

Quaenam ista lues?: The theme of sickness in Valerius Flaccus's Argonautica

1. Actual, literal sickness in the *Argonautica*

A. Plague at the Acherusian Headland

toto non ullus litore Ponti
mitior. hic lecto comitum de robore siquem
perculerit vicina **lues**, ne defice casus
praedicti memor atque animos accinge futuris.
illic **pestiferas** subter iuga concava torquet
alter aquas Acheron vastoque exundat hiatu
fumeus et saeva sequitur caligine campos.
linque gravem fluvium et miseris sua fata colonis:
sic quoque non uno dabitur transcurrere luctu.
(VF 4.590–8)

altera lux haud laeta viris emersit Olympo:
**Argolicus morbis fatisque rapacibus Idmon
labitur** extremi sibi tum non inscius aevi.
...
ecce inter lacrimas interque extrema virorum
munera, quem cursus penes imperiumque carinae,
Tiphyn agit violenta lues.
(VF 5.1–3, 13–15)

B. Plague at Troy

principio **morbi** caeloque exacta sereno
temperies, arsere rogis certantibus agri
(VF 2.475–6)

Along the entire shore of Pontus there is none gentler
[than Lycus]. If a resident **plague** strikes down any of
your chosen stalwarts, here, don't waver, mindful of the
prophesied misfortune, and gird your mind for what the
future holds. There, below hollow ridges, another
595 Acheron churns forth its **disease-ridden** waters and
smokily courses forth from a gaping maw and chases
along the plains with a cruel fog. Leave to the unhappy
farmers the grievous river and their fates: thus too it will
not be granted you to run along with just one grief.

The next light emerged from Olympus not at all happy
for the men: **Argive Idmon falls to sickness and
greedy fate**, not then unaware of the end of his life. . . .
Lo, amidst their tears and the last gifts of the men, **a
violent plague assails** him in whose charge are the
courses and control of their vessel, **Tiphys**.

15

475 At first, **diseases**, and temperate climate driven from the
calm sky; the fields blazed with competing pyres.

2. Actual, literal sickness in similes in the *Argonautica*

A. Medea as a sick lapdog

sic adsueta toris et mensae dulcis erili
aegra nova iam peste canis rabieque futura
ante fugam totos lustrat queribunda penates.
(VF 7.123–4)

Thus a sweet dog, accustomed to pillows and her
125 master's table, **now ill with a new sickness** and coming
madness, traverses the whole house, whining, before
fleeing.

B. Sirius brings plague and drought to Italy

sic cum **stabulis** et messibus ingens
ira deum et **Calabri populator Sirius arvi
incubuit**, coit agrestum manus anxia priscum
in nemus et miseris dictat pia vota sacerdos.
(VF 1.682–5)

Thus when the huge wrath of the gods and **Sirius,
destroyer of the Calabrian field, has settled on stables**
and crops, a rustic band gathers, anxious, into the
685 ancient woodland, and a priest recites pious prayers for
the unhappy men.

3. Primary pre-Flavian plague passages

Lucretius *De Rerum Natura* 6.1090–1286
Vergil *Georgics* 3.440–566
Aeneid 3.135–42
Ovid *Metamorphoses* 7.518–613
Met. 13.685–99
Met. 15.626–33

Manilius *Astronomica* 1.852–926
Astr. 5.206–33
Grattius *Cynegetica* 344–496
Seneca *Oedipus* 1–201
Lucan *Bellum Civile* 6.64–117
Bell. Civ. 9.604–949 [cf. Glauthier 2011]

4. Vatic didacticism

‘dicam’ ait ‘ac penitus **causas labemque docebo.**’
(VF 3.377)

“I shall speak,” [Mopsus] says, “and **shall** thoroughly **teach the causes** and plague.”

morborum quoque te **causas** et signa **docebo.**
(*Geo.* 3.440)

Of diseases, too, **shall I teach** you **the causes** and symptoms.

cf. **dicam** equidem nec te suspensum, nate, **tenebo** (*Aen.* 6.722) – Anchises to Aeneas

cf. **expediam** rerumque **vias finemque docebo.** (VF 4.558) – Phineus to the Argonauts

