustine did not read *Eclogue* 4 as a prophecy of Christ’s birth, nor, like the Biblical epicists, did he often reappropriate Virgil’s words to tell tales from the Bible. Nevertheless, Augustine sometimes differentiates between Virgil’s beliefs and the beliefs espoused by his characters:

*Qui hoc (sc. aeternitatem) terrenis regnis promiserunt... adulatione mentiti sunt. Poeta illorum quidam induxit Iovem loquentem, et ait de Romanis: ‘His ego nec metas rerum, nec tempora prono: imperium sine fine dedi.’ Non plane ita respondet veritas... Forte si vellimus hinc exagitare Vergilium, et insultare, quare hoc dixerit... et diceret nobis: Et ego scio; sed quid facerem qui Romanis verba vendebam, nisi hac adulatione aliquid promitterem quod falsum erat? Et tamen et in hoc cautus fui, quando dixi, ‘Imperium sine fine dedi,’ Iovem ipsorum induxi, qui hoc diceret. Non ex persona mea dixi rem falsam, sed Iovi imposui falsitatis personam: sicut Deus falsus erat, ita mendax vates erat. Nam vultis nosse quia ista noveram?*

Those who have promised eternity to earthly kingdoms... have lied in order to flatter. A certain poet of theirs brought on Jupiter to speak and he said of the Romans, “For them I place boundaries of neither space nor time: I have granted empire without end.” Clearly this is not true... If we wished to reproach and mock Virgil because he said this... he would say to us: “Yes, I know. But what could I do, as a peddler of words to the Romans, but flatter them by promising something that was false? Still even in this I was careful: when I said, ‘I have granted empire without end,’ I brought on their own Jupiter to say it. I did not say this false thing

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in my own persona, but imposed the lying persona of Jupiter: as the god was false, so too was he a deceptive prophet.”

Augustine does not go so far as to paint Virgil as a Christian prophet, but he does suggest that Virgil was wiser than his intended audience, prophetic, and believed his own gods to be false. The last might well be inspired by the sort of allegorizing and euhemeristic commentary we have seen in Servius—not necessarily an attempt to ‘baptize’ Virgil. I have used James O’Hara’s translation of this passage as a reminder that many scholars today, who self-identify as ‘pessimistic’ readers of the Aeneid, are inclined to see a similar distinction between the voice of Virgil and the voice of his more ‘optimistic’ characters.

Perhaps the single most powerful expression of Augustine’s attitude towards Virgil’s Aeneas appears in The City of God 10.21. In this passage, Augustine contrasts Aeneas with the “heroes” of the Church, i.e. the Christian martyrs, who fought to the death against the sin of “impiety” (inpietas). Augustine explains, with obvious reference to the Aeneid, that epic heroes are usually depicted as battling divinities and above all, Juno, who, he claims, is portrayed by the poets as the enemy of virtue.

Augustine claims that even though Virgil had Juno declare that she was defeated by Aeneas (“uincor ab Aenea”), this defeat came about partly through placating her with gifts, since Virgil has Helenus command Aeneas to make offerings to Juno. Augustine concludes by saying:

26 Translation by O’Hara, Death and the Optimistic Prophecy, 126-7.
27 “quos ciuitas dei tanto clariores et honoratiores ciues habet, quanto fortius aduersus inpietatis peccatum et usque ad sanguinem certant. hos multo elegantius, si ecclesiastica loquendi consuetudo patetur, nostros heroas uocaremus.”
28 “inconuenienter a poetis inductur inimica uirtutibus et caelum petentibus uiris fortibus inuida.”
29 Aeneid 7.310 and Aeneid 3.438-39, respectively.
non sic Iunonem, hoc est aerias potestates piorum uirtutibus inuidentes, nostri martyres uincunt. non omnino, si dici usitate posset, heroes nostri supplicibus donis, sed uirtutibus diuinis Heran superant. commodius quippe Scipio Africanus est cognominatus, quod uirtute Africam uicerit, quam si hostes donis placasset, ut parcerent.

Not so do our martyrs conquer Juno, i.e. the ethereal powers jealous of the virtues of the pious. Never do our heroes, if it is possible to use the term, conquer Hera with a suppliant’s gifts, but by divine virtues. Indeed, Scipio is more rightly called Africanus, because he conquered Africa by force [virtute], than he would be, if he had placated the enemy with gifts so that they would show him mercy.

In this passage we catch a glimpse of how Augustine might wish that he could rewrite the end of the Aeneid: Aeneas would do battle against Juno and her minions and defeat them utterly, just as Scipio did to Carthage. Augustine would make the Aeneid into a moral tale of good versus evil, where the epic hero directly fights against his divine nemesis and triumphs. There are certainly close ties in Augustine’s vision to the allegorical tradition as exemplified by Fulgentius, but as we shall see, even Fulgentius does not paint Aeneas’ character in the purely black and white terms which Augustine wished he could find in the Aeneid.

Aeneas’ character in allegorizations of the Aeneid

Considering Fulgentius’ allegorization of Aeneas’ enemies as Vices, it would be easy to jump to the conclusion that the allegorical tradition exaggerates the perfection of Aeneas by vilifying his enemies, but this is not what close scrutiny of Fulgentius’ interpretation reveals. Instead, Fulgentius and the two surviving allegorizations from the twelfth century see Aeneas as an Everyman who is afflicted by all of the vices which

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might plague a typical human being. That is to say, the very point of these allegorizations is that Aeneas is not a unique man, who somehow has no failings or imperfections, but rather an ordinary person, guilty of ordinary vices.

According to Fulgentius, the early books of the *Aeneid* allegorically describe typical youthful vices, such as rejection of parental authority (Book 3) and vanity (Book 5). For John of Salisbury, Book 3 is allegorically equivalent to the youthful miscreant described in Horace’s *Ars Poetica* 161-64, who, among other things, “molds to vice like wax.” Similarly, Bernard interprets Book 3 as the adolescent Everyman turning away from his spiritual nature (Italy) in favor of carnal vices (Crete). All three of these allegorizations condemn Everyman’s “fornication” in Book 4. Marilynn Desmond, although sensitive to the potential for ambiguity in the *Aeneid*, reads these allegorizations as condemnation of Dido and vindication of Aeneas. It is true that these allegories praise Aeneas/Everyman for leaving Dido/lust, but these same allegories condemn him for his involvement with Dido in the first place. It is hard to imagine any medieval cleric not agreeing with Bernard in pointing to Aeneas’ “licitiousness” as a negative exemplum.

Bernard and John of Salisbury do not offer allegorical readings of the last six books, but if we look carefully at Fulgentius’ interpretation of the last six books, we will

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32 Bernard, *Commentary*, 20: “Ab Appolline monetur ut “antiquam matrem requirat.” Antique due matres, id est due regiones, Creta scilicet et Italia, sunt duo Enec initia, natura corporis et anime. Per Cretam enim intelligimus naturam corpoream, que est quoddam initium temporalis vite Enec.”
34 Cf. Kallendorf, *The Other Virgil*, 40-1, where he discusses Petrarch’s imitation of the fourth book of the *Aeneid* in the fifth book of his *Africa*. Kallendorf argues that Petrarch shows his negative assessment of Aeneas’ behavior in this imitation. In my opinion, it would be quite exceptional if this was not how Petrarch interpreted *Aeneid* 4. Petrarch’s interpretation there is completely in the mainstream of medieval interpretations of the fourth book of the *Aeneid*. 
see that even in the later books, after Everyman has reached maturity, he still fights a long struggle against his own vices which include impiety towards the gods (Mezentius), drunkenness (Metiscus), and rage (Turnus). It would be incorrect to conclude that such characterizations indicate the glorifying of Aeneas and the blackening of his rivals. Rather, Aeneas’ opponents are interpreted as externalizations of the vices afflicting the soul and body of Everyman. We might conclude, since ultimately, in the *Aeneid*, Aeneas is victorious, that Everyman finally triumphs over these vices—i.e. he becomes pious, sober, and calm—but only after protracted internal conflict stretching across nearly six books.

What is more, Fulgentius does not extend his allegory up to Aeneas’ victory over Turnus. Emily Albu argues that because Fulgentius interprets even momentary rage (i.e. Turnus) as a vice, he cannot include Aeneas’ slaying of Turnus, “an act of violence that seems to reveal a serious lapse in the pilgrim’s progress.” Rather than ending with the death of Turnus, Fulgentius leaves the reader with the image of Fortune’s wheel, extracted via etymology from the chariot driven by Juturna. I would suggest that by ending with Fortune’s wheel, Fulgentius mirrors the lack of closure which many modern readers have detected in the ending of the *Aeneid*. Fulgentius seems to be suggesting that psychomachia has no end but continues forever as we each struggle against our own fate and vices. There is no marriage to Lavinia, no triumphal procession, and no

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35 Fulgentius, *Continentia*, 105-6.
deification—neither in Virgil nor in Fulgentius. In whatever way we interpret Fulgentius’ ending, it is clear that Fulgentius, Bernard, and John of Salisbury all read the allegorical Aeneas as a conflicted specimen of humanity, who has to put forth great effort in order to overcome his innate imperfections. For John of Salisbury, the human tendency toward vice is the very essence of Virgil’s allegory. After explaining the meaning of each of the first six books as a stage of life, John concludes:

*Constat enim apud eos qui mentem diligentius perscrutantur auctorum Maronem geminae doctrinae uires declarasse, dum uanitate figmenti poetici philosophicae uirtutis inuoluit archana. Licet autem de prima corruptione specialiter dictum sit, potest et de singulis manifesta ratione monstrari quia natura hominis ab adolescentia sua prona est ad malum; ut ex quo libero licet depresso coeperit uti arbitrio, per se cadat sponte in culpam et inde merito suo praeceps prolabatur in penam.*

It is agreed by those who more carefully scrutinize the meaning of the authors that Virgil has shown the power of a double doctrine, when he covered over the mysteries of philosophical virtue with the falsehood of poetic fiction. Although it was said particularly about the first sin, it also can be demonstrated from individual cases by manifest reason that the nature of man from his adolescence is prone to evil; so that from when he begins to exercise free will, although weighed down, he falls of his own accord into sin and then justly slips headlong into punishment.

**The moral character of Virgil’s Aeneas in the twelfth century**

When Meyer Reinhold claims in his study of “the unhero Aeneas” that “in the Middle Ages the portrait of a self-seeking, ambitious Aeneas became the dominant one,” he is referring to the ‘historical’ treacherous Aeneas of Dictys and Dares, which he contrasts with what he sees as Virgil’s “transcendent image of the hero Aeneas.”[^38] Like Reinhold, most medievalists tend to assume that Virgil’s characterization of Aeneas is

consistently positive and must have been so perceived at all time periods. The result has been that whenever a medieval author paints Aeneas in a negative manner, scholars usually see a nod to a supposed anti-Virgilian tradition, often associated with Dares or Ovid via his portrayal of Aeneas in *Heroides* 7.\(^{39}\) In my own analysis, I strive to keep readings of Virgil’s Aeneas separate from the Aeneas of other authors, but medieval readers and poets do not always sharply distinguish between the two. As I described in Chapter 2, even if Virgil is seen to nudge his characterization in a positive direction, the ‘historical’ treacherous Aeneas of Dares and the commentary tradition is always present in the minds of astute readers. Furthermore, we shall see that some twelfth-century readers believed that Virgil indicated in the text of the *Aeneid* that his own Aeneas was equally culpable.

The only twelfth-century portrayal of Virgil’s Aeneas to have received extensive consideration by modern scholars is that found in the anonymous *Roman d'Enéas*, a loose translation of the *Aeneid* into the vernacular. Francine Mora-Lebrun has established a strong link between Servian criticism and the *Roman d'Enéas*; accordingly, she argues that the romance was intended to be a *speculum principis* for the French monarch, and as a result, the character of Eneas is portrayed as a moral ideal to inspire ethical imitation in

\(^{39}\) For example, John Watkins in *The Specter of Dido: Spenser and Virgilian Epic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), paints Virgil’s Aeneas as a *vir perfectus* who is sometimes subverted by later traditions, especially the Ovidian one. Richard Thomas examines the problems in Watkins’ characterization of the tradition in *Virgil and the Augustan Reception*, 154-8. Cf. Thomas’ similar criticism, in the *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 96.03.10, of Baswell’s similar tendency in *Virgil in Medieval England*: “This presupposes, although B. does not really believe in such a thing, a monolithic, “Augustan” Virgilian *Aeneid*, which is undercut by the subversive tradition. The truth is, again, that the seeds of subversion are there from the beginning.” The same criticism could be leveled at the discussion of medieval ambivalence towards Aeneas in Joanna Scott’s “Betraying Origins: The Many Faces of Aeneas In Medieval English Literature,” *LATCH: A Journal for the Study of the Literary Artifact in Theory, Culture, or History* 3 (2010): 64-84.
the reader.\textsuperscript{40} Penny Eley has shown that while the character of Aeneas is intended to represent an ideal of moral behavior, the Turnus undergoes a complete character assassination to become “a thoroughly bad prince whose failure throws the success of Eneas into even sharper relief.”\textsuperscript{41} Although the medieval poet changed many aspects of the plot of the \textit{Aeneid} in order to harmonize with medieval Christian concepts of decorum and morality, essentially transforming Aeneas and Turnus into medieval knights, the poet chose to retain most features of the duel with Turnus, including Turnus’ plea for mercy. In Eley’s view, “the twelfth-century audience would have found little to quibble about” because “in the hierarchy of feudal values, magnanimity towards a defeated enemy ranks lower than the absolute duty of just revenge.”\textsuperscript{42} The \textit{Roman d'Enéas} (as interpreted by Eley and Mora-Lebrun) demonstrates that a twelfth-century Christian audience could agree with Servius that Aeneas’ killing of Turnus was an exemplary act of virtue. Ergo, if a twelfth-century author were to find Aeneas’ killing of Turnus morally reprehensible, such a reaction would not necessarily stem from a Christian moral bias alone.

Although Eley’s and Mora-Lebrun’s readings of the \textit{Roman d'Enéas} harmonize well with Servius’ focus on Aeneas’ moral perfection, there were other voices in the twelfth century, which pointed to Aeneas’ flaws as well as his virtues. From the evidence presented in Chapter 2, informed twelfth-century readers would have been unlikely to deny Aeneas’ treachery at Troy, but at the same time many believed that Virgil carefully altered the truth in order to make Aeneas look better. If it is Virgil who is thought to have removed Aeneas’ treachery from his account of the end of the war in \textit{Aeneid} 2, then such

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 21.
a reading is in keeping with the main thrust of Servius’ commentary, since Virgil would be consciously protecting his hero from exemplifying bad behavior. However, this is not how Bernard Silvestris and John of Salisbury seem to have read the second book of the *Aeneid*. Both authors give weight to the fact that it is Aeneas, not the narrator, who is telling the story of the fall of Troy. If a commentator thinks that Virgil intentionally shows Aeneas lying about his role in the fall of Troy, then that commentator implies that Virgil is intentionally depicting his hero in a morally reprehensible way—albeit subtly.

Bernard Silvestris’ commentary seems to support the latter interpretation, for he notes that Aeneas is speaking a mixture of truth and fiction when he describes the fall of Troy in the second book of the *Aeneid*. As we have seen, Bernard specifically cites Dares as containing the factual description of Aeneas’ treachery in contrast with the “probity of Aeneas” which Aeneas himself describes. Although the crucial phrase is nebulously passive (“*quod vero Enee probitas enarratur fabula est*”), Bernard’s whole allegorical interpretation of this passage depends upon the fact that Aeneas, not the narrator, is the one doing the talking. After all, we are told that the second book represents the transition from infancy to childhood—distinguished by the child learning to speak.

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43 Bernard, *Commentary on the Aeneid*, 15: “*Per hoc enim quod ad narrandas historias suas Didonis provocatur, nihil aliud demonstratur nisi quod ad proferenda verba sua eum manifestari volens voluntas hortatur cui satisfaciens in verba prorumpit. Quoniam quidam sermo verus, quidam falsus, ideo in hac narratione per hoc quod veritati historie falsitas fabule admiscetur hoc idem figuratur.*”


45 Bernard, *Commentary on the Aeneid*, 14: “*In hoc maxima est differentia infantie et pueritie quod pueri loquantur, infantes vero loqui non possunt naturaliter ideoque nichil aliud mistice in hoc volumine secundo significatur nisi initium et possibilitas loquendi.*”
While Bernard’s real meaning is debatable, John of Salisbury’s interpretation leaves no doubt about his own opinion. In critiquing the rule of Dido, John explains that Dido and her nobles were too quick to put trust in Aeneas:

> Quanta enim leuitate Eneas admittitur, quantam cito inuenit gratiam homo ignotus, exul, fugitius, cuius causa ignota est, persona suspecta? Quanta curiositate exceptae sunt ab auribus principum fabulosae narrationes hominis suam evacuantis culpam, propriam quaerentis gloriæ, et id captantis unde posset auditorum subuerere mentes? Praecedunt ergo ad introitum hominis sermones blandi, illecebrae laudum conciliant hospi tii gratiam, conuiciuiu accuratius instruct omnium captata sedulitas, fabulae sequuntur conuiciua, uenandi multiplicisque luxuriae leuitas comitatur. Incestum pariunt haec, incendium desolationem ciuitium et perpetuae hostilitatis prorogant causas.46

For with what levity did she admit Aeneas! What esteem did she so swiftly bestow upon a man who was unknown, an exile, whose purpose was unknown, in short, a suspicious person! With what curiosity did the ears of her nobility drink in the fictional stories of this man, who was striving to cover up his guilt, to enhance his own glory, and to use anything with which he could subvert the minds of his listeners! Therefore, these flattering speeches led the way to the man’s entrance, the charms of his praise procured the favor of hospitality, their captivated interest laid out a more elaborately prepared feast, fictional tales followed the feasts, the levity of hunting and manifold luxury came next. These things resulted in illicit sex and propagated the causes of perpetual hostility and the burning and desolation of citizens.

