

Manto into Mantua: Vergil, Statius, and Dante

A. Everett Beek, University of Minnesota

beekx004@umn.edu

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1. *Aen.* 10.198-203:¹

*Ille etiam patriis agmen ciet Ocnus ab oris,
fatidicae Mantus et Tusci filius amnis,
qui muros matrisque dedit tibi, Mantua, nomen,
Mantua dives avis, sed non genus omnibus unum:
gens illi triplex, populi sub gente quaterni,
ipsa caput populis, Tusco de sanguine vires.*

And Ocnus drives his band from his homeland shores,
Ocnus the son of the seeress Manto and the river Tuscus,
who gave to you, Mantua, your walls and the name of
his mother--Mantua, rich from its ancestors, but not all
of one origin: its people are threefold, under each people
is a fourfold population; the city itself has its rulers from
the people, and its strength from its Tuscan blood.

2. *Inf.* 20.82-9, 91-3:

*Quindi passando la vergine cruda
vide terra, nel mezzo del pantano,
sanza coltura e d'abitanti nuda.
Lì, per fuggire ogne consorzio umano,
ristette coi suoi servi a far sue arti,
e visse, e vi lasciò suo corpo vano.
Li uomini poi che 'ntorno erano sparti
s'accolsero a quel loco...
Fer la città sovra quell'ossa morte;
e per colei che 'l loco prima elesse,
Mantiua l'appellar sanz'altra sorte.*

So the savage virgin, passing through, saw this
uncultivated and uninhabited land in the middle of the
swamp. There, to escape all human contact, she settled
with her servants to practice her arts, and there she lived,
**and there left behind her useless body. Afterwards
the people who before were spread out gathered at
that place...they built the city over those dead bones,
and they named the city Mantua after the woman
who first selected that site,** without further augury.

3. *Inf.* 20.97-102:

*"...Pero t'assenno che se tu mai odi
originar la mia terra altrimenti,
la verità nulla menzogna frodi."
Ed io: "Maestro, i tuoi ragionamenti
mi son sì certi e prendon sì mia fede
che li altri mi sarien carboni spenti."*

"But I adjure you that if ever you hear that my homeland
arose otherwise, let no falsehood deceive you from the
truth." And I said, "Master, your words are so certain to
me and so have my faith that other explanations to me
would be like dead ashes."

¹ Quotations from the *Aeneid* are taken from Mynors' OCT edition. Quotations from the *Divina Commedia* come from Leonardi's edition. Translations are my own.

4. *Aen.* 7.5-24:

*At pius exsequiis Aeneas rite solutis,
aggere composito tumuli, postquam alta quierunt
aequora, tendit iter velis portumque relinquit.
aspirant aurae in noctem nec candida cursus
luna negat, splendet tremulo sub lumine pontus.
proxima Circaeae raduntur litora terrae,
dives inaccessos ubi Solis filia lucos
adsiduo resonat cantu, tectisque superbis
urit odoratam nocturna in lumina cedrum
arguto tenuis percurrens pectine telas.
hinc exaudiri gemitus iraeque leonum
vincla recusantum et sera sub nocte rudentum,
saetigerique sues atque in praeseptibus ursi
saevire ac formae magnorum ululare luporum,
quos hominum ex facie dea saeva potentibus herbis
induerat Circe in vultus ac terga ferarum.
quae ne monstra pii paterentur talia Troes
delati in portus neu litora dira subirent,
Neptunus ventis implevit vela secundis,
atque fugam dedit et praeter vada fervida vexit.*

But dutiful Aeneas, with the funeral [of Caieta] completed according to custom, with the mound of the grave having been heaped up, after the high seas calmed, directs his path with the sails and leaves behind the port. The winds breathe throughout the night, and the shining moon does not make the path difficult; the sea shines beneath the wavering light. **The nearby shores of the Circean land are approached**, the land where the rich daughter of the Sun fills the inaccessible groves with her continuous incantation, and in her lofty house she burns scented cedar for nighttime light, weaving delicate webs with a lively shuttle. **From this place are heard wails and roars of lions and bonds of complaining ropes in the dead of night, and grizzled hogs rage, as do bears in their pens, and the bodies of tremendous wolves howl, whom the cruel goddess Circe, using powerful drugs, changed out of human form into the shape and appearance of beasts.** So lest the dutiful Trojans should suffer such monstrosities, having been brought into her port, and lest they should enter terrible shores, Neptune fills the sails with favorable winds, and gives them an escape and ferries them beyond the dangerous shoals.

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