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Raphael and the Paragone: From Parnassus to the Plague

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di Charles Burroughs

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If sounds unheard are sweeter, few sounds could be sweeter than those played by Apollo in Raphael's painting *Mount Parnassus* in the Stanza della Segnatura, Pope Julius II's study in the Vatican palace (Fig. 1). Here in wall frescoes that expand (or expound upon) allegorical figures in the vault above—Theology, Jurisprudence, Philosophy, and Poetry (Fig. 2)—Raphael challenged the limits of the art of painting. In the *Parnassus*, under the sign of poetry, Raphael devised a visual celebration of the spoken, sung, and written word, as well as of music, as if making a comparison of the capacity of visual and verbal media to memorialize human achievement, in this case literary achievement itself.

Fig. 1. Raphael, *Mount Parnassus*, fresco. North wall, Stanza della Segnatura, Vatican. Photo Credit: Wikimedia, Public Domain: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rafael.

Fig. 2. Raphael, Allegorical figures of Theology, Jurisprudence, Philosophy, and Poetry. Vault, Stanza della Segnatura, Vatican. Poetry below, with Apollo and Marsyas to left. Photo Credit: Wikimedia, Public Domain: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=20199683

Prestigious precedents for such a *paragone* are readily identifiable, as in Horace's famous boast (*Odes* 3.30; see also 4.8.13–20) of the power of the word to outlast the effect of visual commemoration. Horace's poem ends with an invocation to the muse of lyric poetry to honor his transfer of a cultural mode from one culture to another, and he asks her to honor him with a laurel wreath (such as those worn by the poets of Raphael's painting). She is, as Horace notes elsewhere, a slender muse (*tenuis musa*), as befits his

own unsuitability to write epic poetry, even about Augustus (*Odes* 2.12, 4.2).[1] Writing an epic poem would require an altogether more sturdy muse. As we will see, Horace is a key figure, as well as influence, in the *Parnassus*, not least through references to the classification and comparison of genres, media, and human types.[2] In Horace's *Art of Poetry*, most notably, a "poetic expression of poetics,"[3] the phrase *ut pictura poesis* launched a thousand discussions, especially in the *paragone* debate of the mid-sixteenth century about the merits and specific capacities of different media.[4]

Though in fully articulated form this discussion lay in the future when in 1511 Raphael frescoed the Stanza della Segnatura,[5] nevertheless, the contrast of different forms of expression is built into the iconography.[6] This article addresses Raphael's penchant for organizing imagery in distinct categories, e.g., of genre, medium, or simply subject.[7] Perhaps even more remarkable, however, was his interest in devices of transition that disturb or even subvert the separateness of important elements of an image, as well as in devices of division that bring ambiguity as much as clarity.[8] Here I review Raphael's ambivalent approach in connection with his organization of visual material through a focus, first, on the Stanza della Segnatura, which exhibits contrasted subject matter on adjacent walls (not to speak of successive rooms). Then I turn to the print known as the *Morbetto*, which represented the plague on Crete described by Virgil in the *Aeneid*.[9] If we can speak of a *paragone* in these cases, it is multiple: Raphael matches himself variously with eminent precursors as well as contemporary rivals; he creates a dialogue between the classical pagan legacy and Christian values, not to speak of papal interests; and he engages self-consciously with issues of the classification—and rivalry—of artistic media and genres in a way that seems to exceed any brief he may have received from humanist advisors.[10] A notorious expression of apparent artistic rivalry is the figure of Heraclitus in the *School of Athens*, who not only has the features of Michelangelo but also is modeled, in a backhanded tribute to Michelangelo's style, on the latter's despondent prophet Jeremiah in the Sistine vault (Fig. 3).[11]

Fig. 3. Raphael, Heraclitus with the features of, and in the style of, Michelangelo. The *School of Athens*, detail. West wall, Stanza della Segnatura, Vatican. Photo Credit: Mymodernmet, Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain: https://mymodernmet.com/school-of-athens-raphael/.

The representation, or at least the visualization, of classical literary culture, both of Antiquity and his own time, is of course the subject of Raphael's *Parnassus*. As his entourage, or choir,[12] of muses makes clear, Apollo, seated centrally at the peak of the mountain, is already the Olympian embodiment of *mousike*, the cluster of skills and practices associated with the nine sisters;[13] needless to say, he has other associations that are not relevant here. As a protagonist, Apollo symbolizes culture far more actively than the winged female personification above him, to whom his upward glance seems directed.[14] Remarkably, Apollo uses a bow to play music on a stringed instrument, a *lira da braccio*, perhaps in reference to the instruments kept and, presumably, on occasion played in the room, and with nine strings corresponding to the number of muses.[15] The striking modernity of the instrument, the only contemporary instrument in the painting,[16]

contrasts with the ancient plucked lyre, such as that held by the statue of Apollo in the *School of Athens*; the point may be to render Apollo on Parnassus less of a hieroglyph than a figure possessed of *enargeia*, the effect of life so prized in Renaissance culture.[17] A further, more complex lyre appears in *Parnassus* in the hands of a prominent female figure, labeled as Sappho, whose status as a noted exponent of poetry contrasts with the muses and still more with the female allegorical figure in the vault. Sappho's lyre, further, is constructed around a tortoise shell, evoking the mythical origins of high-style music itself, as if to associate it with a female "founder," strategically positioned at the base of the mountain.[18] Sappho sits on a rock that seems to project into the room, as does her left foot, and she dangles her elaborate lyre in front of the frame of the window, on which she also supports her left elbow, pushing it into the viewer's space. At the same time, as if in an act of transmission, she turns back to the group of poets just behind her.[19]