John goes on to explain that Dido is an exemplum of a monarch unfit to rule partly because she was too gullible in believing the lying Aeneas. Without question, in John of Salisbury’s account, it is not Virgil who is lying but Aeneas. This, of course, implies that Virgil’s Aeneas is doubly culpable—not only did he betray Troy, but he also lied about it at great length to foreign dignitaries and generous hosts.

Although both Bernard and John suggest that Virgil’s Aeneas betrayed Troy and lied to cover it up, both readers still see much positive exemplary behavior in Aeneas. Just as Lactantius saw pietas and a positive moral exemplum in Aeneas’ relationship with his father, Bernard and John both praise Aeneas exspecially for his familial piety. To

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46 Poliorceticus 6.22.
Bernard, Aeneas is an exemplum of endurance because of his labors and an exemplum of piety because of his affection for Anchises and Ascanius. Similarly, at Policraticus 4.11, John of Salisbury praises Aeneas as an ideal leader because of the respect he shows for his father and son. John explains how “the most learned of poets” (poetarum doctissimus) showed the ideal royal family in the iconic image of Aeneas leading his son by the hand and carrying his father on his back. John concludes:

Compatriotis omnibus ducem dedit uirum armis et pietate praesignem. Alias enim dux esset inutilis, cum sine uiribus regna adquiri non ualeant aut sine iustitia retineri. Nunc uero omnia unica sollicitudo est liberis, qualescumque sint, diuitiis et honoribus potius quam uirtutibus insignire.

[Virgil] gave to all of his fellow-citizens a man outstanding in arms and piety, for another sort of leader would be useless, since kingdoms cannot be acquired without strength and or retained without justice. But today everyone’s single care is to distinguish their children, whatever their character might be, with riches and honors rather than with virtues.

For John and Bernard, the context of Aeneas’ behavior is crucial. Sometimes Aeneas can be a negative exemplum and sometimes a positive one. Aeneas’ treachery at Troy and lying to Dido do not diminish his usefulness as a positive exemplum of leadership and piety in the context of his military exploits and the respect for his father and son.

Even Aeneas’ pagan religious observance could be interpreted as a positive exemplum for a twelfth-century Christian readership, but again, context is important. At the beginning of his commentary, Bernard Silvestris explains that “from the veneration which he showed towards the gods, from the oracles that he was consulting, from the sacrifices which he offered, and from the vows and prayers which he made, in a manner,

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47 “ex laboribus Enee tolerantie exemplum habemus, ex affectu eius in Anchisem et Ascanium pietatis.”
we are encouraged to be religious.” 48 Yet, in certain instances, Bernard is perfectly happy to qualify his pronouncement. When discussing Aeneas’ journey to the underworld in Book 6, Bernard accuses Aeneas of “seeking conversation with demons through some kind of abominable sacrifice.” 49 According to Bernard, Virgil’s ‘literal’ narrative (contrasted with the allegorical narrative) describes how Aeneas “offered (mactavit) Misenus to demons, sought to converse with their Sibyl, the Cumaean prophetess, and consulted with her about the events of his future life.” 50 Bernard’s interpretation of Misenus’ funeral as a sacrifice seems to be his own logical extrapolation from the Aeneid and from Servius, who contrasts sciomancy with necromancy, which requires a corpse and the shedding of blood: 51

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\text{in sciomantia vero, quia umbrae tantum est evocatio, sufficit solus interitus: unde Misenus in fluctibus occisus esse inducitur.}^\text{52}
\]

But in sciomancy, because it is only a summoning of shades, a burial alone is sufficient: whence Misenus is represented to have been killed in the waves.

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48 Bernard, Commentary on the Aeneid, 2-3: “ex veneratione quam diis exibebat et ex oraculis que possebat, ex sacrificiis que offerebat, ex votis et precibus quas fundebat quodammodo ad religionem invitamur.”

49 Bernard, Commentary on the Aeneid, 30: “per aliquod execrabile sacrificium demonum petit colloquium.”

50 Bernard, Commentary on the Aeneid, 30: “Nam quantum ad historiam, secundum ultimum Eneas ad inferos descendit et Misenum demonibus mactavit eorumque cum Sibilla, vate Camena, colloquium petit atque de future vite casibus quesivit.” We might be inclined initially to interpret “ad historiam” as “what really happened,” i.e. similar to Servius’ “vera historia,” but Bernard goes on to differentiate his allegorical interpretation from the literal meaning of the Aeneid by contrasting the “historia” with the “integumentum” or allegorical reading. Cf. Bernard, Commentary on the Aeneid, 30: “Priusquam historiam exponamus, principium integumenti consideremus.” This is the solution followed by Schreiber and Maresca who translate “historia” as “narrative.” See their translation in Commentary on the First Six Books of the Aeneid, 33.

51 See Wilson-Okamura’s discussion of Bernard’s interpretation and its influence in Virgil in the Renaissance, 159-61. I do not agree with Wilson-Okamura that Bernard is claiming that Aeneas murdered Misenus. On the contrary, Bernard merely suggests that Misenus’ pyre was meant to appease the gods—an interpretation entirely supported by Virgil’s narrative and by Servius.

52 Servius ad Aeneid 6.149.
Thus, Aeneas’ careful adherence to his pagan religion can constitute a positive exemplum to a twelfth-century reader, even if Aeneas’ sciomancy in Book 6 is read in a negative light.

Bernard’s criticism of Aeneas’ sciomancy helps to put John of Salisbury’s apparently more sweeping critique of Aeneas’ paganism in perspective. In his discussion of interpreting dreams, John explains that oracular visions need not come only from God, but can also come from demons. He cites Virgil’s Aeneas as an example of someone who received visions from the latter.

Aeneas oraculorum indicio promissam et quaesitam inuenit Italiam et in ea non tam numinum quam daemonum nutu sedem statuit et sementem Romani generis in orto qui eis complacuerat seminavit. Quid enim aliud agit in somnis pater Anchises, quid Iuppiter, quid Apollo, quid alii quos longum est enarrare? Vnde si de semine illo genus oritur toxicatum, impium in Deum, crudele in homines, persecutioni sanctorum inuigilans, fide rara, sollemni perfidia, seruile moribus, fastu regale, foedum auaritia, cupiditatibus insigne, superbia timidum, omnimoda nequitia non ferendum, miraculis non debet ascribi, cum auctor eorum homicida fuerit ab initio, et a veritate deficiens inuidiae spiculo orbi terrarum infixerit mortem. Quia ergo ex eo patre sunt, etsi eius nequeant implere mensuram, solent tamen illius imitari malitiam. 53

Aeneas, through the signs of oracles, found the promised and long-sought Italy, and in that land, through the assent of divinities, nay rather of demons, established his home and planted the seeds of the Roman race in the garden which seemed best to them. For was this not what Anchises, Jupiter, Apollo, and others too numerous to rehearse were encouraging in his dreams? So, if from that seed, a toxic race has arisen, one impious to God, cruel to men, eager to persecute the saints, rarely trustworthy, normally treacherous, servile in morals, regal in arrogance, foul with greed, outstanding in cupidity, swollen in pride, unbearable because of all of their iniquity, it is no wonder: since their founder was a murderer from the beginning and, forsaking the truth, implanted death in the whole world with the sting of jealously. Therefore, people who come from that father, although they are unable to fill up his measure, are accustomed to imitate his vice.

53 Polycraticus, 2.15.
Aeneas is charged with the vice of consulting demons through dream visions—essentially sciomancy.\textsuperscript{54} Because Aeneas follows the guidance of these visions, Aeneas’ successful arrival in Latium ultimately results in death and human suffering on a grand scale. The founder (\textit{auctor}) of the Romans is accused of grave crimes. It might be possible to interpret the founder (\textit{auctor}) as Satan, rather than as Aeneas, because “murderer from the beginning” is a quotation from the \textit{Gospel of John} 8:44, referring to Satan, but this quotation might as easily be blackening Aeneas all the more. Certainly, John does not hesitate to paint the Romans, described once by him as “\textit{genus Aeneadum},” and Romulus in a negative light.\textsuperscript{55}

For his negative interpretation of Aeneas’ arrival in Italy, John is likely indebted to Orosius, and John’s strong Christian (especially Augustinian) worldview is obvious in this passage.\textsuperscript{56} Nevertheless, many modern readers of the \textit{Aeneid} see a similarly grim cost to the war in Latium in the second half of the \textit{Aeneid}. In some respects, John anticipates modern ‘pessimistic’ readings of the \textit{Aeneid}, which see Virgil as questioning the future Roman (and Augustan) achievement displayed in the underworld by making Aeneas exit via the gate of false dreams—the very image with which John begins this discussion of dreams.\textsuperscript{57} In drawing the connection with modern ‘pessimistic’ readings of the \textit{Aeneid}, I mean to emphasize that John’s negative interpretation of Aeneas’ mission does not have

\textsuperscript{54} Cf. \textit{City of God}, 11.13-4.
\textsuperscript{55} Compare \textit{Policraticus} 3.10: “Eos quoque qui castigati non obtemperabant prohibentis imperio, quasi adulationis reos et publicae salutis hostes, ab exercitu iussit, cum tamen genus Aeneadum hanc mollitiam aurium nondum exuerit quin adulationibus delectentur... Vrbis auspicia sacrilegio parricidii et fraterni sanguinis cruore numinibus sui Romulus consecravit.”
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{History Against the Pagans} 1.18.1: “Paucis praeterea annis interueniuntibus, Aeneae Troia profugi adventuerunt in Italian quae arma commoverit, qualia per triennium bella exciserit, quantos populos implicuerit odio excidioque adflexerit, ludi litterarii disciplina nostrae quoque memoriae inustum est.”
to spring exclusively from his Christian attitudes towards heroism; such interpretations also could have their origins in a close reading of the *Aeneid*. Indeed, medieval Christians could see a wholly positive result of both Aeneas’ mission and his *descensus ad inferos*. At *Inferno* 2.19-24, Dante pointedly describes Aeneas’ imperial mission and the knowledge he obtained through his *descensus* as both glorious and divinely inspired, leading ultimately to the founding of the papacy. Furthermore, as we have seen, Aeneas’ paganism is itself no impediment to John’s reading of Aeneas as a positive exemplum in other contexts, and to Bernard, many aspects of Aeneas’ religious practice can be a positive exemplum as well.

Finally, whether or not the medieval reader believed that Virgil’s Aeneas mistreated Dido by leaving her (multiple interpretations were available), Aeneas’ love affair with Dido is usually given as a negative moral exemplum. In Bernard’s words, “through his immoderate love for Dido, we are recalled from appetite for forbidden things.” Yet, as we have seen, educated readers, such as Bernard and John, knew that the ‘historical’ Aeneas never could have met Dido for reasons of chronology. Thus, even if Virgil is seen as suppressing Aeneas’ betrayal of Troy, Bernard and John would have believed that Virgil made up out of whole cloth nearly as much negative heroic behavior by creating Aeneas’ fictional encounter with Dido.

Although most of the time John of Salisbury and Bernard Silvestris speak of Aeneas in the positive terms described by Servius and the *Roman d'Enées*, the above examples demonstrate that sophisticated readers of the *Aeneid*, who were part of the same

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59 “per immoderatum Didonis amorem ab appetitu illicitorum revocamur.”
60 John acknowledges this chronological impossibility at *Policraticus* 8.14.
literary circles as our epicists, saw ambiguity in the moral character of Virgil’s Aeneas. The interpretation of the *Aeneid* as a panegyric of Augustus was certainly well-known. We have seen that Servius, ‘Anselm’, and Bernard Silvestris mention it in the introductions to their commentaries on the *Aeneid*. However, such an interpretation does not prevent careful readers, such as John of Salisbury and Bernard Silvestris, from treating Aeneas as an occasionally imperfect moral exemplum. Crucially, both John and Bernard believe that Aeneas’ moral virtues and failings could serve equally well as a guide to ethical behavior. This willingness to see imperfection in Aeneas’ character is strikingly different from the tendency of early modern readers to see Virgil’s Aeneas as a *vir perfectus* in all contexts.

It is this twelfth-century conception of the *Aeneid*, then, that we must use as a baseline against which we may characterize the reactions of twelfth-century Latin epic—while of course remaining open to all the ambiguities present in Virgil’s text itself. We should expect that an epic hero modeled on Aeneas does not have to be a *vir perfectus* and that Virgil’s paganism does not necessarily impede interpreting Aeneas as a largely positive model for the heroes of Christian epic. In the studies that follow, I examine how each of our medieval epics engages with potential ethical ambiguities in Virgil’s

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61 Some of the difference between the view of Aeneas found in the *Roman d’Enéas* and that suggested by Bernard and John might be due to difference of audience. For instance, Douglas Kelly suggests that Joseph of Exeter’s *Ylias* was intended for a very different sort of audience than the contemporary *Roman de Troie* of Benoît. See *The Conspiracy of Allusion: Description, Rewriting, and Authorship from Macrobius to Medieval Romance* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 144-5. For a further development of Kelly’s idea, see Francine Mora, “L*’Ylias* de Joseph d’Exeter: une réaction cléricale au Roman de Troie de Benoît de Sainte-Maure,” in *Progrès, réaction, décadence dans l’Occident médiéval*, eds. Emmanuèle Baumgartner and Laurence Harf-Lancner (Geneva: Droz, 2003), 199-213.

62 See Kallendorf, *The Other Virgil*, 1-14; Wilson-Okamura, *Virgil in the Renaissance*, 208-12. I suspect that at least one reason for the difference is that the most forceful proponent for reading the *Aeneid* as panegyric of Augustus, Tiberius Donatus, was essentially unknown in the twelfth century. Once Donatus’ commentary was rediscovered in the fifteenth century, it became enormously popular and did much to shape later commentaries and interpretations.
portrayal of Aeneas’ character. In the process, I offer my own more global interpretations of how each twelfth-century epic relates its conception of heroics to the *Aeneid*.

**Joseph of Exeter’s Aeneas**

I argued in Chapter 2 that Joseph characterizes his own engagement with Virgil as revisionist: he wants to correct the historical lies set forth in the *Aeneid* (and in the *Iliad*). I suggested that some of the historical lies which Joseph wants to correct might have been perceived, thanks in large part to Servius, as stemming from Virgil’s need to praise Augustus through Aneas, but we have not yet considered precisely how Joseph interpreted Virgil’s Aeneas or perceived Virgil’s aims in writing the *Aeneid*. Among our four medieval epics, the *Ylias* is the only one in which Aeneas appears as a character—in fact, the *Ylias* is alone in even mentioning his name! Although a few critics have noted verbal echoes of the *Aeneid* in the *Ylias*, none have discussed Joseph’s characterization of Aeneas or defined Joseph’s attitude towards the *Aeneid*.63

Joseph gives a description of each of the main personages involved in the Trojan War and says of Aeneas that he is *pius* (at *Ylias* 4.74). In this respect at least, Joseph’s Aeneas seems to bear a close similarity to Virgil’s Aeneas. However, Joseph’s full phrase, “*consiliisque pius* (pious in councils),” may possibly reflect a degree of irony, since Joseph would later show that Aeneas is involved in the plot to hand the city over to the Greeks. Nevertheless, I am more inclined to take the description here as free from irony for two reasons. First, Joseph’s source for this passage, Dares also describes Aeneas

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as “pius” in his overall description of Aeneas but without the addition of consiliis or any other word limiting or defining the descriptor. Second, Joseph shows Aeneas urging at Ylias 6.673-7, together with others, that Helen be returned to the Greeks. His counseling there is described in terms which reflect careful, reasoned persuasion, that might well be described as “pius”:

...suadet leni mitissimus ore
Dux Anchisiades. (Ylias 6.676-7)

...The general Aeneas persuades most gently of all with calm speech.

Joseph also shows Aeneas trying to protect Polyxena by hiding her from the Greeks at Ylias 6.877-8. For hiding her, Aeneas is forced to leave Troy as an exile—a punishment which Joseph describes as unfair (“haut equas...penas,” Ylias 6.880). From these examples, we can see that Joseph portrays Aeneas in a largely positive light—in keeping with Dares’ narrative—and that, therefore, Aeneas is worthy of being described as generally “pius.”

The only place in which Aeneas displays immoral behavior is when he is involved in Antenor’s plot to betray the city—again true to Dares’ account. At Ylias 6.710-1, Joseph pointedly revises Aeneas’ famous Virgilian epithet:

...patrique in dampna ruentis
impius et tantis Eneas consonus ausis.

...and impious Aeneas conspiring with such great endeavors in the destruction of his falling homeland.

In these two lines, we might also see an intentional inversion of Aeneid 1.33, “Tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem” (It was so much effort to found the Roman people). “Tantis...ausis” echoes “tantae molis,” and “patrique in dampna ruentis”
inverts “Romanam condere gentem.” These echoes result in an intensification of Joseph’s censure of Aeneas.

Despite Joseph’s ringing condemnation of Aeneas in this passage, the other appearances of Aeneas in the epic prove that Joseph’s Aeneas could exemplify both good and bad behavior. Certainly, Joseph’s Aeneas is neither a vir perfectus nor a paper villain. Joseph’s ambivalent depiction of Aeneas’ moral character might be interpreted as suggesting an ambivalent reading of the moral character of Virgil’s Aeneas, similar to the reading espoused by John of Salisbury and Bernard Silvestris. Joseph claims in his exordium that his purpose is to bring the truth out into the open after it had lain hidden in the ancient poets, chiefly Virgil. By openly recounting Aeneas’ involvement in the plot to betray Troy, Joseph might have been trying to make something that he had thought was merely implicit (i.e. hiding) in the Aeneid into something explicit. Furthermore, by negating Aeneas’ famous epithet at this moment, he may have been responding to Virgil in a manner similar to Lactantius, who objects to what he perceives as Virgil’s indiscriminate application of the term “pius” to Aeneas. Joseph’s labeling of Aeneas at the moment of his treachery as “impius” might be taken again, not so much as a refutation of Virgil, but as a correction, or even as a clarification. After all, it is Servius who calls Aeneas “pius” for killing Turnus, not Virgil.