5. Symptoms of plague

A. The Argonauts’ symptoms (according to Valerius)

at **non inde dies nec** quae magis aspera curis
nox Minyas **tanta caesorum ab imagine** solvit.
bis Zephyri iam vela vocant. fiducia **maestis**
nulla viris, **aeegro adsidue mens carpitur aestu** 365
necdum omnes **lacrimas** atque omnia reddita caesis
iusta putant. **patria ex oculis acerque laborum**
pulsus amor segnique iuvat frigescere luctu.
ipse etiam Aesonides, quamquam tristissima rerum
castiganda duci vultuque premenda sereno, 370
dulcibus **indulget lacrimis** aperitque **dolorem.**
(VF 3.362–71)

But **not then does day or night**, which is more harsh due to their cares, free the Minyae **from the so great image of the slain**. Twice now do the zephyrs call their sails. There is no confidence for the **mournful** men, **their mind is constantly plucked by a sick surge**, nor do they think that all their **tears** and all deserts are bestowed upon the slain. **Their country and sharp love of labors are driven from their eyes**, and **it delights them to grow chill with slothful grief**. Even Aeson’s own son, although the saddest of experiences ought be reproved by a leader and repressed behind a calm expression, **indulges in sweet tears** and reveals his **sorrow**.

B. The Athenian plague’s symptoms

atque **animi prorsus <tum> vires totius**, omne
languabat corpus leti iam limine in ipso.
intolerabilibusque malis erat **anxius angor**
adsidue comes et gemitu commixta **querella,** 1159
singultusque frequens **noctem per saepe diemque**
...
multaque praeterea mortis tum signa dabantur:
perturbata animi mens in **maerore metuque.**
...
lacrimis lassi luctuque redibant;
(Lucretius, *DRN* 6.1156–60, 1182–3, 1248)

And **then altogether the strength of the whole spirit**, the entire body **was languishing**, now on the very threshold of death. **Anxious angst** was the **constant** companion of ills, and **complaining** was mixed with groaning, and repeated sobs often **during night and day**. . . .
And meanwhile, then many signs of death were given: **the mind of the soul was roiled** in **grief** and **fear**. . . .
[The mourners] were going back **wearied by tears and grief**.

C. The Argonauts’ symptoms (according to Jason)

tum secreta trahens Phoebeum ad litora Mopsus
‘quaenam’ ait ‘ista **lues** aut quae sententia divum?
decretusne venit fato **pavor** an sibi **nectunt**
corda moras? cur **immemores famaеque larisque** 375
angimur aut **pariet quemnam haec ignavia finem**?’
(VF 3.372–6)

Then, drawing Phoebean Mopsus to the secluded shores, [Jason] says, “What then is this accursed **plague**, or what is the intention of the gods? Does **fear** come decreed by fate, or **do hearts bind delays** for themselves? Why **are we anguished, forgetful of fame and home**, or **what end will this indolence obtain**?”

6. Different terminology: *lues* vs. *labes*

‘quaenam’ ait ‘ista **lues** aut quae sententia divum?
...
‘dicam’ ait ‘ac penitus causas **labemque** docebo.’
(VF 3.373, 377)

“What then,” says [Jason], “is this accursed **plague** (*lues*), or what is the intention of the gods?” . . .
“I shall speak,” says [Mopsus], “and shall thoroughly teach the causes and **plague** (*labes*).”

7. Otherworldly grottos

A. Celaeneus’s grotto, in Cimmerian darkness

est procul ad Stygiae devexa silentia noctis
Cimmerium domus et superis incognita tellus
 caeruleo **tenebrosa** situ, quo flammea numquam
 400 Sol iuga sidereos nec mittit Iuppiter annos.
 stant <ta>citae frondes immotaque **silva** comanti
 horret **Averna** iugo. **specus** umbrarumque meatus
subter et Oceani praeceps fragor arvaque nigro
 405 vasta metu et subitae post longa silentia voces.
 (VF 3.398–405)

403 Averna *Heinsius* verna ω

There is far off, in the region of the Stygian night’s silences, the **downward-sloping home of the Cimmerians** and a land unknown to the gods above, **shadowy** with dusky-blue mildew, where the Sun never sends his flaming chariot, nor Jupiter the starry years. The leaves stand hushed, and the motionless **Avernian wood** bristles on the leafy ridge. **Below, a cavern** and the paths of shades, and the headlong crash of Ocean, and vast fields of black fear, and suddenly, after long silences, voices.