Apollo sits at the center of several groups of diverse characters. Immediately around him the muses constitute an entourage, while also giving visual form to the range of creative pursuits acknowledged by the classical world. Otherwise, however, the group of Apollo and the muses forms a boundary between different categories of poets,[20] as does the sacred spring that rises from the hill and forks into major and minor streams.[21] Though the distribution of poets by genre has been challenged,[22] there is surely no doubt that genre is the principle of organization, perhaps following Horace's demand (*Art of Poetry*, 92): "Let each form of poetry occupy the proper place allotted to it."[23] On the god's right—on the side of the major stream—are gathered the great epic poets, among them the instantly recognizable Dante and Homer,[24] whose blind gaze is turned skyward as if to seek inspiration; as he declaims, a young amanuensis writes down his words, creating a striking contrast of inspired oral performance and its record on the page, which permits transmission from poet to poet and century to century—or, indeed, the formation of classical culture itself.

In a further reference to the transition to the written word, Sappho holds a scrap of text as well as her lyre; she and her companions are lyric poets, singing especially of love. In contrast with her blond beauty and somewhat relaxed demeanor, the corresponding figure in the group on the lower right is an elderly white-bearded man who points urgently into the space of the viewer. In my view, this figure represents the ancient and specifically Roman genre of satire,[25] which of course flourished also in the irreverent modern city. In particular, Raphael's work on the *Parnassus* occurred in the early years of the Renaissance festival of Pasquino, founded c. 1501, and coincided with the publication of the first pasquinades in 1509–1511. According to Anne Reynolds, "by the time of the first 'official' Pasquino celebration … a link had been perceived between the religious practice of the ancient Romans [the Robigalia festival] and the contemporary practice of satire, or specifically, satiric poetry."[26]

Who, then, is this aging satirist, positioned as the counterpart of Sappho, though they face in different directions?[27] No ancient poet wrote more eloquently about the ills and compensations of growing old than Horace, who, as his reputation grew, was not shy

about proclaiming his own importance. In *Ode* 3.30, as noted above, Horace boasts of his immortality, while also claiming to be the founder of Roman lyric poetry, with a nod to Sappho as a key precursor and model.[28] Much of the *Odes* constitutes a kind of *paragone* with the Greek lyric poets,[29] though late in his career Horace (*Odes* 4.3) salutes the muse for helping him join—as a, or perhaps *the* Roman lyric poet (*Romanae fidicen lyrae*)—the friendly choir of poets (*inter amabiles vatum choros*), as indeed we find him in Raphael's *Parnassus*. But in the fresco it is Sappho who holds the lyre; her counterpart embodies a different aspect of Horace, one well known to Renaissance humanists,[30] who certainly would have been cognizant of his rather gentle satires, his various commentaries on human affairs, and his stance as a Roman Socrates, chiding the foibles and failings of his contemporaries.[31] Horace himself (*Epistles* 2:145–151) tells of the origin of a Roman custom of licentious and abusive song that, as Reynolds points out, "provides suggestive parallels with the early years of the … Pasquino celebration."[32]

Before addressing the final group of poets, that at the top right, a perhaps eco-critical glance is in order toward the highly considered treatment of the trees of the *Parnassus*, which are apparently relevant to the semiotics of the fresco.[33] Tall laurels frame and distinguish Apollo; they rise high above him, creating a kind of green *baldacchino*. Homer's scribe sits beneath a single tree, to the side of the fresco, while the epic poets stand beneath the open sky. On Apollo's less-favored left side, a group of poets, largely clad in shades of green, stands among laurel trees in close proximity to the lowest foliage, suggesting closeness to the natural world. Early Cinquecento viewers, aware of the success of the pastoral poetry of Jacopo Sannazaro, would have expected to find his likeness in the fresco, and the most likely place for it is here. As Bram Kempers has noted, the inscription *numine afflatur* accompanying the figure of Poetry in the vault above irresistibly recalls the opening of one of the most famous poems in the pastoral canon, Virgil's *Fourth Eclogue*, thought to refer to the birth of Christ and hinting at a Christian connotation.[34]

The identification of the group is also suggested by an odd feature of a print of the *Parnassus* made by Marcantonio Raimondi, during Raphael's lifetime, from a preparatory project for the fresco (Fig. 4).[35] One of the muses, seated close to the group of pastoral poets, holds reeds glued together, as if illustrating a stage in the invention of the rustic panpipe, before the reeds were cut on the diagonal to produce distinct sounds.[36] Once again, a concern with the origin of an instrument, as well as of a verse genre, seems to be in question. In the executed fresco, in contrast, this detail is missing, though two muses turn their glance toward the pastoral poets, and one seems to be carrying a broad-brimmed hat, such as country people wear in the fields (she is the only muse seen from the back; perhaps we can imagine her holding a panpipe).[37]

Fig. 4. Marcantonio Raimondi (engraver), *Parnassus*. Probably based on a preparatory drawing for the fresco. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of Henry Walters, 1917. Accession Number: 17.37.150. Public Domain.