In whatever way we interpret Joseph’s reading of Virgil, he appears to deliver a coup de grace to Virgil’s Aeneid near the end of the Ylias, when he describes what happens to the remaining Greek and Trojan heroes after the war. Dares is silent on this point, but Dictys (consistently more negative towards Aeneas than Dares) claims that
Aeneas founded and ruled the city of Corcyra, in the Ionian islands. Joseph chooses to follow Dictys and so closes his description of the fate of Aeneas at Ylias 6.891-3:

\[\textit{Hic urbi Corchira nove, quam struxerat ipse,} \\
\textit{Nomen, et exiguo regnat contentus agello} \\
\textit{Romanis olim promissus menibus auctor.}\]

He gave a name to the new city of Corcyra, which he had founded, and the man, who was once promised to be the progenitor of the walls of Rome, reigned contently over a tiny little plot of land.

This was an extreme position for Joseph to take. Most medieval authors stopped far short of claiming that the basic premise of the Aeneid, Aeneas’ Trojan exodus to Italy, was fictional. Indeed, considering how many important European dynasties traced their lineage to Aeneas or related Trojans, such an assertion could have been politically dangerous. But even in the same breath in which Joseph seems to be dismissing the entire Aeneid as fictional, he uses the ambiguous word “olim” together with obvious verbal allusions to the Aeneid. In contrasting Aeneas’ real (and tiny) kingdom with the “once promised walls of Rome,” Joseph alludes to Jupiter’s promise to Venus at Aeneid 1.257-96 that Aeneas would found the city, Lavinium, which would lead ultimately to the founding of Rome (“\textit{cernes urbem et promissa Lavini / moenia}” Aeneid 1.258-9).

Joseph’s line might be taken to refer to two distinct events, one real and one fictional, but both grounded in the text of the Aeneid: Virgil once promised that Aeneas’ descendents would found Rome, or Jupiter, the character in Virgil’s Aeneid, once promised to Venus that Aeneas’ descendents would found Rome. That is to say, Joseph leaves it open to

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64 Reinhold points out that because of Dictys’ more negative depiction of Aeneas, Dares was more favored in the West, while Dictys was more popular in the Byzantine East. See “Unhero Aeneas,” 202-7.

interpretation whether we take “"olim”" to refer the promise to Virgil’s time period or to Aeneas’ time period. We may choose to read Joseph’s line either as a contradiction of Virgil or of one of Virgil’s characters.

In support of the latter interpretation, Joseph once refers to Aeneas as “the hope of Venus” (Dyones spes), most likely referring to Jupiter’s prophecy in the Aeneid. It is entirely possible that Joseph was aware of Augustine’s interpretation of Jupiter’s prophecy about Rome, distinguishing between Virgil, who knew the truth, and his character who was deceiving Venus and the Romans. Joseph also could have come to the same conclusion, independently, from his own close reading of the Aeneid. O’Hara has shown that apparently positive prophesies, including Jupiter’s speech to Venus, rarely turn out the way the recipient of the prophecy wants it to—neither in the Aeneid nor in classical literature more generally. Certainly in the Ylias, no optimistic prophecies come true except, necessarily, Calchas’ prophecy to the Greeks that they would capture Troy after ten years. A ten-year siege is not exactly an optimistic prophecy, of course, but it still predicts a positive outcome for the listeners. Remarkably, even in this exception, however, Joseph seems to have found a clever mechanism in order to stay true to the tradition. A.G. Rigg argues convincingly that Joseph shows Calchas having to bring about his prophecy by his own duplicitous actions.

We can catch a further glimpse of how Joseph might have read Jupiter’s prophetic speech to Venus in his adaption of two of Venus’ speeches to Jupiter. Immediately after Allecto’s speech, which itself is modeled closely on Juno’s first speech in the Aeneid, the

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66 Ylias 3.184-5.
67 O’Hara, Death and the Optimistic Prophecy.
narrator seems to respond directly to Allecto’s monologue with a speech of his own starting at *Ylias* 2.15.\(^{69}\)

\[O \text{hominum superumque pater! si numina curas,}
Cur hominem plectis? Miserene quod incola terre,
Despicitur? Certe lacrimis noctique dedisti
Proscriptas a luce animas. Pater optime, tandem
Flectere, redde polo reduces vel funera saltem
Exilii tutare tui! Cur impia sevit
Allecto in miseros?\]

O father of men and gods, if you care for divinities, why do you punish humanity? Is it despised because it is an inhabitant of the miserable earth? Certainly, you have given over our forfeited souls to tears and night. O best father, at least be persuaded now and restore the returning souls to heaven or at least make safe the deaths of your exiles! Why does impious Allecto rage against those who should be pitied?

This prayer draws especially upon two speeches in the *Aeneid*, both delivered by Venus to Jupiter, at 1.229-53 and 10.18-62 respectively.\(^{70}\) The first begins, “*O qui res hominumque deumque / aeternis regis imperiis*, etc” and the second begins, “*O pater, O hominum rerumque aeterna potestas*, etc”. Venus asks the supreme divinity essentially the same question that Joseph asks: how a sympathetic deity can allow a malevolent lesser deity to torment good people. In the *Aeneid*, Jupiter replies to Venus, explaining that all of the gods, himself included, are subject to the fates, but he comforts her, nevertheless, with a positive forecast for her descendents. In stark contrast to Jupiter’s falsely reassuring speech to Venus, the narrator’s plea, in the *Ylias*, is met with silence.\(^{71}\)

No optimistic prophecy offers hope for the future of Troy or its citizens. As Rigg has argued, “*funera...exilii*” appears to refer to the deaths of the Trojans, happening before

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\(^{69}\) For the debts to Juno’s first speech, see Ratkowitsch, *Descriptio Picturae*, 334; Gättner, *Klassische Vorbilder mittelalterlicher Trojaepen*, 71-2.

\(^{70}\) The verbal and thematic debts to Virgil in these passages are not noted by Gättner.

\(^{71}\) In fact, Alan is the only one of these four medieval epic poets with the audacity to put words in the mouth of God/Jupiter—a privilege that he solemnly prays for at *Anticlaudianus* 5.277-305.
the Harrowing of Hell, outside of the possibility of redemption.\textsuperscript{72} We can only assume that the silence which answers Joseph’s prayer implies that all of the dead of Troy—the virtuous and pious as much as the wicked—must remain forever tormented in hell. The same silence also greets the prayers of Joseph’s characters. Again and again, his characters pray and sacrifice to the gods, but ultimately it is to no avail: Troy falls and even most of the Greek heroes suffer on their return journeys.

There is no denying the general pessimistic tone of the \textit{Ylias}, but Joseph’s pessimism, as we ought to expect in twelfth-century Latin epic, has an especially ethical and moralizing purpose. When Joseph describes the horrors of the sack of Troy, he suggests that the destruction of Troy is an almost total loss to humanity. Strongly evoking Virgil’s description of the same night at \textit{Aeneid} 2.360-2, Joseph suggests the only way in which that terrible night can benefit humanity at \textit{Ylias} 6.760-3: \textsuperscript{73}

\begin{quote}
\textit{Nox fera, nox vere noxia, turbida, tristis, Insidiosa, ferox, tragice ululanda conturnis}
\textit{Aut satira rodenda gravi, tu sola triumphas}
\textit{Tantorum nisus steriles lucrata dierum!}
\end{quote}

O wild night, true night, night that is criminal, confused, sad, treacherous, and fierce! O night which must be mourned in tragic style or chewed by serious satire, for you alone can triumph and benefit from the futile strife of so many days.

The only possible value comes from re-telling the story of the fall of Troy, thereby benefiting the reader through its ethical instruction. By characterizing the strife at Troy as “sterile struggles” (\textit{nisus steriles}), Joseph again seems to deny that a greater good, such as the Roman Empire, might arise from the ashes of Troy. On the other hand, the ethical

\textsuperscript{73} Cf. Aeneas’ exclamation when retelling the fall of Troy at 2.360-2: “...\textit{nox atra caua circumuolat umbra. / quis cladem illius noctis, quis funera fando / explicit aut possit lacrimis aequare labores?”} Gärtner overlooked the debt of this passage to the \textit{Aeneid} in his catalog of classical allusions in the \textit{Ylias}. 
value which Joseph sees in his own account could as easily be extracted from Virgil, and as we have seen, it was.

In the end, we can say with relative certainty that Joseph read the positive prophesies in the *Aeneid* ironically, but we cannot know for sure whether he thought Virgil was consciously participating in generating that irony. Nevertheless, we cannot rule out the possibility that, like Augustine and John of Salisbury, Joseph thought that Virgil left clues in his epic to show the negative ‘truth’ about Aeneas and Rome. We must therefore allow that Joseph’s undeniable pessimism might reflect, to some degree, his own rather dark interpretation of the *Aeneid*.

**Virgil’s Aeneas in Walter’s Alexander?**

In contrast to the scant scholarship on the *Ylias*, many scholars have made suggestions about how the *Alexandreis* relates to classical epic, but there have been wildly different theories put forward. Much of the disagreement stems from difference of opinion about how positively we ought to read Walter’s portrayal of Alexander. Just a few decades ago, the vast majority of critics assumed that Walter’s goal was the same as that assigned by Servius to Virgil: to praise the epic hero unequivocally. For example, in 1986, Rosemary Morris, largely following Christensen (1903) and Cary (1956), stated that “everything in Quintus Curtius which is not directly relevant to Alexander, or which is uncomplimentary to him, is ruthlessly excised, leaving the portrait of a noble, single-minded warrior king” and that “what Gautier does stress...is Alexander’s role as the

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74 For a summary of several earlier positions on Walter’s attitude towards Alexander’s character, see Ratkowitsch, *Descriptio Picturae*, 132-5. See also the discussion, with more recent and fuller bibliography, in Peter von Moos, *Entre histoire et littérature*, 140-1.
adumbration of an ideal Christian King, a proto-crusader.”75 Several critics in recent years, however, have been inclined to see Walter as more ambivalent in his depiction of the moral character of Alexander. For instance, Maura Lafferty claims that Walter has created an epic hero whose life story represents a “via negativa” because “rather than leading its readers along the path to truth, [the Alexandreis] exposes the false promise of the paths offered by ancient epic and by human science: epic glory, temporal power, imperial history, Aristotelian logic, and curiosity about Nature, all lead the hero of the Alexandreis towards the peripheral, rather than to any inner awareness.”76 Dennis Kratz, Christine Ratkowitsch, and Peter von Moos all agree in seeing an epic hero who ultimately serves as a negative exemplum for the vanity of ambition. Nevertheless, the debate continues, for Claudia Wiener has argued against these scholars that Walter still praises his hero more often than he censures him and (as I argued in Chapter 2) often goes out of his way to omit the least flattering material in his primary historical source, Curtius.77

Those who see ambiguity in the moral character of Alexander usually interpret it as a conscious rejection of the heroics of the Aeneid. Often implicit in this judgment are two premises. First, twelfth-century readers believed that Virgil meant to portray Aeneas in a purely positive light. Second, the difference between Christian ethics and the ethics espoused by Classical Latin epic does not allow twelfth-century readers to derive ethical instruction from Classical Latin epic—or at least to find positive ethical exempla therein.

76 Lafferty, Walter of Châtillon’s Alexandreis, 172: “If the Alexandreis leads its readers on a philosophical journey, it is a via negativa.”
77 Wiener, Proles Vaesana, 19-32.
In my discussion above, we have seen many counterexamples to both assumptions. There may well have been some twelfth-century readers and authors who subscribed to one or both of these ideas about the *Aeneid*, but neither reading may be taken for granted.

Citing the narrator’s many censures of Alexander’s morals—both directly and indirectly through allusive verbal echoes, Dennis Kratz argues that the *Alexandreis* was intended to satirize the heroes of ancient epic. Lafferty explicitly contrasts the heroics of the *Aeneid* with the heroics of the *Alexandreis*, arguing that “the *Alexandreis* demonstrates Walter’s dissent from Vergil: where the ignorance of Vergil’s hero does not detract from his glory and achievement, the ignorance of Walter’s hero leads directly to his destruction.” She maintains that Alexander’s “emphasis on heroic glory over all other goods calls into question the use of epic in education and as a vehicle for ethical training, especially for princes.” Servius might agree with Kratz and Lafferty that Aeneas’ ignorance is no impediment to his achievement of glory, but we have seen that John of Salisbury reads Aeneas’ ignorance (trusting false dreams) as detracting in a major way not only from Aeneas’ own glory but from the whole Roman achievement. In fact, John of Salisbury reads the *Aeneid* quite similarly to the way in which Kratz and Lafferty read the *Alexandreis*. Lafferty’s reading of the heroic character of Alexander could indicate that Walter is replicating the heroism which his contemporary, John of Salisbury, sees in the *Aeneid*—not trying to create what Lafferty describes as an “anti-*Aeneid*.”

Most importantly, because John of Salisbury and Bernard Silvestris see no conflict between such a reading of epic and its usefulness for education in ethics, we must

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78 *Mocking Epic*, 162-6.
80 Ibid.
conclude that Walter is unlikely to be mocking the classical tradition of Latin epic. The importance of ethical education stressed both by medieval commentaries on the *Aeneid* and by medieval commentaries on the *Alexandreis* also point to the same conclusion.

Those who see Walter as ambivalent or even negative toward his protagonist also tend to see Walter’s characterization of Alexander as owing more to Lucan’s Caesar than Virgil’s Aeneas. Von Moos, in particular, has made the case for seeing the *Alexandreis* as intentionally evoking the *Pharsalia* because of what he sees as Walter’s consistent criticism of his protagonist and generally pessimistic outlook. Von Moos’ reading of the *Pharsalia* derives, at least to some extent, from the theory that Lucan’s *Pharsalia* is itself an “anti-*Aeneid*.” This theory is one espoused by many classicists, but it has been especially well articulated by David Quint in his *Epic and Empire* in which he describes the *Aeneid* and the *Pharsalia* as giving birth to two distinct (but sometimes overlapping) European traditions of epic: epics of winners (the *Aeneid*) and epics of losers (the *Pharsalia*). Quint’s study has had an especially strong impact on those who study the later epic tradition but, as Thomas and Casali have shown, the sort of oppositional reading envisioned by Quint and others presupposes a largely ‘optimistic’ reading of the *Aeneid*, where Aeneas is as close to a *vir perfectus* as Caesar is distant from it. Separate from his argument about Walter’s debt to Lucan, von Moos has presented extensive

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82 Cf. especially Von Moos, *Entre histoire et littérature*, 149.
83 David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). On page 8, Quint explains that his study is based upon “two rival traditions of epic, which are here associated with Virgil and Lucan. These define an opposition between epics of the imperial victors and epics of the defeated, a defeated whose resistance contains the germ of a broader republican or antimonarchical politics.”
collections of medieval perceptions of Lucan.\footnote{von Moos, \textit{``Poeta und Historicus im Mittelalter: Zum Mimesis-Problem am Beispiel einiger Urteile über Lucan.''} \textit{Beiträge zur Gesch. der deutschen Sprache und Lit.} 98 (1976): 93-130; \textit{``Lucans tragedia im Hochmittelalter: Pessimismus, \textit{contemptus mundi} und Gegenwartserfahrung.''} \textit{Mitteleinisches Jahrbuch} 14 (1979): 127-86.} In these examples, I have seen no evidence that the \textit{Pharsalia} is an anti-\textit{Aeneid} in the Middle Ages—quite the opposite. Although von Moos finds many medieval writers who, taking a cue from Servius, question whether Lucan is more a poet than a historian, not one speaks of any difference between the \textit{Aeneid} and the \textit{Pharsalia} in the morality of the protagonist or darkness of subject. Arnulf’s twelfth-century commentary on the \textit{Pharsalia} offers an ethical reading similar to medieval commentary on the \textit{Aeneid}, and many of von Moos’ examples speak of the \textit{Pharsalia} and \textit{Aeneid} as a pair—twin peaks of classical learning, offering the same ethical benefit to the reader.

Claudia Wiener accepts that there are certain verbal allusions to Lucan’s Caesar in Walter’s portrayal of Alexander, but, in contrast to von Moos, she argues that Walter changes their emphasis in order to achieve a more positive characterization.\footnote{Wiener, \textit{Proles Vaesana}, 45-57.} She sees little evidence of the tragic elements which lead von Moos to characterize the \textit{Alexandreis} as Lucanian epic. Wiener never builds strong connections to the \textit{Aeneid} or to the medieval exegesis of epic. Instead, she argues that a medieval audience would have read the \textit{Alexandreis} according to the various allegorical modes of Biblical exegesis, in particular typology.\footnote{Ibid., 58-68.} This allows her to interpret Alexander as a typological model for Philip Augustus, seeing the \textit{Alexandreis} as a sort of \textit{speculum principis}, but one in which Alexander is less important as an ethical exemplum than as a historical predecessor.\footnote{Ibid., 91-109.}
I am convinced that the failure of modern scholars to come to a consensus on Walter’s characterization of Alexander suggests that Walter created Alexander with a degree of moral ambiguity. In Chapter 2, I give several examples of Walter’s omission of Curtius’ most negative episodes in order to praise his hero, but Walter does at times paint a negative picture of Alexander. At the beginning of Book 6 of the *Alexandreis*, the narrator declares that if Alexander had maintained his virtues, he would have ruled every kingdom on earth.\(^89\) The narrator even lists his virtues as gentle administration, clemency, and justice.\(^90\) Nevertheless, Babylon’s wealth and *luxuria* corrupt Alexander’s natural virtue (*innatae uirtutis opus*):

\[
\begin{align*}
Hos tamen a tenero scola quos inpresserat euo \\
Ornatus animi, poliendae scemata uitae, \\
Innatae uirtutis opus solitumque rigorem \\
Fregenbat Babilonis opes luxusque uacantis \\
Desidiae populi quia nil corruptius urbis \\
Moribus illius.\(^91\)
\end{align*}
\]

The wealth of Babylon and the slothful excess of an idle population (because there is nothing more corrupt than the morals of that city) depleted Alexander’s store of innate virtue, broke his usual strength, and destroyed those ornaments of the mind, the model of a refined life, which schooling had impressed upon him from a tender age.

