

Names Written in Gold and Blood: Prudentius's *Peristephanon* and Poetic Immortality**Horace****1. *Carmina* 4.8.13ff**

All translations are my own.

Non **incisa notis marmora** publicis,  
 per quae spiritus et vita redit bonis  
 post mortem ducibus, non celeres fugae 15  
 reiectaeque retrorsum Hannibalis minae,  
 non incendia Carthaginis impiae  
 eius, qui domita nomen ab Africa  
 lucratus rediit, clarius indicant  
 laudes quam Calabrae Pierides; neque 20  
si chartae sileant quod bene feceris,  
mercedem tuleris. Quid foret Iliae  
 Mavortisque puer, si **taciturnitas**  
 obstaret meritis **invida** Romuli?  
 Ereptum Stygiis fluctibus Aeacum 25  
 virtus et favor et lingua potentium  
 vatam divitibus consecrat insulis.  
 Dignum laude virum Musa vetat mori:  
**caelo Musa beat.** Sic Iovis interest  
 optatis epulis impiger Hercules, 30  
 clarum Tyndaridae sidus ab infimis  
 quassas eripiunt aequoribus rates,  
 ornatus viridi tempora pampino  
 Liber vota bonos ducit ad exitus.

**Not marble, inscribed with public markings,**  
 through which spirit and life return to good leaders  
 after death, not the swift flights  
 and repulsed backwards threats of Hannibal,  
 not the sackings of impious Carthage  
 of that man, who returned having gained  
 a name from conquered Africa,  
 more gloriously display his praises  
 than the Calabrian Muses; nor  
if papers should be silent about what you have done  
well, would you have received your reward. What would  
 have become of the son of Iliia and Mars, if **envious**  
**silence** had stood in the way of the merits of Romulus?  
 The *virtus* and favor and tongue  
 of the powerful *vates* consecrate Aeacus,  
 snatched from the Stygian waves,  
 to the isles of the blessed.  
 The Muse forbids that the man worthy of praise die:  
**the Muse blesses him with heaven.**  
 Just so the indefatigable Hercules is among  
 the hoped-for banquets of Jove,  
 the sons of Tyndareus, as a shining constellation,  
 save shaken ships from the ocean depths,  
 Bacchus, forehead adorned with green ivy,  
 brings prayers to good conclusions.

**2. *Carmina* 4.9.25-34**

Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona  
 multi; sed omnes **illacrimabiles**  
 urgentur **ignotique** longa  
 nocte, carent quia vate sacro.

Many brave men lived before Agamemnon,  
 but all **unwept and unknown**  
 are oppressed by long night,  
 because they lack a sacred *vates*.

Paulum sepultae distat inertiae  
celata virtus. Non ego te meis 30  
**chartis** inornatum silebo,  
 tove tuos patiar labores

A hidden virtue differs but a little from  
buried laziness. I will not be silent about you  
 in my **papers**, leaving you uncelebrated,  
 nor will I endure that such great labors of yours,

impune, Lolli, carpere **lividas**  
**obliviones.** ...

Lollius, reap **envious oblivion**  
 with impunity ...

## Prudentius

### 3. *Perstephanon* l. 1–3: Hymn in Honor of the Holy Martyrs Emeterius and Chelidonius of Calagurris

Scripta sunt caelo duorum martyrum uocabula,  
**aureis** quae Christus illic adnotauit **litteris**,  
**sanguinis notis** eadem scripta terris tradidit.

The names of two martyrs are written in heaven,  
 which Christ has written there in **golden letters**,  
 and handed down the very same ones to earth  
 written in **bloody markings**.

### 4. *Peristephanon* X. Sancti Romani Martyris Contra Gentiles Dicta

X. 1111–1135

Gesta intimasse cuncta fertur principi  
 praefectus addens ordinem uoluminum  
 seriemque tantae digerens tragoediae,  
 laetatus omne crimen in fasces refert  
 suum tyrannus **chartulis uiuacibus**. 1115  
 Illas sed **aetas** conficit diutina,  
 fuligo fuscatur, puluis obducitur situ,  
 carpit senectus aut ruinis obruit;  
**inscripta** Christo **pagina** immortalis est  
 nec obsolescit ullus in caelis apex. 1120  
 Excepit adstans angelus coram deo  
 et quae locutus martyr et quae pertulit,  
 nec uerba solum disserentis condidit,  
 sed ipsa pingens uulnera expressit stilo  
 laterum, genarum pectorisque et faucium. 1125  
 Omnis notata est sanguinis dimensio,  
 ut quamque plagam sulcus exarauerit,  
 altam, patentem, proximam, longam, breuem,  
 quae uis doloris quique segmenti modus,  
 guttam cruoris ille nullam perdidit. 1130  
 Hic in regestis est **liber** caelestibus,  
**monumenta** seruans **laudis** indelebilis,  
 relegendus olim sempiterno iudici,  
 libramine aequo qui malorum pondera  
 et praemiorum comparabit copias. 1135

It is said that the prefect made known all the things  
 done to the *princeps*, sending a series of scrolls and  
 laying out the sequence of such a great tragedy,  
 the delighted tyrant related his every crime in the  
 bundles on **long-lived paper**.  
 But those long ages consume,  
 soot blackens, dust covers in their places,  
 old age tears or hides in ruins;  
 the **page written on by Christ is immortal**  
 nor does any part of a letter fall forgotten in heaven.  
 An angel standing in the presence of God took down  
 what the martyr said and what he endured,  
 nor did he preserve only the words of the speaker,  
 but sketching the very wounds of his sides, cheeks,  
 chest, and jaws he drew them with his stylus.  
 Every measurement of blood was taken down,  
 how the gashes plowed out each wound,  
 whether deep, gaping, close, long, shallow,  
 what force of pain and the manner of the cut,  
 he lost no drop of blood.  
 This book is among the heavenly records,  
 preserving indelibly the memorials of praise,  
 to be read again one day by the everlasting judge,  
 who will weigh with a fair scale the masses of evil  
 deeds and multitude of rewards.