In any case, the question arises why Raphael omitted a panpipe, finished or unfinished, from his painted fresco. A possible explanation is that the panpipe, the shepherds' instrument, might be associated with the satyr and herdsman Marsyas, whose defeat by Apollo in a context of musical instruments and styles, famously told by Ovid (especially *Metamorphoses* 6.383–400), led to the satyr's cruel punishment of being flayed alive (in some versions the satyr's instrument is a double-flute, *aulos*, supposedly invented and rejected by Minerva, whose statue is paired with that of her brother Apollo in the *School of Athens*). In the vault of the Stanza, the victory of Apollo over Marsyas is the subject of one of four panels in an intermediate position between the walls, thereby mitigating the separateness of the realms of knowledge visualized in them (Fig. 5).[38] The Marsyas panel mediates between the *Parnassus* and the so-called *Disputa*, the Adoration of the Eucharistic Host.

Fig. 5. Nicolas François Bocquet, after Raphael, *Victory of Apollo over Marsyas* (Vault, Stanza della Segnatura, Vatican), print, 1690. Image reversed. British Museum number 1861,0810.136. Photo Credit: Trustees of the British Museum. Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

Whatever its significance, which is not at issue here, the panel's grim subject is clear: holding his lyre, Apollo is crowned while Marsyas hangs from a tree awaiting his doom. In contrast to many representations of the scene (for example, in the cycle of images from the *Metamorphoses* in the *salone* of the Villa Farnesina[39]), the satyr's pipes do not appear in the crowded image, in which Marsyas is squeezed against the left frame. Ovid's main concern (*Metamorphoses* 6.383–400) was to explain the origin of the River Meander from the blood of the satyr and the tears of his rustic companions, who are absent from Raphael's panel. But Ovid sets Marsyas into his context, the world of bucolic song, in which "the commemoration of friendship is a central theme."[40] As viewers of Raphael's image surely recalled, this famous and pathetic story of artistic competition is one of Ovid's many accounts of unfortunate or even doomed artists. Crucially, moreover, it is an ur-*paragone*, and as such echoes a famous inter-text. Robert Hollander has suggested that the idea of the *paragone* between vernacular and high-style expression already underlies Dante's presentation of Marsyas and that the latter constitutes a *figura Dantis*, implying that Raphael's image of Apollo and Marsyas mediates, *inter alia*, between contrasted aspects of Dante, represented in the *Parnassus* as the great vernacular poet and in the *Disputa* as vatic singer of high theology.[41]

The frescoes of the Stanza della Segnatura bring abstractions to life, but certain motifs allude to concrete external realities. The vaulted setting of the *School of Athens* surely evokes Bramante's vision for St. Peter's, all the more as the architect himself is present in the guise of the geometer Euclid. An especially striking connection of interior to exterior occurs in the *Parnassus*, where it implies a kind of *paragone*. If we consider how the sense of sight is enlisted in the fresco, it is not just a matter of viewing the poets arrayed around Apollo but also an invitation to view, at least in imagination, what lies beyond the window positioned within the fresco, if not in the holy mountain of the muses itself.[42]

Before late sixteenth-century changes, the window, if open, would have directed the viewer's gaze toward the famous courtyard of the Belvedere, which ascended the slope of the Vatican hill and at its summit gave access into the sculpture garden, site of a famous statue of Apollo to which Raphael's image of the god about to flay Marsyas seems to allude.[43] Through the doubling of a painted and a really existing terrain, then, a topographical representation of Parnassus echoed a pictorial one, in an extreme case of an intermedial transition, potentially an actual rather than a merely virtual link between a representation of a place and a place as representation.

The passage into the adjoining room, the Stanza d'Eliodoro (Fig. 6), painted slightly later by Raphael, leads from a world of abstractions to one of action, with representations of very different historical events, though each involves supernatural intervention. Rather than the history paintings on the walls, however, I wish to focus on the dado zone and the apparent personifications of mechanical occupations or "arts" that appear there, in a surely willed contrast with the intellectualism of the adjoining Stanza.[44]

Fig. 6. Raphael, Stanza d'Eliodoro, Vatican. General view with support figures in dado zone (by Perino del Vaga). Photo Credit: Wikimedia; CCO Public Domain: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Raffael_Stanza_di_Eliodoro.jpg.

The male and female support figures in the dado dramatize the forms of labor that provide the essential basis for advanced human civilization. Most of the figures are full-figured *telamons* or caryatids (i.e., male or female), but the two windows in the room that reach down into the dado zone cut in half the figures in the relevant part of the dado (Fig. 7). Hence the windows are framed by half herms, evidently because a herm is mostly a post, so that cutting one in two—or at least the shaft and torso—was certainly less odd or even disturbing than performing the same operation on a whole human figure. Each half herm has a truncated torso but a complete head.

Fig. 7. Gérard Audran (1640–1703), after Raphael. Half herms from the Stanza d'Eliodoro, print. From *Diverses Figures Hierogliphiques Peinte* [*sic*] *par Raphael d'Urbin dans une des Salles du Vatican à Rome*. Image by kind permission of Toovey's Fine Art Auctioneers and Valuers

The insertion of herms at the windows, as Flavia Dietrich-England has suggested, was perhaps more than merely a solution to a design problem.[45] Herms are traditionally associated with thresholds, marking the transition from one kind of space to another, for example, from profane to sacred, or public to private. The ancient Greek use of herms as threshold figures, as well as the notorious incident of their desecration,[46] was certainly known in early sixteenth-century Rome, and several examples of Athenian-style herms existed in the city, as is clear from Maarten Van Heemskerck's drawings of antiquities, made in the 1530s (Fig. 8),[47] while Raphael—or at least an associate—included a Greek-style herm in the Vatican loggia, decorated in 1518–1519.[48] Accordingly, the truncated herms that frame the windows of the Stanza d'Eliodoro mark the transition to

the city beyond the Vatican palace, perhaps to the places where the historical events painted above the dado are set, or simply where the craftsmen and professionals plied the trades to which the dado figures allude.