Although on the whole Neil Wright does not see much of Virgil in twelfth-century epic, he has suggested that the ambiguity in Walter’s depiction of Alexander might be based upon Virgil’s complex portrayal of Aeneas.\(^92\) For Wright’s idea to hold, we would have to establish whether Walter too saw ambiguity in Aeneas’ moral

\(^{89}\) “Rex erit ille tuus a quo se posceret omnis / Rege regi tellus si perduraret in illa / Indole uirtutum qua ceparat ire potestas.” (*Alexandreis* 6.8-10)

\(^{90}\) “Aspice quam blandis uictos moderetur habenis. / Aspice quam clemens inter tot prospera uictor. /Aspice quam mitis dictet ius gentibus…” (*Alexandreis* 6.11-3)

\(^{91}\) *Alexandreis* 6.16-21.

\(^{92}\) “Virgil in Twelfth-Century Epic?,” 27.
character—something Wright does not explore. I would argue, however, that there is good evidence within the *Alexandreis* that Walter read the *Aeneid* in the same ethically ambiguous manner as Bernard Silvestris and John of Salisbury.

For example, although Walter’s historical sources never show Alexander killing the opposing generals, Darius and Porus, in single combat, Walter’s concern for historical accuracy does not prevent him from inventing a scene in which Alexander attempts to do precisely what Aeneas does at the end of the *Aeneid*. When Alexander is fighting the army of Darius for the last time, he seeks out Darius in the hope of killing the king in single combat. This incident is not reported by Walter’s primary historical source, Curtius Rufus, and Walter heightens the fictive epic nature of this scene by employing the divine apparatus at this moment.\(^{93}\) The goddess Bellona, disguised as Athena, orders Alexander to stop pursuing Darius, repeating the words that Mars had directed her to use:

\[
\text{“Vana speris, Darium qui perdere per te}
\text{Inscius affectas, scelus hoc a principe tanto}
\text{Amouere dei, nec fas ut dextera mundi}
\text{Sceptra tenens madeat iugulo polluta senili.}
\text{Altera debetur Dario fortuna: suorum}
\text{Probitione cadet.”}\(^{94}\)
\]

“You are pursuing an empty hope in seeking to destroy Darius by yourself. The gods have removed this crime from so great a prince, nor is it lawful for the right hand, which holds the scepters of the world, to drip polluted by the murder of an old man. A different fortune is destined for Darius: he will fall through the treachery of his own men.”

Walter has the goddess characterize Alexander’s potential slaughter of Darius as “*scelus*” and “*nefas*,” yet Alexander wishes to do no more than Aeneas does when he kills the leaders of the opposing army, Mezentius (a *senex* just as Darius) and Turnus. It seems reasonable to conclude that Walter would similarly label Aeneas’ parallel deeds. Walter

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\(^{93}\) Compare Curtius’ version at *Historiarum Alexandri Magni Macedonis*, 4.15.

\(^{94}\) *Alexandreis* 5.224-8
goes on to show that it is fate alone which prevents Alexander from being guilty of Aeneas’ acts of impiety, for Alexander is not deterred and replies to Bellona that he will not allow Fortune to stand in his way and will pursue Darius even to the gates of hell.\textsuperscript{95} Only fate (and Walter’s adherence to the received historical narrative) prevent Alexander from replaying Aeneas’ ‘criminal’ acts of killing Mezentius and Turnus. Walter’s labeling of such a potential regicide as “\textit{nefas}” contrasts markedly with Virgil’s description of Aeneas as “\textit{pius}” right before throwing a spear which nearly kills the king Mezentius (\textit{Aeneid} 10.783), and with Servius’ description of Aeneas as “\textit{pius}” both for contemplating sparing Turnus and then also for killing him.

Walter has internalized—whether directly, indirectly, or independently—Lactantius’ criticism of Virgil’s unrestricted use of the epithet “\textit{pius}” to describe Aeneas. For instance, Walter’s exordium contains no sign of the man “\textit{insignem pietate}” (\textit{Aeneid} 1.10). In contrast, the second line of Walter’s verse \textit{capitulum} for Book 1 explains that Aristotle invests the young Alexander with the scepter and with arms (\textit{sceptroque insignit et armis}). As the verse \textit{capitulum} hints, Alexander will be more noteworthy for his martial prowess and his ability to command than for his piety. The term, \textit{pius}, is applied to Alexander just six times in the \textit{Alexandreis}. The narrator only twice describes Alexander as \textit{pius}. In the first instance, the narrator contrasts Alexander’s initially \textit{pius} behavior to his later moral decay in Babylon, where he becomes \textit{impius}.\textsuperscript{96} In the second instance, Alexander weeps over the death of Darius’ wife, for which he earns the descriptor, \textit{pius}.\textsuperscript{97} In fact, it is precisely Alexander’s honorable treatment of Darius’ captured family which earns him the final four labels as \textit{pius}. It is Darius himself, in all
four cases, who describes Alexander as *pius* when thanking him for his kindness.\(^{98}\) One could argue that these six cases represent merely a matter of semantic shift. In *Pietas from Vergil to Dryden*, James Garrison convincingly argues that *pietas* came to have more of “pity” than “piety” for medieval readers.\(^{99}\) Nevertheless, *pius* is so significant a word in the heroic and ethical vocabulary of the *Aeneid*, and therefore Latin epic, that Walter must be modifying the Virgilian usage intentionally. Such an interpretation would be in keeping with Garrison’s hypothesis that Virgil’s readers in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Europe would have found Virgil’s usage of *pietas* problematic precisely because of this semantic shift. By limiting the *pietas* of his hero, Walter is replicating the limited *pietas* which was already being perceived in the moral character of Virgil’s Aeneas.

The death of Alexander in Book 10 of the *Alexandreis* has been read as especially anti-heroic by those who see the *Alexandreis* as a critique of classical epic, or at least of Virgil. I agree in seeing quite a pessimistic tone—for many of the same reasons as Kratz, Lafferty, Ratkowitsch, and von Moos; but if we allow for the likelihood that Walter read Aeneas as an imperfect hero, then we may see many potential parallels with the *Aeneid* and its commentary tradition. On the surface, the last book of the *Alexandreis* seems far removed from the end of the *Aeneid*. Instead of the epic hero’s triumphant slaying of his opponent while his divine nemesis watches helplessly from heaven, in the *Alexandreis*, the goddess Nature actively brings about the end of the epic by having Alexander killed, not in battle, but by poison. Yet, it is possible to read the conclusion of the *Alexandreis* as

\(^{98}\) *Alexandreis* 4.65, 4.79, 7.261, 7.291.

realizing the *Aeneid*’s conclusion which, according to the commentary tradition, Virgil stopped short of narrating.

Alexander dies through the intervention of Fate/Nature while he is still planning future battles—i.e. before he has concluded his conquest of the world. As we have seen in Chapter 2, the *Aeneid*’s commentary tradition generally shows Fate/Nature, in the form of the Numicus river, ending Aeneas’ life before he has even finished the war in Latium. What is more, Walter explicitly contrasts Alexander’s expectation that he will ascend to heaven upon his death with the reality of Alexander’s mortality and modest burial at *Alexandreis* 10.448-50.

> Magnus in exemplo est. cui non suffecerat orbis,  
> Sufficit exciso defossa marmore terra  
> Quinque pedum fabricata domus...

Alexander the Great is an *exemplum*. A five-foot home made of marble cut out from excavated earth suffices for the man for whom the world had not been enough...

Since the narrator then encourages the reader to take Alexander as an *exemplum* for the transitory nature of fortune and the vanity of worldly ambition, it is no wonder that this passage has been seen by several scholars as an indication that Walter means us to read Alexander’s life as a negative exemplum for the vanity of the traditional pagan heroic search for glory. Nevertheless, Aeneas’ death, as told by the commentary tradition, quite possibly treacherous and certainly ignominious since he was denied burial, was in many ways a worse fate than Alexander’s small grave. Walter’s ending realizes the end of Aeneas’ life that the *Aeneid*’s commentary tradition predicts, in contrast to the ending which Virgil’s characters, such as Jupiter, lead the reader to expect.

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100 Cf. Dyson, *King of the Wood*, 50-73.  
Walter too sets up such a hypothetically optimistic ending for his own epic, in his exordium, but he acknowledges it as a fantasy that can never fulfilled. Walter boasts in his exordium that if the Fates had granted Alexander immortality, then Alexander’s deeds would have surpassed the “fame of the Caesars’ triumphs and the glory of the whole Roman race,” and Alexander would have outshone even the brightest stars in the sky.\(^{102}\) In this hypothetical statement, we see reference to two things strongly associated with the ‘optimistic’ prophecies in the *Aeneid*: first, the theme of future Roman and Augustan glory; second, the predicted apotheosis of Aeneas. The *Aeneid’s* commentary tradition relates that Aeneas’ ascension to the stars never happened in spite of Jupiter’s prophecy, and many readers of the *Aeneid*, including John of Salisbury, have seen Virgil’s apparent glorification of the triumphs of Caesar and Augustus as a false dream. Similarly, Alexander’s glorious hypothetical ending presented in Walter’s exordium contrasts sharply with the *Alexandreis’* real ending. Walter could have chosen to end with the realization of certain ‘optimistic’ predictions, as does the *Roman d’Enéas* where Enéas happily marries Lavine. Two centuries later, Maffeo Vegio’s Thirteenth Book would go even further, showing not only Aeneas’ marriage to Lavinia but also his ascension to heaven.\(^{103}\) But the *Alexandreis* does not share in these works’ reading of Aeneas as a *vir perfectus* any more than it does their concomitant endings.

Alan’s allegory: Redeeming the classic

\(^{102}\) *Alexandreis* 1.7-11: “Cesareos numquam loqueretur fama tryumphos, / Totaque Romuleae squaleret gloria gentis: / Preradiaret enim meriti fulgore caminus / Iignicos, solisque sui palleret in ortu / Lucifer, et tardi languerent Plaustra Boete.”

\(^{103}\) For discussion of how Vegio’s continuation ‘optimistically’ resolves the ambiguity in the *Aeneid’s* real ending, see Thomas, *Virgil and the Augustan Reception*, 279-84.
At its most literal level, the *Anticlaudianus* is about the creation of a *vir perfectus*, and we have seen that Alan borrowed much of his plot from allegorical readings of the *Aeneid*.\(^{104}\) Does this mean, however, that Alan saw in the character of Aeneas, either literally or allegorically, a type of *vir perfectus*? Alan could have found some justification for such a reading in Servius, but, as we have seen, many interpretations were available in the twelfth century. In *The Ancient Flame: Dante and the Poets*, Wetherbee makes, in passing, a suggestion about how Alan read the *Aeneid*. Citing *Anticlaudianus* 2.361-2, where Alan mentions “the abyss (*abyssus*) of Virgil,” Wetherbee theorizes that “the Vergilian abyss is the unfathomable sadness of the celebration of Augustan Rome, a reminder that the price of empire is the alienation of nature and the destruction of primitive community.”\(^{105}\) He concludes that “Alan’s epithets seem to point deliberately to what is darkest in Latin epic, the relentlessness of fate and the inevitability of loss.”\(^{106}\) Wetherbee sees Alan making an intentional contrast between this conception of classical epic and the *Anticlaudianus*, which “aims to emulate the ordered fullness of God’s handiwork.”\(^{107}\) Wetherbee expressly states that his conclusions are not based on a study of Virgil’s reception in the Middle Ages but exclusively upon modern interpretations of Virgil, primarily drawing upon the readings of Michael Putnam and other modern ‘pessimistic’ readers. Although I think it unlikely that Alan would have phrased his own reading of the *Aeneid* in the postcolonial language used by Wetherbee, there is evidence

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\(^{104}\) According to Sheridan (23 n.79), some manuscripts add to the title the words, “nine books about the office of the good and perfect man (*De officio viri boni et perfecti libri novem*).”


\(^{106}\) Ibid.

\(^{107}\) Ibid., 6.
within Alan’s poem that he was troubled by certain ethical imperfections he saw in the
behavior of Virgil’s protagonist and that his own epic is meant to correct these faults.

When Alan describes the murals in Nature’s palace, an ecphrasis which I have
argued (Chapter 1) depicts the twelfth-century literary canon, he divides these murals into
positive and negative exempla, or in Ralph of Longchamp’s words, “noble personages”
(personae nobiles) and “ignoble personages” (personae ignobiles). Alan places Virgil
on the wall of positive exempla and shows him writing the Aeneid (at Anticlaudianus
1.142-3). Although Virgil is placed among the positive ethical exempla, the way in which
Alan characterizes the Aeneid indicates that his reading of the Aeneid is not
unproblematic:

Virgili musa mendacia multa colorat
Et facie ueri contextit pallia falso.

Virgil’s Muse embellishes many lies and weaves a cover for falsehood bearing the
appearance of truth.

As I interpret Alan’s meaning, Virgil depicts falsehoods as fact (Chapter 2) and weaves
an integumentum (pallia) to hide his deeper allegory (Chapter 1). I take such strong
language as “mendacia” and “falso” to suggest that Virgil only deserves a place on the
wall of positive models insofar as his Aeneid is read allegorically.

Aeneas is nowhere to be found—neither with Virgil on the wall of positive
exempla nor indeed anywhere in the Anticlaudianus. Instead, prominently placed on the
wall of positive exempla, is Turnus, praised for his bravery (audacia) and willingness to
die for his cause:

Militat instantis feroens audacia Turni,
Ense tonans, ignara metus et prodiga uite.

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Commentary on the Anticlaudianus, 72-3.
The glowing bravery of persistent Turnus wages war, thundering with sword, not knowing fear, and prodigal with life.

Considering the close relationship between the *Aeneid* and *Anticlaudianus*, the omission of Aeneas and the substitution of Turnus on the wall of ethical ideals must be intentional and requires explanation.\(^{109}\)

Ratkowitsch, one of the few to have offered a thorough close reading of Alan’s ecphrasis, has also noted the apparent incongruity of Turnus here. Her explanation depends upon her theory that all of the murals in Nature’s palace depict pagan characters and are therefore inherently imperfect. She suggests that *audacia* (bravery) might be a virtue but that “das Wort *audacia* besitzt sehr oft negativen Beigeschmack, und genau in diesem Sinn verwendet Vergil stets *audax*, wenn er das unüberlegte Draufgängertum des Turnus charakterisiert.”\(^{110}\) She offers a parallel from later in the *Anticlaudianus* where *audacia* and willingness to die in battle is assigned to one of the Vices, Poverty. The fact that this Vice is Poverty should give us pause—Poverty is only willing to be brave in the face of death because, as Alan tells us, it has nothing to lose. By implication, *audacia* for someone wealthy could be a virtue. Alan never once uses the term as though *audacia* itself is a negative quality—and the fact that it is present on a wall together with such unequivocal twelfth-century virtues as strength, intelligence, and chastity must mean that Alan thought of *audacia* as a virtue.

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\(^{109}\) Turnus is also named, in place of Aeneas, in the two most important models for this scene: Bernard Silvestris’ *Cosmographia* and Alan’s *De planctu Natuae*, prose 9. Neither passage offers much help in explaining Alan’s meaning here. In the earliest work, the *Cosmographia*, Bernard Silvestris describes how all of human history is written in the stars. Many of the same names appear in this passage, but Bernard makes no attempt to separate them into negative and positive exempla, so it impossible to know whether Turnus is being viewed in a positive or negative light. In his *De planctu Natuae*, Alan introduces the idea of dividing the individuals into two groups, one of positive exempla and one of negative exempla. Turnus appears in the group of positive exempla, just as he does in the *Anticlaudianus*. Again, just as in the *Anticlaudianus* and the *Cosmographia*, it is Turnus’ *audacia* that is his defining feature.

\(^{110}\) *Descriptio Picturae*, 234-5.
Ratkowitsch assumes that Alan would have shared her own particular reading of the *Aeneid* which she reveals saying, “Bedenkt man weiters, dass Turnus in der Aeneis seinen Mut nicht für eine positive Sache einsetzt, sondern um gegen das göttliche *fatum* anzukämpfen, und dass er letztlich trotz—oder besser wegen—seiner *audacia* unterliegt, so werden die Gefahren, die in dieser heidnischen *virtus* liegen, offenkundig.”