B. Vulcan’s grotto, on Aetna

est in Trinacria specus ingens rupe cavique
introsum reditus, circum **atrae** moenia **silvae**
 alta premunt ruptique ambustis faucibus amnes;
 Volcano conducta **domus**, quam **sup<t>er** eunti
 stagna sedent venis oleoque madentia vivo.
 (Grattius 430–4)

430 **There is in Trinacria a cavern**, huge with its cliff, **and hollow recesses inward; black woods** and rivers broken from its burned jaws press around its high walls; this is said to be **home** to Vulcan. As one goes **below** it, pools stagnate, oozing with veins of living oil.

8. Different punishments

A. Guilty and para-guilty

... et varia **meritos** formidine pulsant.
 at quibus **invito** maduerunt sanguine dextrae,
 (VF 3.390–1)

390 and they strike the **deserving** with varied fear. But for those whose right hands have dripped with **unwilling** blood ...

B. Their respective punishments

comes una sororum
additur et pariter terras atque aequora lustrant.
quisque suos sontes inimicaque pectora poenis
implicat et varia **meritos** formidine pulsant.
 at quibus **invito** maduerunt sanguine dextrae,
 si fors saeva tulit miseris et proxima culpae,
 hos variis **mens ipsa modis agit et sua carpunt**
facta viros: resides et iam nil amplius ausi
 395 in lacrimas humilesque metus aegramque fatiscunt
 segnitiam, quos ecce vides. sed nostra requiret
 cura viam. . . .

390 **One of the sisters joins them as a companion** and they traverse lands and seas equally. **Each entwines his own guilty men and hated breasts with punishments**, and they strike the **deserving** with varied fear. But for those whose right hands have dripped with **unwilling** blood, if chance has brought to those unhappy men things cruel and next to guilt, **these the mind itself harries in various ways, and their own deeds pluck at the men:**
 395 idle even now, having dared nothing further, they sag into tears and lowly fears and sick sloth, as those whom – look – you see. But our care will find a way. . . .

...
 ensifer hic atraque sedens in veste Celaeneus
insontes errore luit culpamque remittens
 carmina turbatos volvit placantia manes.
 (VF 3.387–97, 406–8)

392 *ceteri cetera*

...
 Sitting here, in black garb, sword-bearing Celaeneus **looses the innocent from their mistake and, remitting their guilt**, reels off chants placating the roiled shades.

C. The non-Grattian version of Hephaestus’s shrine

ἐν Αἴτνῃ δὲ ἄρα τῆ Σικελικῆ Ἥφαιστου τιμᾶται νεώς, καὶ ἔστι περίβολος καὶ δένδρα ἱερὰ καὶ πῦρ ἄσβεστόν τε καὶ ἀκοίμητον. εἰσὶ δὲ κύνες περὶ τε τὸν νεῶν καὶ τὸ ἄλσος ἱεροί, καὶ τοὺς μὲν σωφρόνως καὶ ὡς πρέπει τε ἅμα καὶ χρῆ παριόντας εἰς τὸν νεῶν καὶ τὸ ἄλσος οἶδε σαίνουσι καὶ αἰκάλλουσι, οἷα δὴ φιλοφρονούμενοί τε καὶ γνωρίζοντες δήπου· ἐὰν δὲ τις ἢ γεῖρας ἐναγής, τοῦτον μὲν καὶ δάκνουσι καὶ ἀμύσσουσι, τοὺς δὲ ἄλλως ἐκ τινος ὀμιλίας ἦκοντας ἀκολάστου μόνον διώκουσι.

(Aelian, *De Natura Animalium* 11.3)Cf. Nymphodorus of Syracuse, BNJ 572 F 9 = Aelian *De Nat. An.* 11.20

And on Sicilian Aetna a temple of Hephaestus is cultivated, and there is an enclosing wall and sacred trees and an unquenchable and tireless fire. And there are holy dogs around the temple and grove, and they greet and fawn on those going prudently and as is fitting and necessary to the temple and grove, as though friendly and no doubt recognizing them; but if someone should be polluted with respect to their hands, this man they bite and tear to shreds, but by contrast they only chase away those having come from some licentious gathering.