Fig. 8. Maarten Van Heemskerck, Herm and other Sculptural Fragments. In *Roman Sketchbooks*, 1532–1533, fol. 1, 64v, unaltered. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, Inventory Number 79 D 2, fol. 64v. Photo Credit: Volker-H. Schneider. Copyright Kupferstichkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz. Creative Commons: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/de/legalcode.

Ubiquitous in Renaissance visual culture, support figures—including herms—have become an important topic in recent scholarship.[49] Herms especially appear, among a number of more or less fantastic motifs, in the context of grotesque decoration, as in the Vatican loggia, as noted, or in Raphael's fantastic designs for tapestries.[50] A particularly strange herm is a prominent feature of a remarkable print based on a design by Raphael, the so-called *Morbetto*, or Cretan Plague (Fig. 9).[51] The herm is clearly not based on any classical model; it is unrealistically tall, and its head tops an extended shaft and pedestal reminiscent of the elongated forms of grotesque imagery rather than the solid sculptures drawn by Heemskerck in the 1530s, as already noted. Raphael's tapering herm is sufficiently tall to reach from the upper to the lower edge of the print so as to divide the image into two halves: one a scene set in the merciless heat of high summer; the other a night scene (or rather two night scenes). In harsh sunlight, to the right of the herm, several humans succumb to sickness or express grief and despair.

Fig. 9. Marcantonio Raimondi (after design by Raphael), *The Plague on Crete* (known as the *Morbetto* or, incorrectly, *the Plague in Phrygia*). Engraving, c. 1516. Photo Credit: Wellcome Institute. License under Creative Commons, CC-BY-4.0: https://wellcomecollection.org/works/d6mcyhev

On the base of the herm, an inscription indicates the literary source of the image, a passage in Virgil's *Aeneid*, placing the *Morbetto* in a group of prints related to the poem. During Aeneas's long and eventful journey from Troy to Rome, the Trojan refugees find refuge in Crete and establish a settlement named Pergamea, alluding to an alternative name of Troy.[52] However a summer plague—actually a kind of cosmic pollution[53]—forces abandonment of the new settlement, which turns out to be an unhealthy replication of the lost city—an obsessive return to a traumatic past—rather than a forward-looking foundation in accordance with divine wishes.[54] The pestilence is the subject of the line quoted in the inscription on the base of the herm, which begins with words translated as: "the Trojans left their sweet souls." The second part of the inscription—"they dragged their weary bodies"—suggests psychological as much as physical malaise, as if even without the plague the Trojan refugees realized that their leader had made the wrong decision.

The right-hand half of the engraving depicts the effects of the plague on a small group of humans crowded into the foreground. The affecting fulcrum of the group is a dead or dying mother whose baby seems suddenly aware of its mother's condition and rears

away from her body. Other figures react in different ways. One shields her eyes from the appalling sight, even while reaching for the child. Another figure slumps onto the base of the herm itself, which performs double duty as a framing device and as an element of the Cretan landscape, while also dramatizing the *paragone* of image and text.[55] Behind this figure of desperation, an older bearded man recoils in horror. The figure refusing to look at the dying woman places emphasis on the horror of the sight, an emphatic elaboration on the relatively laconic words of Vergil in part inscribed on the base of the herm.

The group of victims on the right is closed in by the herm's base as well as by fragments of ancient architecture, notably large column drums that clearly once supported a magnificent building and that seem to underscore the pathetic aspect of the Trojans' settlement attempt. Edward H. Wouk reasonably points to the print's Roman context, in particular to correspondences between unhealthy air and the ruinous state of the city, which Raphael and his associates hoped to make good.[56] But there is nothing classical, or in any way reminiscent of Rome, about the irregular area of rough ground in which a dead horse lies near unruly bushes and long grass. Like the architectural fragments, the buildings that surround the area are markedly decayed, but unlike them they are entirely unclassical. Hanging on the wall next to the herm is a curious detail, perhaps reminiscent of the practice in contemporary Rome of hanging processed hides on walls to dry.[57]

The print is obviously structured by a contrast of bright sunshine on the right and a dark interior on the left, in which the gloom is mitigated by particular sources of light: a torch and a shaft of moonlight. There is also an odd juxtaposition: a bedroom scene above seems to have little direct connection to the dark barn-like space below, where a man with a torch checks on sickened or dead sheep lying in a heap below the apparently concerned gaze of an ox or cow. But if the dead sheep indicate the failure of the new foundation, the upper scene shows that deliverance awaits the Trojans, who will make further progress along the path assigned them by destiny to become founders of the Roman people. Aeneas sleeps in his bed beneath an open window through which moonlight streams into the room. Two figures standing by the bed appear at first sight to belong to the same order of reality as the sleeping man, but a phrase inscribed on the moonlit wall indicates that, in accordance with Vergil's text, they are dream figures, the household gods that Aeneas brought with him from Troy and who now urge him to re-conceptualize his mission by transplanting the Trojans to a new foundation in the west.