So forcefully does Ratkowitsch emphasize Turnus’ negative role in the *Aeneid*, that one is left with the impression that there is no justification for Turnus to be on the wall of positive exempla. Ratkowitsch is surely right to find imperfections in all of the depictions of Nature’s previous works—both positive and negative—in Nature’s palace (hence the need for the New Man), but her interpretation fails to account for Alan’s allocation of Turnus to the wall of positive exempla. Instead of assuming, with Ratkowitsch, that Turnus was killed by Aeneas because his “pagan” *audacia* was at odds with divine fate (isn’t “göttliche *fatum,*” in the *Aeneid*, also pagan?), we should question whether Alan didn’t read the *Aeneid* as showing greater sympathy for Turnus and perhaps more ambivalence towards Aeneas. Ralph of Longchamp sees no negative connotations in Turnus’ presence. To Ralph, Turnus is logically on the wall of “noble personages” because Turnus is simply the archetypal bravest man (*Turnus: audacissimus*).

I suggest that Aeneas is noticeably absent from Alan’s wall of classical ideals because, to Alan, Aeneas was not an unambiguous ideal of any single virtue. Aeneas should be on the wall for his *pietas*, but, as we have seen, in the twelfth century, Aeneas is inextricably linked to his ‘historical’ treachery. Any mention of Aeneas’ piety might

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111 *Descriptio Picturae*, 235.
112 *Commentary on the Anticlaudianus*, 72-3.
113 Cf. Kallendorf’s discussion of Bentley’s critical discomfort because Milton similarly includes Turnus and suppresses Aeneas’ name when he summarizes the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and *Aeneid* at Paradise Lost 9.13-19. See Kallendorf, *The Other Virgil*, 160-1.
too easily be construed as ironic or hypocritical. In contrast, the ‘historical’ Turnus was
guilty of no such treachery. Even Virgil casts Turnus in Book 7 in a positive light (Aeneid
7.473). Servius lists Turnus’ virtues in his explanation of this line:

_HUNC DECUS EGREGIUM FORMAE MOVET Turni scilicet decus; nam hoc
dicit: alios pulchritudo Turni, alios nobilitas, alios virtus movebat ad bellum. nam
hoc est ‘animis audacibus implet’, id est fortibus, adfectione sui inicit omnibus
magnanimitatem._

THE OUTSTANDING NOBILITY OF HIS FORM MOVES ONE: namely the
nobility of Turnus, for he says this: some were moved to go to war by Turnus’
beauty, some by his nobility, and others by his virtue. For this is what Virgil
means when says ‘he inspires them with daring spirits’, i.e. with brave spirits,
through affection for him he inspires all with magnanimity.

According to Tertullian, Aeneas should have died at Troy, and surely would have if he
had not betrayed it.114 In contrast, Turnus died fending off an invader from his
homeland.115 At the very least, Alan’s purely positive description of Turnus, where we
might otherwise expect to find Aeneas, sets Alan’s reading of the Aeneid quite far from
that found in the Roman d’Enées, in which, as Eley has shown, Turnus becomes “a
thoroughly bad prince” with no redeeming qualities.116

Although Alan shows great respect for Virgil’s ‘historical’ Turnus, we have seen
that, like Fulgentius, he reads Turnus’ allegorical role as a Vice which attacks the soul. In
Alan’s homage to the final battle between Aeneas and Turnus at Anticlaudianus 9.329-
53, we can see a good example of how dramatically Alan strives to purge any moral
ambiguity from the behavior of the New Man and to villify his enemies. At the same
time, Alan implicitly may be seen as criticizing Aeneas’ slaying of Turnus—just as

114 Tertullian, _Ad nationes_ 2.9.12-4.
115 For a similarly positive interpretation of Turnus’ character in Early Modern Europe, see the example of
Giovanni Pontano (1426-1503) cited by Craig Kallendorf in _The Other Virgil_ , 43-4.
Walter seems to have done. The last Vice to address the New Man on the battlefield is Fraud, who, instead of making threats, begs to be spared:

“O iuuenis cui terra fauet, cui militat ether,
Cui Deus arriet, celum famulatur, et omnis
Applaudit mundus, et totus supplicat orbis,
Reliquis belli, que uix et forte supersunt,
Parce nec in uitulos deseuiat ira leonis.
Vincere cur uictos temptas? Cur bella mouere
Queris in imbelles? Satis est potuisse nec ultra
Nobilitas animi querit, nisi uincere posse.” (Anticludianus 9.336-43)

“Oh youth, whom the earth favors, for whom the sky fights, and whom God smiles upon, heaven serves, the whole universe applauds, and the whole world venerates, spare those still left in the war, who barely and only by chance survive, and do not allow the anger of a lion to rage against calves. Why try to conquer the vanquished? Why do you seek to make war upon the unwarlike? It is enough to have been able to do so, nor does nobility of spirit seek anything more than the ability to conquer.”

Bossuat, who rarely notes Virgilian parallels, recognizes in his apparatus that Fraud’s speech has much in common with Turnus’ final words to Aeneas at Aeneid 12.931-8. Like Turnus, Fraud admits that she has been completely defeated. Fraud refers to herself and her kin as “uictos,” just as Turnus refers to himself as “uictum”. Both also claim that the entire war has already been won. Finally, both end with a request that the victor go no further (compare Fraud’s “ultra” to Turnus’ “ulterius”).

The Virgilian scene, however, becomes rather dramatically altered by what follows, for immediately after her speech, Fraud draws a hidden sword (occulte gladium) and tries to kill the New Man. The New Man’s armor saves him from harm, but remarkably he still does not slay Fraud. Instead, he allows Fraud simply to flee. It is, of course, possible to see Alan’s scene here as a criticism of Turnus—does he imply that

Fraud could even be seen as making an intertextual reference by using the rare word desaevio which only occurs twice in Virgil—once to describe the winter at Aeneid 4.52 and, significantly, to describe Aeneas during his battlefield rampage at Aeneid 10.569. Fraud’s use of desaevio could be read as reminding the New Man not to be like Aeneas in his bloodthirsty rampage after the death of Pallas.
Turnus was also just trying to trick Aeneas with his plea for mercy, so that he could catch Aeneas off guard and kill him? Possibly, but in the *Aeneid*, Turnus does not attempt to kill Aeneas once he has begged for mercy. Furthermore, even in the face of such deceit, Alan’s hero spares the defeated Vice.

As Garrison and Wilson-Okamura have shown, early modern rewritings of the famous duel often bring Virgil’s ending in accord with contemporary mores by showing a character who refuses to yield and thus is rightly killed in self-defense.\(^{118}\) Ariosto, for instance, ends his poem with a fight in which Ruggiero offers to spare Rodomonte, who in response attempts to stab Ruggiero in the back. Ruggiero is thereby given justification to kill Rodomonte according to the early modern rules governing duels.\(^{119}\) The similarity between Ariosto’s scene and Alan’s is striking (perhaps more than coincidental), but Alan’s New Man goes a step beyond Ruggiero in sparing his victim even after her treachery.

The New Man’s mercy is in keeping with the propriety that Alan outlines in the fight between Piety and Impiety, which immediately precedes Fraud’s speech. Here, Impiety rages around the battlefield. In describing Impiety’s mindless carnage on the battlefield, Alan uses such loaded Virgilian terminology as *furor* and *ira*—words applied to Aeneas in his fight with Turnus and in his rampage in Book 10. Piety, at first, has recourse to kind words, but when these fail, she arms herself and repels all of Impiety’s blows with her shield. Again, this might at first appear to condone the piety of Aeneas’ military actions in Books 9-12, but the way in which Alan ends the scene proves

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119 See the thoughtful discussion of this scene in Garrison, *Pietas from Vergil to Dryden*, 173-4.
incompatible with the end of the *Aeneid*: “Impiety tires, yielding to battle, without being conquered by battle” (*fatiscit / Impietas, cedens Marti, sine Marte subacta*).

In fact, the New Man spares all of the Vices except for their divine leaders, Allecto and Venus, the only expressly “pagan” gods on the battlefield. Alan’s ending might be seen as realizing the ending that Augustine would have wished for the *Aeneid*. The New Man is a new Aeneas who would never placate the Vices with gifts and instead does battle directly with Allecto, the demonic queen of the Vices, analogous to Juno, and slays her at the beginning of the battle.\(^{120}\) Allecto’s minions, allegorically analogous to Juno’s human instruments, Turnus, Mezentius, and others, he spares.

I have offered evidence above to suggest that Alan is uncomfortable with the moral imperfection of Virgil’s hero. Based on this reading of the relationship between the *Anticlaudianus* and the *Aeneid*, I will now propose one possible interpretation of Alan’s total allegory: Alan’s effort to create a more ethically perfect epic is parallel to Nature’s own quest to make a *vir perfectus*. That is to say, Nature’s role (in coordination with the other Virtues) is that of an *auctor* creating an epic. This is not an entirely new theory. The similarity between Nature’s goals and Alan’s were noted many years ago by three scholars, who apparently each came up with the idea independently, but no subsequent scholars have developed the idea further. First, Linda Marshall brilliantly realized something no one seems to have recognized before or since: what Bossuat labeled a “Verse Prologue” is really the beginning of the *Anticlaudianus*, the exordium which includes the thematic statement and the invocation.\(^{121}\) Marshall then interpreted Alan’s

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\(^{120}\) Cf. John of Sailsbury’s even more explicit equation of the classical “hero” with the Christian “saint” in *Metalogicon* 4.34.

\(^{121}\) Linda E. Marshall, “*Phalerae Poetae* and the Prophet’s New Words in the *Anticlaudianus* of Alan of Lille,” *Florilegium* 1 (1979): 242-83. Marshall’s article seems not to be known to most recent scholars.
programmatic statement, using Ralph of Longchamp’s allegorizing commentary on Alan’s exordium, to show that Alan’s theme is the creation of epic itself. Four years later, Jane Chance pointed to the many correspondences between Nature’s activities creating a New Man and Alan’s activities as a poet creating an epic.\textsuperscript{122} She concluded that “the twelfth-century artist of the Anticlaudianus, then, becomes both the creator of art glorifying the arts and the product of the arts in which he has been trained.”\textsuperscript{123} Citing some of the same evidence, Dronke argued three years later that “throughout the Anticlaudianus parallels are established between the cosmic process of creation and the poetic,” and therefore, “the poet’s task reflects Natura’s task, which is itself a kind of ‘creative writing’.”\textsuperscript{124} This should come as no surprise, since the very title of the epic points to the author as the subject; to change its negative title to a positive one, we would have to call it the ‘Alanus’.

By establishing how Alan might have interpreted the Aeneid—both allegorically and literally, I can build upon and refine the ideas of Marshall, Chance, and Dronke. As Marshall has shown, Ralph of Longchamp read Alan’s claims in his exordium to mean that Alan was writing allegorically, in the manner of Virgil.\textsuperscript{125} Moreover, Alan himself tells us in his prose prologue that his poem contains additionally “a more acute subtlety of allegory” (\textit{acutior allegorie subtilitas}). Surprisingly, given the similarity he saw between Nature’s creative process and the poet’s, Dronke doubted the veracity of Alan’s

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\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 247.
\textsuperscript{124} Dronke, \textit{Dante and Medieval Latin}, 10-2.
\textsuperscript{125} Ralph glosses the last words of the Anticlaudianus’ first line, “falerasque poetae,” as “\textit{id est modum scribendi integumentalem. Sicut enim phalerae velant equum et ornant, sic integumentalis modus loquendi aliquid mysticum velat et claudit interius et ornat verba exterius.” See Ralph, Commentary on the Anticlaudianus, 67.
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claim remarking, “since nearly all the characters in the plot of the Anticlaudianus have allegorical names, it is hard to see any literal sense of the story which is not allegorical from the outset.” Specifically, Dronke asks, “what could the characters in the Anticlaudianus—Fronesis, Natura, Concordia, Astronomia, Fortuna and the rest—possibly mean, other than themselves?” In answer, I propose the following allegorical meaning. We have seen that Alan describes Nature’s previous works primarily as ethical exempla in the literary canon (depicted on the walls of Nature’s palace), so it follows that Nature’s new work could be read in the same vein. In Chapter 1, I showed that the final three books of the Anticlaudianus correspond to the allegorical (primarily Fulgentian) reading of the whole Aeneid. I suggest that the first six books of the Anticlaudianus describe the quest to create, i.e. write, the hero of this allegorical epic. Ziolkowski has established Alan’s fondness for exploring a wide range of concepts in terms of grammar and the rules of poetry. The meta-poetic allegory that I have proposed would be in keeping with such tendencies.

Nature begins her speech by expressing her concern that all of her previous works are imperfect. Even the best among them only exemplify individual virtues—rather than all at once in the same person/character:

“Sed nichil invenio quod in omni parte beate
Viuat, quin multas nobis deferre querelas
Possit, si hanc nostram uelit accusare Mineruam.”

“But I find nothing that lives in every form of blessedness, which could not bring many complaints against us, if it should desire to attack our skill.”

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126 Dronke, *Dante and Medieval Latin*, 12.
127 Ibid.
129 *Anticlaudianus* 1.216-8.
None of the literary/historical figures in the canon exemplify all virtues but rather show individual virtues, often mixed with vices. The novelty of Nature’s new project will be in concentrating all virtues in one person/character. Alan gives us another clue in Nature’s speech that Nature’s previous creations are parts of the literary canon, when he has her say the following at *Anticlaudianus* 1.221-2:

> “Nec tamen herentes maculas abstergere possum, 
> Quas habitus firmi prescriptio longa tue tur.”

“I cannot expunge permanent stains, which the long established prescription of immoveable habit guards.”

By characterizing Nature’s previous works as guarded by the “long established prescription of immoveable habit,” Alan might be referring to the deeply ingrained authority of the twelfth century’s *auctores*. If so, Alan might be suggesting that he does not wish to displace the canon’s *auctores*, but merely create a work that might in some way aid them, just as Nature has neither the intention of destroying her previous creations nor the ability to do so even if she wanted to.

At 1.258-63, Nature explains the most pressing reason for creating the New Man:

> “Heu! pudeat nostra terris decreta silere, 
> Quod nostri languescit amor, quod fama tepescens 
> Torpet et a toto uiles proscribimur orbe, 
> Quod laxas mundo sceleris concedit habenas 
> Thesiphone nostraque sibi de gente triumphans 
> Gaudet et a nostro luctu sibi gaudia suggit.”

“Alas! Let us be ashamed that our decrees are silent throughout the land, because love for us languishes and our cooling fame dulls. We are exiled from the whole world as worthless, because Tisiphone hands over the lax reins of sin to earth and rejoices, triumphing over our race, and sucks her joy from our grief.”

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The mention of an ongoing battle with the Furies alludes, of course, to the final battle in Book 9 of the *Anticlaudianus*, where the New Man will conquer the Vices led by Allecto, but we have seen that Nature’s previous works may also be interpreted as the twelfth-century literary canon. If we apply Nature’s sentiment to the literary canon used in schools, it becomes nearly identical to that expressed by John of Salisbury in his *Metalogicon*. In this work, John complains bitterly about those factions who strongly opposed the study of the literary *auctores*—especially the classical poets—in the mid-twelfth century curriculum. The whole of the *Metalogicon* is essentially a defense of the traditional role of grammar and rhetoric (and therefore poetry) in the curriculum. In this light, the battle at the end of the *Anticlaudianus*, although ostensibly a psychomachia, takes on a character similar to the Old French poem, *Bataille des set ars*, by Henri d’Andeli, in which the forces of grammar and rhetoric fight a losing battle against the forces of logic and disputation.131 This mid-thirteenth-century work significantly describes the *Anticlaudianus*, *Architrenius*, and *Alexandreis* fighting on the side of the *Aeneid* and other classical poetry against the forces of logic and the sciences (among these, Aristotle’s works feature prominently). That is to say, at least one early reader saw these twelfth-century epics as fighting alongside classical Latin epic in a losing battle to maintain their position in the canon.132 Thus, it is entirely in keeping with the contemporary educational climate (as well as with the contemporary inclination towards allegorical reading) to interpret Alan’s battle between the Virtues and Vices as one between the “classic” literary canon and those who oppose it.

131 For discussion of this poem’s place in the disputes over education in twelfth- and thirteenth-century schools, see Curtius, *European Literature*, 56.
132 Some things never change, but we should take heart when we consider that the same “losing” battle is still being fought today, almost 800 years later. Perhaps we should all start writing Latin epics.
We can now link Nature’s ambition in the *Anticlaudianus* directly to Alan’s ambition in writing the *Anticlaudianus*. Alan intends the New Man to be the perfect hero of an equally perfect epic, one which could promote/reinvigorate the study of literature and especially Latin epic. That is to say, Alan envisions his *Anticlaudianus*, via its perfect hero, redeeming all of the other epics in the literary canon—just as the perfect man, Christ, had redeemed humanity. Already in Nature’s opening speech, she uses Christological terminology to explain that the New Man will “redeem (redimatur) the fault (crimen) of her previous works” and that “the goodness of this one man will outweigh the faults of the many.”\(^{133}\)

In fact, the parallels between Christ and the New Man are so strong throughout the *Anticlaudianus*, that many later medieval readers interpreted the New Man as Christ.\(^{134}\) Few today so interpret the New Man, for good reasons, and Ralph of Longchamp makes no mention of such an interpretation in his commentary.\(^{135}\) Nevertheless, Alan closes his epic with a strong allusion to Virgil’s “Christian” fourth *Eclogue*. After the New Man defeats the vices, he ushers in a new Golden Age. As Simpson points out, “the scene of the Golden Age is indebted especially to Virgil’s *Fourth Eclogue*, lines 37-45, not only for verbal borrowings, but also in its conceptual placing: in both panegyrics, the Golden Age will arrive with the maturity of a perfect ruler.”\(^{136}\) Compare, for instance, *Eclogue* 4.17, “*pacatumque reget patriis virtutibus orbem*” (and he will rule over the world made peaceful by his father’s virtues), with

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134 See Meier, “Die Rezeption des Anticlaudianus,” 480-3 and 508.

135 Simpson provides a good summary of modern opinion, enumerating some of the problems with interpreting the New Man as Christ in *Sciences and the Self*, 116-7.