9. Mopsus’s eschatological revelations

non si mortalia membra
sortitusque breves et parvi tempora fati
perpetimur, socius superi quondam ignis Olympi, 380
fas ideo miscere neces ferroque morantes
exigere hinc animas redituraque semina caelo.
quippe nec in ventos nec in ultima solvimur ossa;
ira manet duratque dolor. cum deinde tremendi
ad solium venere Iovis questuque nefandam 385
edocuere necem, patet ollis ianua leti
atque iterum remeare licet.
(VF 3.378–87)

Even if we put up with mortal limbs and brief allotments and short lifespans, though once the companion fire of lofty Olympus, it is not therefore right to engage in death and to drive hence with iron tarrying souls and seeds that will return to heaven. Indeed, we are dissolved neither into winds nor into simply bones, at the end; anger remains, and grief hardens. When, then, they have come to the throne of fearsome Jupiter and with a complaint have laid forth their unspeakable death, the door of death lies open to them, and they are allowed to pass through it again.

10. Banishment of the Cyzican ghosts

A. Don’t bring plague

‘ite, perempti,
ac memores abolete animos. sint otia vobis,
sit Stygiae iam sedis amor, procul agmine nostro 450
et procul este mari cunctisque absistite bellis.
vos ego nec Graias umquam contendere ad urbes
nec triviis ululare velim pecorique satisque
nullae ideo pestes nec luctifer ingruat annus
nec populi nostrive luant ea facta minores.’ 455
(VF 3.448–55)

“Go, ye slain, and banish your mindful souls. May you have leisure, may you now have love of your Stygian abode; be far from our band and far from the sea, and stay away from all wars. I will you never to hasten to Greek cities nor shriek at the crossroads, and therefore let not diseases nor a grief-bearing year bear down on both flock and crops, nor let our people or our descendants pay for these deeds.”

B. Plague brought by Sirius

subito cum tabida membris
corrupto caeli tractu miserandaque uenit
arboribus satisque lues et letifer annus.
linquebant dulcis animas aut aegra trahebant 140
corpora; tum sterilis exurere Sirius agros,
arebant herbae et uictum seges aegra negabat.
(Vergil, *Aeneid* 3.137–42)

When suddenly a plague, putrifying to limbs and pitiable, and a death-bearing year came to both trees and crops from a corrupted stretch of the sky. They were giving up their sweet souls or dragging their sick bodies; then Sirius burned the sterile fields, the grasses began to wither, and the sick crop was denying sustenance.

11. Uses of *lues* and *pestis* in the *Argonautica*

<i>lues</i>	<i>pestis</i>	real disease	civil war	assoc. disease
2.291: The slaughter on Lemnos, from Hypsipyle’s perspective; in Ovidian plague phrase, <i>dira lues</i>			*	
	2.498: The sea-serpent which Neptune sends; parallel to Apollo’s plague			*
3.246 (<i>generally accepted emendation for Iovis</i>): The battle at Cyzicus			*	
3.373: The spiritual malaise of the Argonauts, from Jason’s perspective				*
	3.454: Plague that the shades of the dead might bring if not expiated	*		
4.432: The Harpies				
	4.482: The Harpies, from Phineus’s perspective			
	4.491: The Harpies			
4.503: The Harpies				
4.529: The Harpies				
	4.551: The Harpies			
4.592: The sickness which will strike down Tiphys and Idmon		*		
	4.594 (<i>pestiferas ... aquas</i>): The waters of Acheron which produce sickness	*		
5.15: The sickness which takes Tiphys		*		
6.400: Ariasmenus’s men getting chopped to bits by their own chariots; in Ovidian plague phrase, <i>diram ... luem.</i>			*	
	6.417† [corrupt text replicating next line]		(*)	
	6.418: The imbrication of Ariasmenus’s chariots		*	
	7.125: The illness affecting the lapdog; paired with <i>rabies</i>	*		
	7.252: Medea’s lovesickness as it lurks in her bones			*
	7.334: Unclear, as the surrounding text is corrupt, but evidently either a term for poison or else disease <i>as a parallel</i> for poison (Medea is here contemplating suicide)	(*)		
	8.165: Medea’s lovesickness, from her mother’s perspective			*