As inevitably occurs when *poesis* becomes *pictura*, the *Morbetto* goes beyond its literary source in providing visual detail, in this case of the tragic situation of the Trojans on Crete. In some ways, Raphael is faithful to the source: the harsh sunlight that beats down on the right, for instance, is in accordance with Vergil's mention of disease striking from the sky in the season of Sirius, the Dog Star. Along with the plague that kills the people, the searing heat scorches the landscape and withers the crops. However, a puzzling detail of the *Morbetto* is that the dead sheep have no counterpart in Vergil's text, which mentions only crops and no animals, except an indirect reference to the oxen needed for plowing, possibly including the ox in the *Morbetto*.[58] In other words, Raphael has introduced a reference to pastoral, reminding us of another of the Virgilian scenes engraved by

Marcantonio Raimondi after Raphael's designs[59] (according to Hubert Damisch, this was the first such print, and it contributed much to Raphael's international fame[60]). In Raimondi's *Judgment of Paris* (Fig. 10), another herdsman or *boukolos*, also accompanied by his dog, sits within a rough mountainous landscape where nymphs of a spring shelter in a shady cave and a river god reclines among marshy vegetation. The herdsman, of course, is Paris; still ignorant of his royal descent or indeed his destiny, he evidently has charge of the free-ranging cattle grazing on the mountain (this is too wild a landscape for sheep herding). Except for his Phrygian cap, Paris is nude, but this locates him in the region where Marsyas, a satyr but also a Phrygian shepherd, fatally challenged the lyre of Apollo with the coarse pipes of the pastoral world.

Fig. 10. Marcantonio Raimondi (after design by Raphael), *The Judgment of Paris*. Engraving, c. 1517. Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1919. Accession Number: 19.74.1. Photo Credit: Metropolitan Museum, Licensed under CC0 1.0 Universal.

As already noted, the opposition of epic and pastoral, though more pacific in character, is evident in the literary topography of the *Parnassus*, where the pastoral muse carries a hat as protection from the sun. A repeated topic in Virgil's *Eclogues* is the importance of shade to the idealized countrymen, who especially seek shelter from the torrid midday sun; indeed, at the beginning of the first *Eclogue*, the countryman Tityrus famously relaxes in the shade of a beech tree. Virgil also points to the physical and even psychological danger of wandering beneath the noontime sun; it is a mark of mental sickness.[61] More positively, shade allows countrymen to retreat from the sun at midday to exchange songs, typically in rivalry with each other, creating a miniature model of classical literary culture, if not of civilization itself. In *Eclogue* 7, indeed, the shepherd who retrospectively narrates the mighty song contest (*magnum certamen*) reports that the Muses themselves approved the alternation of voices.[62]

What, then, is the role of the distraught herdsman in the *Morbetto*, who with his torch reveals the failure perhaps of both an economic and literary enterprise? If the right side of the print is about the need to move on from a failed to a successful epic, does the vignette on the left show the death, or at least transcendence, of pastoral? After all, after Apollo had earlier tweaked his ear and told him to stick to less weighty projects (*Eclogues* 6.3–5), Vergil himself moved on from pastoral to compose the national epic of Rome. Moreover, part of Vergil's narrative of the Cretan plague concerns the coincidence of names between Crete and the Troad, or Phrygia. The name that Aeneas gives to his Cretan settlement, Pergamea, recalls a famous Hellenic city and cultural center on the Ionian coast. And other older correspondences between the landscape around Troy and that of Crete motivate the decision to settle at Pergamea. In particular, there is a mountain called Ida in both places, and it is on the slopes of the Phrygian Ida (since Antiquity famous for its botanical abundance) that Paris meets the goddesses, leading to the end of his pastoral existence and his entrance into epic. In short, then, Raphael's *Morbetto* shows a scene of multiple transitions: first, following Vergil, from the failed replication of a lost homeland to the foundation of a new, entirely more durable city;

second, from one literary genre to another;[63] and third, from the Greek cultural world to a world dominated politically by Rome. The ascent to a greater Rome, based on the models of Antiquity, was key to the works both of Virgil and Raphael.

A major topic in the *Morbetto*, finally, is the destructive power of the summer sun, the theme of a famous drawing by Michelangelo and perhaps a print designed by Raphael, who both presumably drew on Ovid's account in the *Metamorphoses* (1.747–2.400) of the fiery death of Phaeton, the son of the sun god.[64] As we read Ovid's apocalyptic description of rivers drying, mountains burning, and the earth itself begging the gods for relief, it is hard not to have in mind contemporary effects of climate change, a planet on fire. As Wouk emphasizes, the Roman summer brought stifling heat and pestilence, as is represented in the *Morbetto*. However, we need to consider also the context of the *Morbetto*, which is usually dated to 1515–1517, that is, well into the pontificate of Leo X, an enthusiastic patron of Raphael and a member of the Medici family, which was connected by name and tradition to the powers of healing and further, as proclaimed by Medicean propaganda, to Apollo as a major god of healing.[65] The print extends to the suffering body the well-known concern of both Raphael and Leo with the recovery of the damaged physical city of Rome.[66] It also suggests the need to accept divine guidance in going forward along an epic path already adumbrated by Virgil, represented in the *Parnassus* as the guide of Dante, who in turn brought the pagan epic tradition into the Christian world of medieval and Renaissance Italy. In the syncretic celebration of a humanist Christian culture envisioned by Raphael in the Stanza della Segnatura, Apollo plays the *viola da braccio* among poets spanning Antiquity and the Christian era. As we saw, the poets on Parnassus include at least one contemporary, making a personal connection to the court of Pope Julius II, Raphael's great patron, as well as to Julius's colossal project of cultural and political revival that Raphael celebrated in the paintings of the Stanza (in which Julius himself appears in the guise of a medieval pope on the wall opposite *Mount Parnassus*). Though Julius, formerly Giuliano della Rovere, took his papal name in part as a gesture to his own biography, he more importantly proclaimed a programmatic connection to a great precursor and model, not a pope but, rather, the transformative figure of Julius Caesar. By the time of the execution of the frescoes in the Stanza, key features of Julius II's architectural ambition—notably New St. Peter's—were becoming visible, and the dream of a revival of Rome's ancient glories must have seemed no longer out of reach. Disappointments would follow, needless to say, but this was a moment for a turn to epic and indeed for Raphael to move on to other rooms in the papal apartment and to turn his hand—first for Julius and then for Leo—to lofty themes of history, the creation and defense of the Church of Rome.