136 Simpson, *Sciences and the Self*, 107, n.23. See also further discussion at *Sciences and the Self*, 287.
Anticlaudianus 9.387-92, “regnum mundi legum moderatur habenis / ille beatus homo...Virtutes mundumque regunt” (that blessed man moderates his rule of the world with the reins of law...and the Virtues rule the world). Both poems describe gods mingling with men on earth (Eclogue 4.6-7,15-6; Anticlaudianus 9.391-5), and the lists of natural wonders that occur in both Golden Ages is likewise quite close (Eclogue 4.18-25, 37-45; Anticlaudianus 9.396-409). The fact that the child of Eclogue 4 was almost unanimously interpreted as Christ in the Middle Ages adds further weight to the idea that the New Man does have something of a Christological mission even if he cannot be directly equated with Christ.\(^\text{137}\)

In the twelfth century, it was not uncommon for the Golden Age metaphor to be applied to canonical auctores, just as today we still speak of Golden or Silver Latin poets.\(^\text{138}\) It is important to note, however, that the relative dates of composition did not become the means of subdividing canonical authors until much later. For example, Aimeric’s “golden” authors, in his Ars lectoria (c.1080), include Statius and Terence as well as Virgil, while his “silver” authors range from Plautus to Priscian.\(^\text{139}\) But it is certainly the case that Aimeric’s list reflects the preference for auctores with a relatively ancient date of composition; Aimeric includes no auctores within five hundred years of his own time. Joseph of Exeter draws a similar parallel between the Golden Age and the canon of auctores. In the exordium of his Ylias, Joseph voices his fear that his epic will receive unfair treatment because many people hate recent works and only like things

\(^{138}\) For discussion see Curtius, European Literature, 464-5.
\(^{139}\) Ibid.
written during “Saturn’s Golden Age”. Joseph seems to be reflecting the bias, as true now as in the twelfth century, that the “classic” and “canonical” should also be old.

If we assume that the Golden Age at the end of the Anticlaudianus refers to the literary canon, then we may interpret Alan’s ending in the following way: the moral perfection of the New Man will re-establish a new Golden Age in which the great epics of the past are revered and in which the Anticlaudianus itself occupies the pinnacle of the new canon. Thus, the New Man does have a Christological mission: he has been born into a new epic in order to save the imperfect epics of the past. Alan has created an epic to save his literary universe from the taint caused by imperfect historical heroes/exempla in Latin epic. Because Alan includes the epics of his contemporaries, Joseph and Walter, on the mural of negative exempla which Nature had created, I suggest that Alan sees his own epic as redeeming not just pagan classical literature but even the classicizing, yet Christian, epics of his own time. Both the Ylias and the Alexandreis portray heroes who are far from the ethical perfection of Alan’s New Man. Alan is most anxious to correct the ethical imperfection of the historical hero—not the pagan heroic code or pagan epic per se.

The Anticlaudianus has been described, I think correctly, as an early representative of the specula principum, a genre which would gain in popularity in the centuries thereafter, becoming especially ubiquitous in the early modern period. A

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140 “si secula tantum / aurea Saturni memorant et nulla recentis / gratia virtutis, aude tamen ardua, pubes!” (Ylias 1.16-8).
141 Alan even has Nature say of the New Man, “sit speculum nobis” (Anticlaudianus 1.243). For the Anticlaudianus as speculum principis especially meant for Philip Augustus, see M. Wilks, “Alan of Lille and the New Man,” in Renaissance and Renewal in Christian History, ed. D. Baker (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1977), 137-57; Linda E. Marshall, “The Identity of the ‘New Man’ in the Anticlaudianus of Alan of Lille,” Viator 10 (1979), 77-88. Simpson (Sciences and the Self, 291-2) concurs with Wilks and Marshall (while arguing that obviously the poem means much more than a simple panegyric). I am less convinced that the Anticlaudianus was intended for Philip Augustus than I am that it is an early speculum principis. I believe
common attribute of such literature is the *vir perfectus*—a character to serve as a perfect moral template for princes and, indeed, for everyone else as well. Many scholars have shown that, during the early modern period, Aeneas often was seen to be unambiguously a *vir perfectus* and the *Aeneid* itself was interpreted as a *speculum principis* for Augustus.\(^\text{142}\) Much more work will be required to uncover all of the connections between seeing Aeneas as a *vir perfectus* and the genre of *speculum principum*, but the evidence I have presented for the *Anticlaudianus* tantalizingly suggests that at least one early, and very important, example of this literature was in fact reacting against Virgil’s portrayal of an *imperfect* Aeneas.

### An Epic of Everyman: the *Architrenius* and the *Aeneid*

As we saw in the case of the *Alexandreis*, modern readers of the *Architrenius* are divided over how to characterize John’s hero and the work’s relationship to classical epic heroics. Is Architrenius a hero or an antihero, a *vir perfectus* or a “*vir perfectus in reverse,*” and how does John think that his own hero relates to Aeneas?\(^\text{143}\) Paul Piehler and Christine Ratkowitsch assume that the *Architrenius* maintains a Virgilian theme of self discovery. For Piehler, “Architrenius, distantly descended, one might say, from Gilgamesh and Aeneas, becomes the first of the interior pilgrims, wandering over the world in search of his soul, and—like Dante, Bunyan’s Christian, and Kafka’s Land-

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\(^{142}\) For instance, Landino maintains that Aeneas is a “*vir perfectus*” demonstrating how all people should perform their duties correctly. For discussion, see Wilson-Okamura, *Virgil in the Renaissance*, 219. See especially the discussion of the “ideal man theory” in *Virgil in the Renaissance*, 208-12.

surveyor—*profugus*, an exile, searching out the *lares*, numinous abodes of mental divinities, in a landscape at once internal and external.”

Similarly, Ratkowitsch argues that, “Der Architrenius ist eine neun Bücher umfassende satirisch-didaktische allegorische Dichtung, die in Form einer physischen und psychischen Reise die inner Entwicklung eines Menschen von Zweifeln bis zur geistigen Reife und zum Seelenfrieden aufzeigt.” On the other hand, Peter Godman reads the *Architrenius* as a humorous parody of the *Anticlaudianus* and, more generally, of the Latin tradition of the *Bildungsepos*. To Godman, Architrenius is “an antihero of *Unbildung*” who is “the opposite of Alan’s *vir perfectus*.” Based on his reading of the character of Aeneas as a *vir perfectus*, Godman also sees an antithesis between the *Aeneid* and the *Architrenius*.

I have already made the case that we cannot assume the priority of the *Anticlaudianus*, and therefore, I think it unwise to read the *Architrenius* as an intentional parody of the *Anticlaudianus*, but there are certainly good reasons to see a degree of antithesis between the heroes of the *Anticlaudianus* and the *Architrenius*. In contrast to Nature’s quest to create a *vir perfectus* in the *Anticlaudianus*, the imperfection of John’s hero is the driving force of the epic. Architrenius sets the narrative in motion by delivering a *planctus* in which he laments his moral imperfection.

... “*Mene istos,* inquit, “*in usus*

*Enixa est Natura parens, me misit ut arma*

*In superos dampnata feram, divumque reatus*

*Irriten odium?*

...*mater quid pignora tante*

*Destituit labi nec, quem produxit, alumpno*

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144 Piehler, *Visionary Landscape*, 89.
145 Ratkowitsch, *Descriptio Picturae*, 268.
146 Godman, for instance, argues that the *Architrenius* is “an epic account of striving less by a *vir perfectus* modeled on the works of Virgil and Statius than by a mindless mourner, surveyed with the caustic gaze of a Juvenal or an Ovid.” Godman, *Silent Masters*, 318-9.
147 Like Juno’s speech at the beginning of the *Aeneid*, this speech, the first in the epic, will impel the narrative to its conclusion. Architrenius’ speech even begins with the same word as Juno’s speech, “*mene.*”
Excubat, ut nullis maculam scelus inspuat actis?"¹⁴⁸

“Did mother Nature give birth to me for these purposes: Did she send me out in order to wage a damnable war against the gods, so that my guilt might inspire the hatred of the gods?... Why has a mother abandoned her child to so great a misfortune, nor protected the offspring whom she created, so that wickedness might not leave its stain on all of his actions.”

Architrenius wants to ask his creator the question: why, when Nature was clearly capable of making almost anything, did she make man capable of being tormented by vices?

Architrenius’ question can be read as a reply to Nature’s complaint against the vice-ridden human race in Alan’s much earlier work, De planctu Naturae. Alan’s own very different answer, to judge from the Anticlaudianus, was to have Nature create a perfect man, a model for the rest of humanity to imitate.

Whether in anticipation of or in response to Alan’s solution, Architrenius goes on to claim in 1.312-9 that he is not a vir perfectus:

“At me pestiferis aliis exponit inhermen
Angibus et tortis victorium deteror idris.
Non michi pacifico nudum latus asperat ense,
Non Calibum plumis lorice recia nodat,
Non surgente caput animosum casside cristat,
Non clipei telis obtendit menia: nec, quos
Det Natura, timent scelerum Stimphalides arcus,
Nec furtim lesura nefas deterret harundo.”

“But Nature exposes me unarmed to another kind of poisonous snakes, and I am impaired by the writhing hydras of my vices. She does not furnish my naked side with a peacemaking sword. She does not tie the nets of my hauberk with the scales of the Chalybes [i.e. of iron]. She does not crown my brave head with a lofty helm. She does not protect me from weapons with a shield. Those to whom Nature gives these things do not fear the Stymphalian bow of sins, nor does its wicked arrow, which wounds so stealthily, deter them.”

Architrenius points out that Nature must have been capable of making him perfect, yet he was born with no natural immunity against vice. The hypothetical armorning that Nature

¹⁴⁸ Architrenius 1.225-8, 231-3.
could have provided him has a parallel at Anticlaudianus 8.321-7, where Nature arms the New Man in preparation for his battle against the vices. The similar passages cannot be used to demonstrate influence or priority because of the ubiquity of the Pauline arming allegory, but it is clear that Alan is proposing a solution in the Anticlaudianus that John would reject.

There is certainly strong textual support for reading Architrenius as an imperfect hero in contrast to Alan’s *vir perfectus*, but does this imply that John sees his protagonist as an antihero of an anti-Virgilian epic? John certainly rejects many aspects of the literal narrative of the Aeneid, frequently differentiating his own epic from epics which take the aristocracy for their subjects. For instance, John twice refers to his undertaking as “*togatus.*” A medieval gloss on the first appearance of the word in the Architrenius interprets this word to mean ordinary people below the rank of knight (equestrian): approximately the free lower-middle class in the late twelfth century. John seems to confirm this definition when he bids farewell to his epic, referring to it as “*togati / Ingenii proles rudis et plebea*” (the rude and plebean creation of toga-clad invention). That is to say, his epic is of a lowly social class just like its author. Significantly, in the context of epic, *togatus* can also have the connotation of non-martial or civilian. Servius explains that the Aeneid’s first word, *arma*, is deliberately contrasted with *toga*:

*per ‘arma’ autem bellum significat, et est tropus metonymia. nam arma quibus in bello utimur pro bello posuit, sicut toga qua in pace utimur pro pace ponitur, ut Cicero “cedant arma togae,” id est bellum paci.*

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149 At 1.51 and 9.468.
150 Transcribed by Schmidt in his edition of the Architrenius, 288: “*togati fuerunt vulgares Romani qui toga, veste vili, utebantur; trabeati vero nobiles qui trabea utebantur, que vestis erat dignitatis.*”
By “arms” he signifies war, and it is a kind of metonymy, for he writes arms, by which war is waged, in place of war, just as the toga, which is used in peace, is used in place of peace as Cicero says “arms yield to the toga,” i.e. war to peace.

Adding further weight to this interpretation, in the exordium (Architrenius 1.44-52), John specifically contrasts the topic of his poem with the noble and martial themes of Homer.

But it is right that, amid Apollo’s laurels, the myrtle grow green with its drooping fronds. Phoebus’ lyre does not sing for every hand. We do not know how to sooth ears with the Aonian lyre. The point of that plectrum becomes worthless in the hand of a commoner. Such glory of bards, that splendor, that title, belongs only to Homers. It is sufficient for me if the accompaniment of our slender reed-pipe is enough for commoners...

Among medieval readers, Virgil’s “tenuis avena” (slender reed-pipe) of Eclogue 1.2 did not have quite the connotations assumed by modern classicists to indicate a Callimachean poetic of refinement and brevity. Instead, Servius explains the term as indicating the low style appropriate to bucolic poetry.

ON A SLENDER REED-PIPE on a stalk, on a stem, of the sort with which rustics are often accustomed to sing: elsewhere “to ruin a miserable song with your noisy pipe.” Furthermore, by saying “on a slender reed-pipe,” he indicates obliquely the type of humble style which, as is said above, he uses in the Bucolics.

John is arguing in this programatic statement that he will be using a style fitting for the description of humble people, who will not be engaging in the traditional martial subject
of Homeric epic. Such a “tenuis avena” is appropriate for the description of John’s hero, a lowly grammarian, although, at the same time, we might see John drawing a parallel between himself and the Virgil of Eclogue 1, who, according to Servius, wrote himself into the character of Tityrus.\(^\text{152}\)

John’s subject might stand in opposition to the martial and noble plot and heroes of the Aeneid, but John’s anti-epic statements must be understood in their context: a long didactic poem which, as I showed in Chapter 1, derives its narrative structure from the allegorical interpretation of the Aeneid. There is an inherent tension in the allegorized Aeneid between the princely Aeneas and the Everyman whom he is said to represent. This distinction becomes blurred in early modern allegoreses, but in the allegoreses of Fulgentius, Bernard, and John of Salisbury, Aeneas does not stand for an ideal monarch, but an Everyman. Alan resolves this tension by explicitly endowing his New Man with noble blood, thereby transforming the Everyman of the Aeneid’s allegorical tradition into a speculum principum—a transformation that would have a long legacy. In contrast, John rejects the noble trappings of Aeneas and makes his hero an Everyman who laments his middling place in society as well as his moral imperfection.

I argued in Chapter 1 that “Architrenius” is merely a thinly veiled epithet for the author himself, but whether or not this identification is accepted, Architrenius’ social class is clear. Instead of being royalty or Alan’s New Man, a king to usher in a new Golden Age, Architrenius belongs to the same social class as its author—a humble grammarian. John’s patron, Walter of Coutances, the incoming Archbishop of Rouen, also seems not to have been of noble blood, and his title of magister means that he

\(^{152}\) Servius ad Eclogue 1.1 (cf. Georgic 4.563-6). John could also be making a more general reference here to the allegorical mode of interpretation. See Wilson-Okamura, Virgil in the Renaissance, 74.
received a good education—Turner has even suggested that, like Architrenius, he studied in Paris.\textsuperscript{153} Perhaps his patron’s personal history enabled John to risk the bold move of introducing a scholar as an epic protagonist: he knew that he would have a receptive audience in his new patron. The similarities between the early lives of John and Walter might even mean that Walter, more than John, is intended to be the “real” man standing behind the epithet, “Architrenius.”

I would argue that it is John’s decision to write an epic about an Everyman and his parallel decision to focus on the philosophical \textit{descensus} that most give his poem the satirical anti-epic flavor detected by Godman. Godman is certainly not alone in seeing the \textit{Architrenius} as predominantly a work of satire because of its numerous Juvenalian echoes and themes—even the first two words of the epic quote Juvenal.\textsuperscript{154} I do not dispute the satirical flavor of the \textit{Architrenius}, but I believe that the satire is in the service of an epic purpose. It has long been the prerogative of epic poets to flavor their works with other genres. Lucretius is philosophical, Ovid’s \textit{Metamorphoses} is elegiac, and Lucan is historical. Indeed, the ancient view of Homeric epic was that it encompassed all genres. Bernard Silvestris even opens his commentary on the \textit{Aeneid} with a similar discussion claiming that “some poets such as the satirists write for utility; some, such as the comic playwrights write for delight; and some such as the historical poets [i.e. writers of epic] write for both.”\textsuperscript{155} The \textit{Architrenius} has an especially satirical bent because its subject matter, the lofty epic \textit{descensus}, necessarily focuses on vice: what it looks like

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{155} Bernard, \textit{Commentary on the Aeneid}, 2: “Poetarum quidam scribunt causa utilitatis ut satirici, quidam causa delectionis ut comedi, quidam causa utriusque ut historici.”
\end{footnotesize}
and how to avoid it. Bernard Silvestris and Servius frequently quote Juvenal and Horace throughout their commentaries on Book 6 of the *Aeneid*. A satirical flavor is almost required by the theme of philosophical descent itself.

As we have seen, the allegoresis of the *Aeneid*, in its essential form, is ambivalent with respect to the moral character of its hero. Even if John saw Virgil’s Aeneas as a *vir perfectus*, he surely read the allegorical *Aeneid*, his primary focus, as having an ethically imperfect hero. I would argue that John is not rejecting the Virgilian epic tradition and writing an anti-*Aeneid*, but rather he is emphasizing a different aspect of the *Aeneid*, the very aspect that seems to have vexed Alan of Lille in the *Anticlaudianus*: Aeneas’ imperfection. We can see an example of this in each poet’s treatment of *lacrimae* (tears).

Godman argues that Architrenius must be an epic antihero partly because, as his name suggests, he is always crying. Godman is not alone in finding tears inappropriate for an epic hero. Richard Thomas provides a good overview of Servius’ critical discomfort with the weeping of heroes in the *Aeneid* and concludes his discussion by suggesting that “in all the preceding examples Servius was driven by the principle that heroic behavior cannot involve the demonstration of grief and sorrow.” To Servius, boys, such as Ascanius, may shed tears without it being shameful, but heroes cannot honorably cry.