12. Harpies stink

A. Apollonius’s Harpies

... ἄλλοτε τυτθόν, ἵνα ζῶων ἀκάχοιτο. καὶ δ’ ἐπὶ <u>μυδαλέην ὀδυμῆν</u> χέον’ ...	190	... other times, [they leave] a little, so that he might stay alive to grieve. And they also shed a mildewy stench upon it; ...
... τυτθόν δ’ ἦν ἄρα δὴ ποτ’ ἔδητύος ἄμμι λίπωσιν, <u>πνεῖ τόδε μυδαλέον τε καὶ οὐ τλητὸν μένος ὀδυμῆς.</u> ...	228	... and if they ever leave me a little of the food, it breathes this mildewy and unendurable force of stench. ...
... οἱ δ’ ἐσιδόντες ἥρωες μεσσηγὺς ἀνίαχον· αἰ δ’ ἄμ’ ἀντῆ πάντα καταβρώξασαι ὑπὲρ πόντοιο φέροντο τῆλε παρέξ· <u>ὀδυμῆ δὲ δυσάνσγητος</u> αἴθι λέλειπτο. (Ap. Rhod., <i>Argonautica</i> 2.190–1, 228–9, 269–72)	270	... but the heroes, seeing them in their midst, shouted aloud; and they, having gulped down everything with a cry, were carried over the sea far off and away; and an unendurable stench was left there.

B. Vergil’s Harpies

tristius haud illis monstrum, nec saeuior ulla
 pestis et ira deum Stygiis sese extulit undis.
 uirginei uolucrum uultus, **foedissima uentris
 proluuiis** uncaequae manus et pallida semper
 ora fame.

...

at subitae horrifico lapsu de montibus adsunt
 Harpyiae et magnis quatiunt clangoribus alas,
 diripiuntque dapes contactuque omnia foedant
 immundo; tum **uox taetrum dira inter odorem**.
 (Vergil, *Aeneid* 3.214–18, 225–8)

215 There is no more grievous monstrosity than those, nor
 has any crueller pest and anger of the gods brought itself
 from the Stygian waves. Virginal faces of birds, **a most
 foul effluuium from their bellies**, and crooked hands
 and faces always pale with hunger. . . .

225 But suddenly the Harpies are present, in a horrifying
 glide down from the mountains, and they shake their
 wings with a great clanging, and they snatch the banquet
 and foul all things with their unclean touch; then **a voice,
 dreadful amidst the putrid stench**.

C. Lucretius’s plague victims

spiritus ore foras taetrum uolvebat odorem,
 rancida quo perolent proiecta cadavera ritu.

...

quorum si quis, ut est, vitarat funera leti,
 ulceribus taetris et **nigra proluvie alvi**
 posterius tamen hunc tabes letumque manebat,
 aut etiam multus capitis cum saepe dolore
 corruptus sanguis expletis naribus ibat.
 (Lucretius, *DRN* 6.1154–5, 1199–1203)

1155 **The breath was churning a putrid stench outside the
 mouth**, in the same fashion that decaying, discarded
 corpses stink. . . .

1200 As it is, if any of these had avoided death, gore and
 death were nevertheless awaiting him later on, with
 putrid ulcers and **black effluuium of the belly**; or also
 much fouled blood was coming out of his blocked
 nostrils, together with great pain of the head.

13. Avernian regions also stink

A. Lucretius on terrestrial emanations

nunc age, **Averna** tibi quae sint loca cumque lacusque,
 expediam, quali natura praedita constant.
 principio, quod Averno vocantur nomine, id ab re
 inpositumst, quia sunt avibus contraria cunctis,
 e regione ea quod loca cum venere volantes,
 remigii oblitae pennarum vela remittunt
 praecipitesque cadunt molli cervice profusae
 in terram, si forte ita fert natura locorum,
 aut in aquam, si forte lacus substratus Avernus.
 is locus est Cumas apud, acri sulphure montes
 oppleti calidis ubi fumant fontibus aucti.

...

est etiam magnis Heliconis montibus arborum
 floris **odore** hominem **taetro** consueta necare.

...

nonne vides etiam terra quoque sulphur in ipsa
 gignier et **taetro** concresecere **odore** bitumen,

...

sic et **Averna loca** alitibus summittere debent
 mortiferam vim, de terra quae surgit in auras,
 ut spatium caeli quadam de parte venenet;

...

fit quoque ut inter dum vis haec atque aestus **Avernus**
 aëra, qui inter avis cumquest terramque locatus,
 discutiat, ...

...

hic ubi nixari nequeunt insistereque alis,
 scilicet in terram delabi pondere cogit
 natura, ...