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[1] On the expectation that poets write epic and Horace's conception of an alternate kind of public poetry, see R.O.A.M. Lyne, *Horace: Behind the Public Poetry*, Yale University Press, New Haven/London, 1995, pp. 21–39. On Virgil's initial reluctance to write epic, see below.

[2] As noted by Jennifer L. Ferriss-Hill, *Horace's* Ars poetica*: Family, Friendship, and the Art of Living*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2019, pp. 69–75, this is an important aspect of Horace's *Satires* and is carried over into the *Art of Poetry*, "which forms a counterpart to the *Satires* (p. 73). Horace would have approved of the range of appropriate attitudes and characteristic displayed by the poets of the *Parnassus*.

[3] Paul F. Watson, "To Paint Poetry: Raphael on Parnassus," in Maryanne Cline Horowitz, Anne J. Cruz, and Wendy Ann Furman (eds.), *Renaissance Rereadings: Intertext and Context*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1988, pp. 114–141, quotation on p. 114.

[4] On the central figure in this debate, see Francois Quiviger, "Benedetto Varchi and the Visual Arts," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 50 (1987), pp. 219–224. On the milieu of the *Parnassus*, see Oskar Bätschmann and Tristan Weddigen, "Der Paragone der Künste um 1500," in Bätschmann and Weddigen, *Paragone – Rangstreit der Künste, Darmstadt*, WBG, 2013, pp. 13–16.

[5] Bätschmann and Weddigen, *op. cit.*; Jean H. Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1958; Rudolf Preimesberger, *Paragons and Paragone: Van Eyck, Raphael, Michelangelo, Caravaggio, Bernini*, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, 2011, esp. p. 10.

[6] Edward H. Wouk, "From Death to Print: Marcantonio Raimondi's *Morbetto* and the Power of Engraving in Raphael's Rome," in Wouk and David Morris (eds.), *Marcantonio Raimondi, Raphael and the Image Multiplied*,Manchester University Press, Manchester, UK, 2016, pp. 46–65, writes of "Raphael's preoccupation with an ancient rivalry between images and words that was now playing out publicly" (p. 48).

[7] The question of Raphael's authorial role has attracted debate. For an exaggerated estimation of the role of humanist advisers, however important, in devising iconography, see, notably, Christiane L. Joost-Gaugier, *Raphael's Stanza della Segnatura: Meaning and Invention*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge/New York, 2010.

[8] Christof Thoenes, *Raphael*, Taschen, Munich, 2019, p. 16, commenting on Raphael's early painting *The Knight's Dream*.

[9] A key source is Wouk, *op. cit.*, to which this article is greatly indebted.

[10] Christian K. Kleinbub, "Raphael's *Quos Ego*: Forgotten Document of the Renaissance *paragone*," *Word & Image*, 28, no. 3 (2012), pp. 287–301; Wouk, *op. cit.*, pp. 48–51.

[11] Christian K. Kleinbub, *Vision and the Visionary in Raphael*, Penn State University Press, University Park, 2011, p. 68; Preimesberger, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

[12] For the Muses as the "choir of Apollo," see Virgil, *Eclogue*, 6.66, recalling Hesiod's reference to the mountain where he received inspiration from the Muses. See Robert Coleman, *Vergil, Eclogues*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge/New York, 1977, p. 193.

[13] Penelope Murray and Peter Wilson, Introduction, in Murray and Wilson (eds.), *Music and the Muses: The Culture of Mousike in the Classical Athenian City*, Oxford University Press, Oxford/New York, 2004, pp. 1–8. See also Penelope Murray, "The Muses and their Arts," in Murray and Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 365–389.

[14] Apollo's upward glance, matching that of Homer, perhaps indicates alertness to a higher spiritual authority, as argued by Luba Freedman, "Apollo's Glance in Raphael's *Parnassus*," *Source: Notes in the History of Art*, 16, no. 2 (1997), pp. 20–25.

[15] Roy Eriksen and Magne Malmanger, *Imitation, Representation and Printing in the Italian Renaissance*, Fabrizio Serra, Pisa, 2009, p. 201.

[16] The *lira da braccio* appeared "in its mature form" around 1500; see Emanuel Winternitz, "A *Lira da Braccio* in Giovanni Bellini's *The Feast of the Gods*," *The Art Bulletin*, 28, no. 2 (1946), pp. 114–115.