Godman maintains that John of Hauville similarly thought that crying was inappropriate to the epic hero and so must have constructed his hero in antithesis to the traditional hero. As evidence, Godman presents Thales’ criticism of Architrenius’

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156 *Virgil and the Augustan Reception*, 102-6.
weeping at Architrenius 7.280-5, during Architrenius’ interview with the philosophers in the Isles of the Blessed.  

Parce puer lacrimis, fletus agnosce virilem
Dedecuisse genam. pudor est hoc imbre rigorem
Immaduisse virum; lacrime planctusque loquuntur
Degeneres animos, riguumque facillima flendi
Femina pectus habet didicitque cadentibus utro
In lacrimis clausisse dolos, reserasse dolores.

Refrain from tears, boy! Recognize that your weeping was not appropriate for your manly cheek. It is shameful for a man to have moistened his toughness with this shower. Tears and complaints tell of degenerate minds, and a woman, always quick to weep, has a well-watered breast, and has learned to hide her tricks in tears falling at will while revealing grief.

Certainly, Thales’ censure is indebted to Servius’ conception of epic heroics, yet this passage marks the only time in the entire Architrenius when a character criticizes Architrenius for weeping. The rest of the time, no one (and crucially never the narrator) suggests that Architrenius is over-reacting to the genuine human sorrow and corruption which he surveys. I would argue that Thales’ criticism must be a special case, which showcases more the failure of this character to console Architrenius than any excess on the part of Architrenius himself—at least as it pertains to his earlier journey.

Most of the time Architrenius’ tears are demonstrative and intended to promote ethical behavior in the reader. Not long after Thales censures Architrenius’ tears, a different philosopher, Pittacus, argues for the ethical value of tears at Architrenius 8.30-4:

[clemencia]... fluvios exosa cruoris
Non lacrime, si quam regnis extorsit egestas
Et solium movere case, si quando potentum
Arentes oculos tenero compassio fletu
Impluit et latuit sceptro rorante tyrannis.

[Clemency]... abhors the flow of blood but not the flow of tears, if poverty has ever persuaded monarchs and cottages have ever moved thrones, if ever

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compassion has wet the dry eyes of the powerful with tender weeping and a tyrant retired because of his moistened scepter.

That is to say, tears can promote ethical behavior, for tears of compassion have the power to move the rich and powerful to help the needy. In the poetics of the *Architrenius*, weeping can be a positive attribute. As Godman admits, it is hardly necessary to justify weeping as a positive force in a twelfth-century northern European work.\(^{159}\)

Furthermore, in spite of Servius’ efforts to make Aeneas conform to his conception of ideal epic heroics, Aeneas does weep in the *Aeneid*. One of Aeneas’ most famously tearful moments occurs when he views the scenes depicting the Trojan War on Dido’s temple. As Ratkowitsch has shown, this scene is an important model for one of John’s longest ecphrases (*Architrenius* 4.214-83), a description of a tapestry depicting, among other things, several tragic scenes from the Trojan war.\(^{160}\) Immediately after these Trojan scenes are described, the narrator paraphrases Aeneas’ famous “*lacrimae rerum*” speech at *Architrenius* 4.252-3:

\[
\text{Dulce virum luctus lugere, dolere dolores} \\
\text{Et lacrimis lacrimas, planctu rescribere planctum.}
\]

It is sweet to mourn the mourning of men, to grieve for their griefs, and to retrace their tears with tears, and their lament with lamentation.

In these lines, John does not just recall the tears of Aeneas, he amplifies them. Wetherbee also notes the Virgilian parallel and suggests that “what we see at such moments, I think, is a remarkable intuitive feeling for the humane element in classical Latin poetry, a sense of the *lacrimae rerum* capable of temporarily subordinating the impulses of the satiric

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\(^{159}\) See his discussion with bibliography in “Opus consummatum,” 66. After all, Bernard of Clairvaux argued the following: “*Ubi breviter comprehensa utroque cognitione est: et nostri quidem in lacrimis serens, quae autem Dei metens in gudio.*” (Sermo 11.18-9)

\(^{160}\) *Descriptio Picturae*, 274-5, 283-5.
moralist.”161 I do not see any conflict between this moment and John’s purpose as a moralist—quite the contrary, but I would agree with the gist of Wetherbee’s interpretation. John’s amplification of Aeneas’ tears here (as elsewhere in the Architrenius) suggests a reading of Virgil’s hero as an imperfect specimen of humanity, not a vir perfectus.

In contrast, Alan’s New Man never weeps, and the word, lacrimae, appears only a handful of times in the Anticlaudianus. In fact, Gemitus, Luctus, Fletus, Planctus, and Lacrimae are all members of Allecto’s army of Vices.162 Both the Architrenius and Anticlaudianus respond differently to Aeneas’ lacrimae, but both can find justification either in the Aeneid or its commentary tradition. One could say that Alan tried to remove Virgil’s lacrimae rerum while John augmented them. Such an interpretation is in keeping with the distinction I outlined in Chapter 1: Alan’s focus on the Virgilian ascent to heaven and John’s focus on the Virgilian descent to the underworld.

By writing an epic about a real Everyman of his own day, John was arguably trying to get directly at what Bernard Silvestris perceived to be the ethical kernel of the Aeneid, “know thyself”—in so doing, forging an even greater allegiance to Roman satire. Rather than having to explain how Aeneas, a monarch at great temporal and social remove from most of the readership of the Aeneid, demonstrates how to behave correctly, John shows ethical situations happening through the eyes of a protagonist who represents himself, his patron, and, considering the exceptionally difficult Latin of the Architrenius, likely much of his readership. The Architrenius would have allowed its readers to

161 Wetherbee, Architrenius, xx-xxi.
162 Anticlaudianus 9.219-27.
approach the goal of “know thyself” more directly than the existing classical and classicizing epics.

The ‘Harvard’ school in the twelfth century?

In the past, when scholars have read Medieval Latin epic as questioning an epic protagonist’s moral perfection, they have usually interpreted it as anti-Virgilian or anti-pagan sentiment, but I suggest that there can be another dimension to such readings. Often, it is possible to see twelfth-century authors as drawing constructively upon the Aeneid’s (pagan) commentary tradition, and sometimes twelfth-century authors seem to suggest that their own negative readings of Aeneas’ moral character are sanctioned by Virgil himself. In the latter case, there is an especially close connection between such twelfth-century readings of the Aeneid and the modern ‘pessimistic’ or ‘Harvard’ school of Virgil criticism.

It is notoriously difficult to prove that a later poet is reading the Aeneid in similar fashion to modern ‘pessimistic’ criticism. Many reviews of Kallendorf’s and Thomas’ efforts to highlight poetic ‘pessimism’ in the reception of the Aeneid rightly point out, for instance, that it is often debateable whether an alleged ‘pessimistic’ response could not also be a strongly ‘optimistic’ reading which is intentionally parodying or subverting its model.\(^{163}\) This is a very serious problem—but one that I hope I have lessened by showing

\(^{163}\) See especially Victoria Willis’ review of the The Other Virgil in Reception: Texts, Readers, Audiences, History 3 (Summer 2011): 176-9. Willis makes the following charge: “Kallendorf frequently lapses into referring to the Aeneid as if it were a relatively stable and inert model against which the meaning of a new text can be fixed and measured. It is as if any text using Virgilian allusion and taking a nuanced, ambivalent, or critical position on imperialism or colonialism had to be understood as recognizing something which is already in the Aeneid, rather than critiquing, transforming, or lampooning a text that in
that the ‘horizon of expectations’ of close contemporaries to these poets included
readings of the *Aeneid* which take for granted that Virgil intentionally constructed a
morally imperfect protagonist. While the examples I have mustered above are certainly
intended to contribute to the evidence for ‘pessimistic’ readings of the *Aeneid* in the
twelfth century, the heart of my argument is to show that we cannot take any modern
reading of the *Aeneid* for granted—be it ‘optimistic’ or ‘pessimistic’—when studying the
*Aeneid*’s medieval poetic reception.

the period was usually taken as a straightforward encomium of empire.” In defense of Kallendorf, so few
studies of Virgilian reception have been sensitive to possible alternative readings of the *Aeneid* that even if
Kallendorf sometimes exaggerates the ‘pessimism’ in his examples, his work as a whole provides a much-needed shift of perspective.
Conclusion

The picture I have painted of twelfth-century Virgilian influence shows how foreign classicism can appear even when drawing upon the same texts that inform our understanding of the Roman classics today. Some of this apparent foreignness can be attributed to the dramatic integration of the classical epic commentary tradition into the text of twelfth-century Latin epic. Walter and Joseph both appropriate the role of the commentator by giving the “true history” (vera historia) while at the same time actively euhemerizing and naturalizing the divine apparatus. Alan and John make the traditional allegoresis of the Aeneid into the very plots of their epics. All of this, as I argued in Chapter 3, is not being done to lampoon or replace the classical epic tradition but rather to build upon it. There is classical precedent for the absorption of the concerns of earlier commentaries into new poetry, but I have seen no classical author who goes so far in this direction as these four epicists.1 I have argued that the special integration of the roles of epicist and commentator stems from a reading of the Aeneid in which there is almost no separation between the surface text and the underlying wisdom “revealed” by the ancient commentary tradition. This theory suggests several avenues for future research that could modify our current understanding of the history of medieval literature and ultimately lead us to reconsider the place of twelfth-century Latin epic in the later literary tradition.

Virgilian commentary and ‘Chartrian’ humanism

Baswell in *Virgil in Medieval England*, Mora-Lebrun in *L’Enéide médiévale et la chanson de geste*, Thompson in *Dante’s Epic Journeys*, and others have begun to explore the influence of the *Aeneid* commentary tradition on vernacular authors, but surely the most direct influence must lie in the Latin tradition. My dissertation has barely left the shallows of these largely uncharted waters, yet some of the influence of the Virgilian commentary tradition on Medieval Latin poetry has, I think, already been explored but under a different name. Many of the great literary productions of the late twelfth century, including the *Anticlaudianus*, *Architrenius*, and other poems, have been seen as an outgrowth of the keen interest in Platonism, especially the *Timaeus*, stimulated by the so-called ‘school of Chartres’. Wetherbee, who has done the most to develop the idea of ‘Chartrian’ influence on medieval poetry, argues in *Platonism and Poetry*:

Both Boethius and Martianus dramatize the experience of the philosopher, and they were, with Plato, the most influential exponents of the theme which, as formulated in the commentaries of Bernardus, became virtually the archetypal pattern of Chartrian allegory: the theme of what may be called intellectual pilgrimage, the experience of the spirit in its attempts to rise above its earthly situation through an understanding of *naturalia* and attain a vision of truth.

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In Wetherbee’s analysis, after commentators such as Bernard Silvestris had codified this theme, “Chartrian humanism becomes itself a theme for poetry” in the *Anticlaudianus* and Bernard’s *Cosmographia*. What Wetherbee labels the “archetypal pattern of Chartrian allegory” is the same allegory found in the *Aeneid* by Servius and Fulgentius, drawing on earlier allegoresis of Homer. True, the traditional allegoreses of the *Aeneid* and the *Odyssey* were heavily influenced by Neoplatonic thought, but these commentaries have their own lineage and history, largely independent of the *Timaeus* and other purely philosophical works.

The history of the epic commentary tradition suggests that Wetherbee’s “Chartrian allegory” might owe more to the epic tradition than to a renewed interest in the *Timaeus*, but did the members and students of the ‘school of Chartres’ associate this allegory more with epic or with Plato? John of Salisbury acknowledges Homer, not Plato, as the ultimate source of his own allegoresis of the first half of the *Aeneid* with which he ends the *Policraticus*. As we have seen in Chapter 1, Bernard Silvestris argues that Boethius and Martianus intentionally imitated Virgil’s allegory in the sixth book of the *Aeneid*, described as the ascent to the mind of God. Bernard makes no mention of Plato in this context, but Wetherbee, when discussing Bernard’s statement, claims that the fact “that all three authors are imitating Plato goes without saying.” Wetherbee goes on to theorize that “the *Timaeus* is the paradigmatic literary text as well as a summa of philosophy, and to the extent that the poets had succeeded in emulating this great model,

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4 Ibid., 7.
5 See especially Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian*.
6 *Policraticus* 8.24: “*Quibus [sex librorum distinctionibus] conditionis humanae, dum Odisseam imitatur, ortum exprimere uisus est.*”
virtually the embodiment of the natural order itself, their own works attain a similar
scope and coherence.” Wetherbee, not Bernard, makes the leap from Virgil to Plato.
This distinction highlights the difference between Wetherbee’s interpretation of the
origins of ‘Chartrian’ thinking and that favored by Wetherbee’s quintessential
‘Chartrian’, Bernard Silvestris. At Metalogicon 1.24, when John of Salisbury describes
the classroom of Bernard of Chartres, that is to say the physical school of Chartres, he
emphasizes its defining feature as a dedication to the grammatical, rhetorical, and
allegorical unpacking of classical epic:

_Excute Virgilium aut Lucanum, et ibi cuiuscunque philosophie professor sis,
eiusdem inuenies conditionem. Ergo pro capacitate discentis aut docentis industria
et diligentia, constat fructus prelectionis auctorum. Sequebatur huncorem
Bernardus Carnotensis, exundantissimus modernis temporibus fons litterarum in
Gallia, et in auctorum lectione quid simplex esset et ad imaginem regule positum
ostendebat; figuras gramaticae, colores retoricae, cauillationes sophismatum, et
qua parte sui proposito lectionis articulus respicebat ad alias disciplinas,
proponebat in medio._

Thoroughly investigate Virgil and Lucan, and, whatever philosophy you teach,
you will find its seasoning there. Therefore, the fruit of a lecture on the authors is
in proportion to the capacity of the student and the industry and diligence of the
teacher. Bernard of Chartres, the most abundant font of letters in Gaul in modern
times, used to follow this practice, and in reading the authors, he used to show
what was simple and done according to the letter of the rule. In the midst, he used
to explain the figures of grammar, the rhetorical devices, the sophistical trivia,
and in what part of the examined reading each portion pertained to other
disciplines.

If such eminent ‘Chartrians’ believed that the classical epic tradition, more than Plato,
was the ultimate source of their learning, then perhaps the poetic achievements of the
’school of Chartres’ owe more to the study of Virgil than has been previously suggested.

The fact that the philosophical interests of the ‘Chartrians’ do not accord with our
own reading of Virgil is no surprise. Servius, Fulgentius, and Macrobius read the _Aeneid_

8 Ibid.
as a summa of natural and ethical philosophy, just as Wetherbee claims that the
‘Chartrians’ read the Timaeus. Even the author of an anonymous twelfth-century
‘Chartrian’ commentary on the Timaeus feels compelled to discuss Virgil as a
philosophical authority.\(^9\) I do not dispute the importance of the Timaeus to many twelfth-
century scholars (although Margret Gibson maintains that interest in the Timaeus drops
off radically after 1150), but the importance of Servius and Fulgentius as sources of
Neoplatonic thought has, in my opinion, been dramatically underappreciated—especially
when it comes to the interpretation of medieval poetry and commentaries on poetry.\(^10\)

Certainly, the Virgilian commentary tradition is a more intuitive source of
inspiration than the Timaeus for the following influences which Wetherbee assigns to the
‘school of Chartres’:

In all of this the tradition of Chartres had its influence: Bernardus Silvestris turned
the essence of Chartrian thought into poetry in his much-imitated De mundi
universitate; the apparatus of learning which Guillaume de Conches had applied
to the integumenta of the Timaeus survived to point a moral in the glosses of
Arnulf of Orleans on Ovid and Lucan; Jean de Hanville lectured at Rouen on the
inseparability of universal learning from great poetry, and was felt by many to
have attained this lofty ideal in his Architrenius.\(^11\)

Seeing a link to classical epic commentary in each of these instances seems more natural
than making the leap from a prose philosophical work, the Timaeus, to the poetry of
Bernard Silvestris (shown by Whitman to draw inspiration from the allegorized Aeneid),

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\(^9\) Paris, B. N. lat. 8624, f. 17r, cited by Tullio Gregory, *Platonismo medievale; studi e ricerche* (Roma: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 1958), 128: “...aliquantulum isti veritati accedunt sed nundum eam perfecte intuentur, sue ignorantie culpant in Platonem et Virgilium in philosophico more de anima mundi loquentes. Quomodo enim potuit manifestius expedire Virgilius quid mundi animam diceret quam cum dixit “Principio celum et terram, etc.”


to commentaries on Ovid and Lucan, and finally, to “the inseparability of universal learning from great poetry” codified in the form of an epic, the Architrenius.\textsuperscript{12} If we assume that interest in the Virgilian tradition is the ultimate source of these developments, then we can easily account for the ‘Chartrian’ interest in the philosophical allegorization of classical poetry—one of the major ‘Chartrian’ characteristics identified by Wetherbee. To Wetherbee, the best manifestations of ‘Chartrian’ philosophy all appear in commentaries on other texts—mostly classical poets; Wetherbee derives ‘Chartrian’ philosophy from commentaries on the Timaeus, Consolatio, De nuptiis, and the Aeneid.\textsuperscript{13} Tellingly, it is Bernard Silvestris’ commentaries on the latter two which Wetherbee describes as “the most typically Chartrian.”\textsuperscript{14} These commentaries are, without question, far more directly indebted to Servius’, Fulgentius’, and Macrobius’ exegesis of the Aeneid than to the Timaeus or other purely philosophical texts.