### 5. X. 556–558

inplet iubentis dicta lictor inpius;  
 charaxat ambas unguis scribentibus  
 genas, **cruentis** et secatur faciem **notis** ...

The impious lictor fulfills the orders of the one  
 ordering; he engraves both cheeks with writing claws,  
 and carves up the face with **gory markings**...

6. *Peristephanon* III. Hymn in Honor of the Passion of the Most Blessed Martyr Eulalia

III. 131–140

nec mora, carnifices gemini  
iuncea pectora dilacerant  
et latus ungula uirgineum  
pulsat utrimque et ad ossa secat  
**Eulalia numerante notas.** 135  
“scriberis ecce mihi, Domine.  
Quam iuuat hos apices legere  
qui tua, Christe, tropaea **notant!**  
Nomen et ipsa sacrum loquitor  
purpura sanguinis elicit.”

Without delay the twin torturers  
lacerated the slender chest  
and the claw struck the virginal side on both sides  
and lay bare her bones,  
**while Eulalia counted the markings.**  
“See, you are being written on me, Lord.  
How it pleases me to read these lines,  
which record your victories, Christ!  
The very purple of my drawn-out blood  
speaks your sacred name.”

*Peristephanon* IV: Hymn in Honor of the Eighteen Holy Martyrs of Caesaraugusta

7. IV. 193–196

Nos **pio fletu**, date, perluamus  
**marmorum sulcos**, quibus est operata  
spes, ut absolua[m] retinaculorum  
uincla meorum.

Grant that we may wash through with **pious weeping**  
the **furrowed marbles** by which lies enclosed  
my hope that I might unloose the chains  
of my bindings.

8. IV. 169–172

Plenus est artis modus **adnotatas**  
**nominum formas** recitare Christo, 170  
quas tenet caeli liber explicandus  
tempore iusto.

It is the complete measure of art  
to recite the forms of the names written down by  
Christ which the book of heaven,  
to be displayed at the proper time, holds.

9. IV. 161–168

Quattuor posthinc superest uirorum  
nomen extolli **renuente metro**,  
quos Saturninos memorat uocatos  
prisca uetustas.  
Carminis leges amor **aureorum** 165  
**nominum** parui facit et loquendi  
cura de sanctis uitiosa non est  
nec rudis umquam.

After this it remains that the name of four men be  
praised **though the meter refuses**,  
venerable antiquity recounts  
that they were named Saturninus  
Love of the **golden names**  
makes the laws of song insignificant,  
and the care for speaking about the saints  
is not wicked nor ever unrefined.

10. *Peristephanon* XI. To the Bishop Valerian about the Passion of the Most Blessed Martyr Hippolytus

XI. 1–19

Innumeros cineres sanctorum Romula in urbe  
uidimus, o Christi Valeriane sacer.  
**Incisos tumulis titulos et singula quaeris**  
**nomina**: difficile est, ut replicare queam.

I have seen the countless ashes of saints in the city of  
Romulus, o Valerius consecrated to Christ. You ask for  
the **epitaphs inscribed on the tombs and the name of**  
**each person**: that is difficult, as I will try to explain.

Tantos iustorum populos furor inpius hausit,  
cum coleret patrios Troia Roma deos.

5 Impious rage devoured so many of the just while  
Trojan Rome worshiped the patriarchal gods.

Plurima litterulis signata sepulcra loquuntur  
martyris aut nomen aut epigramma aliquod,  
sunt et **muta** tamen **tacitas claudentia** tumbas  
**marmora**, quae solum significant numerum.

Very many tombs sealed with letters speak of some  
name or epigram, nevertheless there are also mute  
marble slabs enclosing silent tombs which indicate the  
number alone.

Quanta uirum iaceant congestis corpora aceruis,  
nosse licet, quorum nomina nulla legas.  
Sexaginta illic defossas mole sub una  
reliquias memini me didicisse hominum,  
quorum solus habet conperta uocabula Christus,  
utpote quos propriae iunxit amicitiae.

How many bodies of men lie in the heaped-up funeral  
pile, it is permitted to know, none of whose names  
you may read. There I remember that I learned that  
the relics of 60 men were covered over in one heap,  
whose names Christ alone has learned when he joined  
them in close friendship.

Haec dum lustris oculis et sicubi forte latentes  
rerum **apices** ueterum per monumenta sequor,  
inuenio Hippolytum...

While I inspect these with my eyes and seek  
throughout the tombs the outlines of old events,  
hiding wherever they are, I find Hippolytus...

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