[17] For just one among many in an extensive bibliography, see Ruth Webb, "*Ekphrasis* Ancient and Modern: The Invention of a Genre," *Word and Image*, 15, no. 1 (1999), pp. 7–18, esp. 13.

[18] On the tortoise shell as basis for a lyre, see Thomas J. Mathiesen, *Apollo's Lyre: Greek Music and Music Theory in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1999, pp. 237–238. According to the *Hymn to Hermes*, the god made the first lyre from a tortoise shell. Sappho was an early human user; Ovid, *Heroides* 15.181, calls Sappho's instrument simply "a tortoise."

[19] In the figure of Sappho, as in the male figure opposite her (discussed below), Thoenes, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–39, finds a "drastic illusionism," which he claims Raphael later eschewed. This ignores the likelihood that Raphael had reason for the two contrasting figures to link with the space of the viewer.

[20] As pointed out by Paul F. Watson, "On a Window in Parnassus," *Artibus et Historiae*, 8, no. 16 (1987), pp. 127–148. He notes, p. 138: "Raphael does compose by genres."

[21] On the motif of the divided stream, see Steele Commager, *The Odes of Horace: A Critical Study*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1995, pp. 11–13.

[22] Jonathan Unglaub, "Bernardo Accolti, Raphael's *Parnassus* and a New Portrait by Andrea del Sarto," *The Burlington Magazine*, 149, no. 1246 (2007), pp. 14–22, here 14, claims that "the individualized portraits [in the fresco] defy … clear generic grouping." This is surely exaggerated, at least.

[23] Quoted by Watson, *op. cit*, p. 140.

[24] On the happy mingling of figures from the classical past and later periods, see now David Rijser, *Raphael's Poetics: Ekphrasis, Interaction and Typology in Art and Poetry of High Renaissance Rome*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2006, p. 113.

[25] Daniel Hooley, *Roman Satire*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2008, p. 2: "The Romans made a literary genre out of it." As Hooley, p. 20, notes, Horace (*Satires* 1.10.48) refers to a Roman precursor as "the inventor of the genre."

[26] Anne Reynolds, "The Classical Continuum in Roman Humanism: The Festival of Pasquino, the Robigalia, and Satire," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 49, no. 2 (1987), pp. 289–307, esp. p. 298.

[27] On various identifications of this figure, often as Pindar but occasionally as Horace, see Unglaub, "Bernardo Accolti," *op. cit.*, pp. 15, 22. Thoenes, *op. cit.*, p. 26, picks Pindar and improbably discounts the perspective effect as mere artistic showing off (as with Sappho, as noted above). Unglaub, *op. cit.*, p. 20, persuasively identifies the adjacent figure as Raphael's contemporary Bernardo Accolti, no satirist as such but notorious for his capacity to dish out both praise and insults.

[28] Richard Hunter, "Sappho and Latin Poetry: The Case of Horace," in Thea S. Thorsen and Stephen Harrison (eds.), *Roman Receptions of Sappho*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2018, pp. 151–164.

[29] Paul A. Miller, *Horace*, Tauris, London/New York, 2019, pp. 85–86.

[30] Michael J. McGann, "The Reception of Horace in the Renaissance," in Stephen Harrison (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Horace*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge/New York, 2007, pp. 305–317.

[31] Reynolds, *op. cit.*, p. 298; Miller, *op. cit.*, pp. 17–49; William S. Anderson, "The Roman Socrates: Horace and his Satires," in Anderson, *Essays on Roman Satire*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1982, pp. 13–49, esp. p. 22.

[32] Reynolds, *op. cit.*, pp. 298–299.

[33] This is even clearer in the print; see Watson, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

[34] Bram Kempers, "Words, Images and All the Pope's Men: Raphael's Stanza della Segnatura and the Synthesis of Divine Wisdom," in Iain Hami'siier-Monk, Kaiun Tilmans, and Frank Van Vree (eds.), *History of Concepts: Comparative Perspectives*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 1998, pp. 131–165, here p. 154. On possible Christian connotations, see Freedman, *op. cit.*

[35] Grazia Bernini Pezzini, Stefania Massari, and Simonetta Prosperi Valenti Rodinò, *Raphael Invenit: stampe da Raffaello nelle collezioni dell'Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica*, Quasar, Rome, 1985, pp. 34–35 (Catalogue, Segnatura 2.1). On the relationship of Raphael and Raimondi, see Lisa Pon, *Raphael, Dürer and Marcantonio Raimondi: Copying and the Italian Renaissance Print*, Yale University Press, New Haven/London, 2004, pp. 15–38; Carla Lord, "Raphael, Marcantonio Raimondi, and Virgil," *Source: Notes in the History of Art*, 3, no. 2 (1984), pp. 23–33; David Landau and Peter Parshall, *The Renaissance Print: 1470–1550*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1994, pp. 121–146; and Kleinbub, *op. cit.*

[36] Watson, *op. cit.*, p. 141, identifies her as Thalia.

[37] The absence of tragedy and comedy, each represented by a muse, is puzzling. However, Horace (*Art of Poetry* 220–221, 275–276) and others emphasize the rustic roots of tragedy, and Roman satire can be seen as a continuation of Greek comedy; Ferriss-Hill, *op. cit.*, pp. 54–55.

[38] Edith Wyss, *The Myth of Apollo and Marsyas in the Art of the Italian Renaissance: An Inquiry Into the Meaning of Images*, University of Delaware Press, Newark, 1996, pp. 68–69.