Most scholars who discuss the importance of the ‘school of Chartres,’ including its most outspoken critic, R.W. Southern, see the ‘Chartrians’ as philosophers defined by their engagement with Plato. As I have shown, however, this is not necessarily how Bernard Silvestris or John of Salisbury—or for that matter any of the epicists discussed here—portray their own interests or those of their teachers. Instead, they seem concerned, above all, with the explication of classical poetry—the very thing often cited as the springboard of the Italian Renaissance. By defining ‘Chartrianism’ (or Southern’s replacement term, ‘scholastic humanism’) as a kind of Platonism which just happens to be amenable to reading classical poetry, we risk making a false distinction between the classicism of the fourteenth-century humanists and the classicism of twelfth-century

\textsuperscript{12} See Whitman, Allegory, 110 and 239-41.
\textsuperscript{13} Wetherbee, Platonism and Poetry, 28-125.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 104.
Northern European scholars, both of which can be described in terms of a special interest in classical poetry and the Virgilian tradition.

**Continuity of the Virgilian tradition**

When Tobias Gregory claims that “it is the degree of formal, stylistic, and thematic imitation of classical models, the Virgilian above all, that distinguishes the epics of the Renaissance from those of the Middle Ages,” he is merely stating the conventional wisdom.\(^{15}\) Even most medievalists still subscribe to this idea. Recently, Vincent Gillespie, repeating a conclusion drawn by Pascale Bourgain, claimed that “until the proto-humanist revival, Virgil was ‘un dieu, mais un dieu crépusculaire’, described by Dante as ‘one grown faint from too much silence’ (Inferno 1.1, 62–3).”\(^{16}\) If Virgilianism is a defining feature of the Italian Renaissance, then my dissertation can be taken as further justification for Charles Homer Haskins’ *Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*. If the influence often assigned to the ‘school of Chartres’ is also tied to a renewed Virgilianism, then the case becomes even stronger. Nevertheless, my own inclination tends towards seeing continuity rather than a series of renaissances. As we have seen, the *Aeneid* has always been read and Servius has always been read too, guiding interpretation of the *Aeneid* (and, I believe, much of Latin literature) in a similar direction across the Middle Ages and throughout the early modern period. Marjorie Curry Woods has recently sounded a warning that commentaries, not just on Virgil but on all Latin poems,

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\(^{15}\) Gregory, *From Many Gods to One*, 24-5.

did not change as much as is often thought. She maintains that “a number of what are usually listed as characteristics of Renaissance commentaries are also true of medieval ones [and] much of what is said to be characteristic of medieval commentaries is true of only some medieval commentaries and is also true of some Renaissance commentaries.”

It is crucial that all those who work on medieval literature, especially on medieval commentaries, be well-read in the Virgilian tradition because Servian insights are ubiquitous and easily can be misjudged as medieval or early modern innovations (or eccentricities) when they appear in contexts outside of the Virgilian corpus. The potential pitfalls awaiting medievalists unfamiliar with the Virgilian tradition may be illustrated by examples drawn from two well-known books concerned with medieval commentaries on classical literature: Judson Allen’s *The Ethical Poetic* and Beryl Smalley’s *English Friars and Antiquity*. In his detailed survey of late medieval literary theory, Allen cites two excerpts from medieval treatises which, for him, sum up the range of medieval responses to history and myth. In the first, he points out that the fourteenth-century author “John Ridevall was able to prove on the basis of literary evidence alone, that Dido could never have known Aeneas.” In the second (from the twelfth century), “the anonymous mythographer of Bodleian ms Digby 221, using the same kinds of scholarly techniques [i.e. reasons of historical chronology] but coming to an opposite, and characteristically medieval, conclusion, argued that Helen was an immortal.” Unbeknownst to Allen,

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19 Allen, *The Ethical Poetic*, 255. “Helenam vero immortalem fuisse temporis probat diuturnitas. Nam constat fratres eius de Argonautis fuisse, Argonautarum vero filios cum Thebanis dimicasse. Item filii eorum contra Trojanos bellum gesserunt. Si ergo immortalis Helena non fuisset, tot sine dubio per secula...”
John Ridevall reproduces Servius’ discussion of the three-hundred year chronological gap between Dido and Aeneas at *Aeneid* 1.267, while the anonymous twelfth-century mythographer has quoted, essentially verbatim, Servius’ note on Helen’s immortality at *Aeneid* 2.601. Both Ridevall’s claim and the twelfth-century mythographer’s “characteristically medieval conclusion” are fundamentally classical and both are intimately bound up with the classical reception of the *Aeneid*.

Allen’s source for Ridevall’s discussion of Dido and Aeneas is Beryl Smalley, who describes this as Ridevall’s “most striking contribution to scholarship.”20 To Smalley, Ridevall is anticipating Petrarch’s ‘humanist’ claim that the historical Dido and Aeneas could not have met. Smalley explains: “True, John Ridevall had anticipated him to some extent; but Ridevall’s discoveries remained buried in a little-read commentary. Petrarch proclaimed his own as a triumph for a new method” and ultimately, “had made the discovery that the past and the present were different.”21 Like Allen, Smalley seems unaware that ancient commentaries and histories, widely available and widely scrutinized in the Middle Ages, were the ultimate source of both Ridevall’s and Petrarch’s conclusions. This oversight is all the more surprising because Petrarch, when he makes his claim about the fictional meeting of Dido and Aeneas, cites his ancient sources and remarks that no educated person could be ignorant of the fictionality of the episode.22 Nevertheless, Petrarch does make the grandiose claim that “he alone in this age and in these places” was the first to reveal the historical truth about Dido and Aeneas.23 It might

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20 Smalley, English Friars and Antiquity, 130.
21 Ibid., 293-4.
22 *Rerum senilium libri* 4.5.
23 Ibid.: “ego enim primus, imo solus, hac aetate, et his locis mendacium hoc discussi.”
be tempting to read his claim, as Smalley seems to have done, as indicating that Petrarch thinks he is the first person since antiquity to recognize that the meeting of Dido and Aeneas is fictional, but Petrarch’s additional restriction of “in these places” suggests a more limited intention. Petrarch had read the *Policraticus*, which also mentions the fictionality of the Dido episode at 8.14, so he must have known that authors writing well after antiquity were familiar with Virgil’s most famous fiction. As W. Ullmann has shown, the *Policraticus* was also popular among Petrarch’s peers, so it is unlikely that Petrarch was intentionally trying to deceive anyone; more probably, he was merely emphasizing his own learning over that of his former teachers. Petrarch uses harsh words to describe his teachers’ ignorance of the Virgilian tradition; it is easy to imagine how he would have reacted to Allen’s and Smalley’s assertions.

Allen’s and Smalley’s misattributions of Servian concepts, though in themselves seemingly trivial, illustrate the ease with which medievalists—not just scholars of early modern literature—can misread the evidence as conforming to the traditional narrative of a unique Italian Renaissance rediscovery of the classical understanding of classical poetry. Servian ideas, taken out of context, might at times be labeled as uniquely medieval or Renaissance, scholastic or humanistic, silly or clever, but they are fundamentally classical and have been available to readers of the classics continuously since their formation. When discussing false conceptions of the ‘dark ages’, C.S. Lewis once quipped that “if one were looking for a man who could not read Virgil though his

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father could, he might be found more easily in the twentieth century than in the fifth.”

The same could be said about knowledge of the Virgilian tradition among literary critics.

Reintegration of Medieval Latin epic into the canon

Common assumptions about the *Fortleben* of twelfth-century epic also obfuscate the continuity of the Latin epic tradition. A good example of these biases may be seen in modern assessments of Petrarch’s position in the history of Latin epic. Petrarch’s negative attitude toward the *Alexandreis*, *Anticludianus*, and *Architrenius* in his *Invectiva contra eum qui maledixit Italie* (1373) has been read as a natural humanist reaction to outmoded scholastic literature—marking the end of an era. But, if anything, Petrarch’s discussion of these epics points to the opposite conclusion. In his invective, Petrarch is trying to prove that Italic literature, which for him includes Virgil, is superior to the literature produced by the non-Italic Europeans, most of all the Gallic. Petrarch’s invective becomes very much a battle of books, akin to Henri d’Andeli’s *Bataille des set ars*, but instead of logic attacking the liberal arts, Petrarch’s *auctores* fight along ethnic lines. As we might expect, Petrarch only discusses Latin literature—mostly poetry.

Remarkably, Petrarch mentions no poems composed after c.400CE except for the

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Anticlaudianus, Architrenius, and Alexandreis. These three twelfth-century epics, the lone representatives of medieval poetry, stand side by side with mentions of ancient epics and epicists, such as Virgil, Statius, Lucan, and Claudian.

The way that Petrarch cites these authors suggests that he must mention them—and find a way to denigrate them—precisely because they are such famous examples of non-Italic poetic excellence. The Architrenius was taught in Italy (probably even within Petrarch’s circle), and the same must have been true of the even more popular Alexandreis and Anticlaudianus. Petrarch’s target, John of Hesdin, only mentioned the Architrenius, not the Anticlaudianus or Alexandreis, in his own short apologia of Gallic literary culture (itself responding to an earlier attack by Petrarch). Conspicuously absent from both John of Hesdin’s and Petrarch’s arguments are any references to medieval Italic Latin epics—none of which achieved the level of pan-European canonical status enjoyed by the epics included in my study. All of Petrarch’s examples of great Italic literature come from antiquity. Thus, to Petrarch, the twelfth-century epics in my study are some of the greatest accomplishments of the non-Italic peoples, whom he usually refers to as “barbari.” Naturally, he must disparage them in order to prove his thesis that theItalic people are the innate inheritors of the classical Roman tradition. Taken in context, Petrarch’s attack on these twelfth century epics proves to be motivated more by ethnic hostility than by objective literary criticism based on Latin style.

29 Marjorie Curry Woods describes the manuscript, Genoa, Biblioteca Durazzo Giustiniani, B II 1 in Classroom Commentaries: Teaching the Poetria Nova Across Medieval and Renaissance Europe (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2010), 146-8. This manuscript, not included in Schmidt’s list, contains the Architrenius as well as Geoffrey’s Poetria Nova; it dates to the third quarter of the fourteenth century and contains many glosses. According to Woods, these glosses at least twice mention Pietro da Muglio, a famous teacher and a friend of Petrarch.

In keeping with the traditional literary history, Petrarch’s own epic, the *Africa*, has been read as breaking with the medieval epic tradition by drawing inspiration directly from the classical past. Specifically, Petrarch’s “return to Roman history for substance and inspiration” and his reliance upon scrupulous historical fact has been said to justify the *Africa* as “the earliest Renaissance epic rather than as a medieval artifact.” It is only possible to view the *Africa* as a break with the Middle Ages if we ignore the Medieval Latin epic tradition. The subjects and themes of both the *Ylias* and *Alexandreis* most certainly display a deep love of the specifically classical past, and as we have seen, numerous medieval Latin epics, not least the *Ylias* and the *Alexandreis*, share Petrarch’s inclination to base epic narrative on historical fact. If anything, this is a particular predilection of post-classical Latin epic!

In my opinion, Petrarch’s *Africa* is far closer in form and inspiration to twelfth-century epic than it is to any ancient epic. Petrarch’s incorporation of the Virgilian commentary tradition, as outlined by Kallendorf, shares one of the special developments of twelfth-century epic: the extent to which the interests of the Virgilian commentary tradition have been absorbed into the fabric of the epic. The similarities between the use of history in the *Alexandreis* and in the *Africa* led Enrico Carrara to posit that the *Africa* might be a direct response to Walter, an “Anti-Gualterus.” Carrara saw such strong similarities that, even though he was unaware of the evidence for Petrarch’s familiarity

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31 Bergin and Wilson, *Petrarch’s Africa*, xv: “Even Morris Bishop, who finds many faults in the work, grants it the merit of making “at least an effort to be realistic in its evocation of history”—a notable advance, one might say, over both the allegorical epics of the Middle Ages and the long fantastical romances making use of classical figures. On these grounds it seems to us that the *Africa* should rightfully be seen as the earliest Renaissance epic rather than as a medieval artifact. Petrarch’s return to Roman history for substance and inspiration, his Herculean efforts to revive the Latin language and the style of the classical period, and his perception of the spirit of Romanitas, clouded only infrequently by pious syncretism, distinguish him sharply from medieval poets.”

with the *Alexandreis* discussed above, he correctly concluded that Petrarch must have read the *Alexandreis*. Another probable debt to twelfth-century Latin epic can be seen in Petrarch’s close association of the poet and the hero in the *Africa*. Francesca Galligan points to Dante’s *Divine Comedy* as the source of Petrarch’s linking of poet and hero, but Petrarch could also be drawing inspiration from the *Architrenius* and *Anticlaudianus* in which the poet-as-hero motif figures prominently. Petrarch claimed that his epic was incomplete (in certain imitation of the *Aeneid*), but, as it stands, the nine-book structure of the *Africa* mirrors the otherwise relatively unique nine books of the *Architrenius* and the *Anticlaudianus*.

Much work remains to be done before we can accurately assess the influence of twelfth-century Latin epic on the later tradition, but what has been uncovered so far suggests that they were a major source of inspiration from the time of their composition until the end of the early modern period. The *Alexandreis* was the primary source for numerous vernacular Alexander romances composed in almost every part of Europe from Iceland to the Iberian peninsula. Jean de Meun’s continuation of the *Roman de la Rose* shows a marked influence from the *Anticlaudianus* and the *Architrenius*. Dante made

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35 Cf. Charles Martindale, *Redeeming the Text*, 55. “Both Ovid and Lucan, for example, still suffer rather thin and unrewarding treatment from many scholars today, whereas over the centuries the response has often been urgent and committed. We can thus use the tradition to bypass twentieth-century criticism, to relativize current reactions, and to free ourselves for a more positive approach to their writings.”
37 For the debts of the *Rose* to the *Architrenius*, see Edmond Faral, “Le *Roman de la Rose* et la pensée française au XIIIe siècle,” *Revue des deux mondes* 35 (1926), 449-52. Although Jung does not believe that the *Architrenius* directly influenced the *Roman de la Rose*, he admits that it is far closer in overall character than any other earlier allegorical work. For the influence of the *Anticlaudianus* on the *Rose*, see Daniel Poirion, “Alain de Lille et Jean de Meun,” in H. Roussel and F. Suard, eds., *Alain de Lille, Gautier de Châtillon, Jakemart Giélée, et leur temps* (Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1980), 134-51.
extensive use of the *Anticlaudianus* in his *Commedia*.\(^{38}\) Even the least popular of these epics, Joseph’s *Ylias*, was carefully studied by Chaucer and imitated in his *Troilus*.\(^{39}\)

The impact of twelfth-century Latin epic on early modern literature has yet to be explored, but it seems that the same humanist audiences who wished to read Petrarch’s *Africa* were also reading these twelfth-century epics.\(^{40}\) In one telling case, excerpts from the *Africa* were copied onto the last folio of a fifteenth-century manuscript of the *Architrenius*.\(^{41}\) It was most likely from this very manuscript that Badius Ascensius, the famous humanist and author of one of the most popular early modern commentaries on Virgil, copied the text of his 1517 printed edition of the *Architrenius*.\(^{42}\) In fact, all four of these twelfth-century epics were printed at least once in the sixteenth century, and the *Anticlaudianus* and *Alexandreis* were frequently reprinted until the eighteenth century.\(^{43}\) The sheer number of printings of twelfth-century Latin epic suggests that if influence were sought, it would be found. The connections that might emerge from such a study include the possibility that *Paradise Lost* owes a debt to the *Anticlaudianus* and that the *Architrenius* might be an important ancestor of Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*.\(^{44}\) Such

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\(^{38}\) See Eugène Bossard, *Alani de Insulis Anticlaudianus cum divina Dantis Alighieri comoedia collatus* (Andegavi: Lachêse & Dolbeau, 1885). E.R. Curtius makes the case for Dante’s use of the *Anticlaudianus* especially forcefully in *European Literature*, 360-1.

\(^{39}\) See Robert Root, “Chaucer’s Dares,” in *Modern Philology* 15 (1917): 1-22. Root’s thesis that Chaucer’s *Troilus* was based on the *Ylias*, not the prose Dares, has been upheld and expanded upon by Jamie Fumo in *The Legacy of Apollo Antiquity, Authority and Chaucerian Poetics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 140-151.


\(^{41}\) MS Troyes bibliothèque municipale 2263. See discussion of manuscript Y in Schmidt, *Architrenius*, 101-2.

\(^{42}\) Ibid, 110-1.

\(^{43}\) The *Alexandreis* was printed in 1487, 1513, 1541, 1558, and 1659. The *Anticlaudianus* was first printed in 1536 and printed again in 1582, 1611, 1654, and 1725. The *Architrenius* was first printed in 1517. The *Ylias*, the least popular of these epics and the last to be printed, finally received its *editio princeps* in 1541. For the influence of the *Anticlaudianus* on Milton, see Manitius, *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters*, 795; Simpson, *Sciences and Self*, 21, n.38. For the importance of the Architrenius to
possibilities challenge the deeply entrenched belief of the modern academy that Medieval Latin literature was ignored by early modern readers.

Today, Medieval Latin epics are being studied in isolation from each other and from the wider canon partly because our modern academy does not view Medieval Latin poetry as important (in spite of E.R. Curtius’ powerful arguments to the contrary in *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*). This modern isolation has hurt our appreciation of Medieval Latin epic, but more gravely, I would argue, it impedes our understanding of the history of classical, medieval, and early modern literature. We can no longer afford to ignore the classics of pre-modern Europe, which included twelfth-century Latin epic. If we endorse the adage, “once a classic, always a classic,” a good idea in an age when the canonical status of the Latin classics remains in jeopardy, then we must necessarily embrace the other Latin classics into our curricula as Joseph Farrell has advocated. If we do not, then we might fail to understand the true role of the Latin classics in shaping Western literature and thought—surely one of the greatest desiderata of a classical education in the modern world.

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