[39] Luba Freedman, *Classical Myths in Italian Renaissance Painting*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge/New York, 2015, p. 120; Wyss, *op. cit.*, pp. 64–65.

[40] Andrew Feldherr, *Playing Gods: Ovid's Metamorphoses and the Politics of Fiction*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2010, p. 103.

[41] Robert Hollander, "Marsyas as *figura Dantis*: *Paradiso* 1.20," online 22 Jan. 2018: https://www.princeton.edu/~dante/ebdsa/hollander042710.htm. Hollander (n4) emphasizes Dante's frequent use in the *Comedy* of the term *villano*, "so frequently marked by its attention to 'low' themes and diction."

[42] Watson, "On a Window in Parnassus," pp. 127–134.

[43] Watson, *op. cit.*, p. 142. The view was truncated by Sixtus V's construction of a library wing; see Elisabeth B. MacDougall, *Fountains, Statues, and Flowers: Studies in Italian Gardens of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC, 1994, p. 4.

[44] Flavia Dietrich-England, *Die Sockelzone der Stanza di Eliodoro: ein Entwurf Raffaels*, VDG, Weimar, 2006, pp. 43–46; Christoph L. Frommel, "Cariatidi, telamoni e termini nelle Stanze di Raffaello," in Sabine Frommel et al. (eds.), *Construire avec le corps humain*, Vol. 1: *Les ordres anthropomorphes et leurs avatars dans l'art Européen de l'antiquité a la fin du 16e siècle*, Picard, Paris: 2018, pp. 123–140.

[45] Dietrich-England, *op. cit.*, pp. 189–191. Christoph Frommel, *op. cit.*, less persuasively posits correspondences between the dado figures and the frescoed scenes above.

[46] Josephine Crawley Quinn, "Herms, *Kouroi* and the Political Anatomy of Athens," *Greece & Rome*, Second Series 54, no. 1 (2007), pp. 82–105; Robin Osborne, "The Erection and Mutilation of the *Hermai*," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, New Series, 31, no. 211 (1985), pp. 47–73.

[47] Tatiana Bartsch and Peter Seiler, *Rom zeichnen: Maarten van Heemskerck 1532–1536/7*, Mann, Berlin, 2012, p. 91, plate 32.

[48] Nicole Dacos, *The Loggia of Raphael: A Vatican Art Treasure*, Abbeville, New York, 2008, p. 295. In the spandrel of Vault IV, a shaggy-haired herm, in monochromatic low-relief stucco, stands next to a faun who seems to be stealing fruit.

[49] Sabine Frommel, "Supports anthropomorphes peints de la Renaissance italienne," in Sabine Frommel, *Construire avec le corps humain*, *op. cit.*, pp. 83–104.

[50] Clare L. Guest, "Iconography and Topography in Raphael's Grotesques," *Atti e Studi*, 2 (2006), pp. 65–80.

[51] Wouk, *op. cit.*, pp. 46–65.

[52] Rebecca Armstrong, "Crete in the *Aeneid*: Recurring Trauma and Alternative Fate," *The Classical Quarterly*, 52, no. 1 (2002), pp. 321–340.

[53] Michael C.J. Putnam, "The Third Book of the *Aeneid*: From Homer to Rome," in Putnam, *Virgil's Aeneid: Interpretation and Influence*, University of North Carolina Press, Durham, 1995, pp. 50–70.

[54] David Quint, "Repetition and Ideology in the *Aeneid*," in Philip R. Hardie (ed.), *Virgil, Critical Assessments*, Vol. 4: *The Aeneid*, Taylor & Francis, London, 1999, pp. 117–157, esp. p. 124.

[55] Wouk, *op. cit.*, p. 62, aptly describes it as "a threshold of representation."

[56] Wouk, *op. cit.*, 54–55.

[57] Peter Partner, *Renaissance Rome 1500–1559: A Portrait of a Society*, University of California Press, Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1976, p. 89.

[58] Raphael perhaps also had in mind *Georgics* 3.486–493, where Virgil describes various types of fatal pestilence brought on by burning heat (*ignea sitis*) and specifically mentions the effect on sacrificial animals, perhaps sheep.

[59] Wouk, *op. cit.*, 51.

[60] Hubert Damisch, *The Judgment of Paris*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1996, pp. 78–79.

[61] Virgil, *Eclogue* 2.1–14, relates the shepherd Corydon's crazy wandering under a burning sun.

[62] Charles Fantazzi and Carl W. Querbach, "Sound and Substance: A Reading of Virgil's Seventh Eclogue," *Phoenix*, 39, no. 4 (1985), pp. 355–367. They claim (p. 355) that "Virgil through his competing singers wishes to reveal something about the composition of poetry, specifically bucolic poetry."

[63] Quint, *op. cit.*, p. 133, sees *Aeneid* III as a turning point in the poem, as, in terms of genre, a transition from "romance to epic."

[64] Carmen C. Bambach, "Michelangelo: Divine Draftsman and Designer," in Bambach (ed.), *Michelangelo: Divine Draftsman and Designer*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2017.

[65] Edith Balas, *Michelangelo's Medici Chapel: A New Interpretation*, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 1995, p. 140.

[66] Wouk, *op. cit.*, pp. 53–54.

Charles Burroughs

Retired from the Smith Chair in Liberal Arts at Case Western Reserve University in 2014; subsequently he teaches part time in the Art History Department, SUNY Geneseo

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