(Lucr. *DRN* 6.738–48, 786–7, 806–7, 818–20, 830–2,
 836–8)

740 Now come, I shall reveal to you whatever **Avernal**
 regions and lakes there are, endowed with what nature
 they exist. First of all, why they are called “Avernal” by
 name, that is bestowed on them from the fact that they
 are opposed to all birds, because when they have come
 flying directly to those regions, having forgotten the
 oarage of their wings, they let go their sails, and they fall
 745 headlong, spilled with limp neck onto the earth, if by
 chance the nature of the place so endures, or into the
 water, if by chance the Lake of Avernus is spread below
 them. This is a place near Cumae, where mountains
 smoke, filled with acrid sulphur, augmented by hot
 springs. . . .

There is also a tree in the great mountains of Helicon
 which is accustomed to kill a man with the **putrid
 stench** of its flower. . . .

Surely you see, also, that sulphur is born in the earth
 itself, and bitumen congeals with a **putrid stench**. . . .

Thus too must the **Avernian regions** send up to birds
 their death-dealing force, which rises from the earth into
 the breezes, so that it poisons the stretch of sky from a
 certain region. . . .

It happens too that sometimes this force and hot vapors
 of **Avernus** shake apart the air, whatever is placed
 between the birds and the earth. . . .

Here, when they are unable to be supported and stay
 upright on their wings, obviously nature forces them to
 collapse onto the earth due to their weight, . . .

B. Ailing avians

multaque humi cum inhumata iacerent corpora supra
corporibus, tamen alituum genus atque ferarum 1216
aut procul absiliebat, ut acrem exiret odorem,
aut, ubi gustarat, languebat morte propinqua.
(Lucretius, *DRN* 6.1215–18)

And although many bodies lay unburied upon the earth,
still the race of birds and beasts was either springing far
away, so as to depart from the sharp odor, or, when it
had tasted [the corpses], was languishing with
approaching death.

ipsis est aër auibus non aequus, et illae
praecipites alta uitam sub nube relinquunt.
(Vergil, *Georgics* 3.546–7)

The air is not fair to even the birds, and they leave life
headlong, beneath the high cloud.

C. Apollonius’s Phaethon

ἔνθα ποτ’ αἰθαλόεντι τυπείς πρὸς στέρνα κεραυνῶ
ἡμιδαῆς Φαέθων πέσεν ἄρματος Ἡελίοιο
λίμνης ἐς προχοῶς πολυβενθέος· ἡ δ’ ἔτι νῦν περ
τραύματος αἰθόμενοιο βαρὺν ἀνακηκίει ἀτμόν,
οὐδέ τις ὕδωρ κείνο διὰ πτερὰ κοῦφα τανύσσαι
οἰωνὸς δύναται βαλέειν ὑπερ, ἀλλὰ μεσηγὺς
φλογμῶ ἐπιθρόσκει πεποτημένους.

600

There, once having been struck in the breast by a
gleaming thunderbolt, half-burned Phaethon fell from
the chariot of Helios into the streams of the very deep
marsh; and still even now it bubbles up heavy steam
from the blazing wound, **and no bird is able to cross
over that water, having stretched out its light wings,
but having fluttered into the middle, it plunges into
the flame.** . . .

...
τοὺς δ’ οὔτε βρώμης ἦρει πόθος οὔτε ποτοῖο,
οὔτ’ ἐπὶ γηθοσύνας τράπετο νόος· ἀλλ’ ἄρα τοί γε 620
ἡματα μὲν στρεῦγοντο περιβληχρὸν βαρῦθοντες
ὀδμῆ λευγαλέῃ, τὴν ῥ’ ἄσχετον ἐξανίσκον
τυφομένου Φαέθοντος ἐπιρροαὶ Ἡριδανοῖο·
(Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 4.597–603, 619–23)

620

But as for the Argonauts, desire for neither food nor
drink took hold of them, nor did their mind turn to joys;
but during the days they suffered distress, oppressed
even to faintness by the grievous smell of the smoldering
Phaethon, which the streams of the Eridanos sent forth,
unbearable.

14. Valerius’s Harpies

A. Their odor

‘diripiunt verruntque dapes foedataque turbant
pocula, **saevit odor** surgitque miserrima pugna 455
parque mihi monstrisque fames.’

“They snatch and sweep away the banquets and disturb
the fouled cups; **their odor is savage**, and a most
unhappy fight arises, and for me and the monsters, there
is equal hunger.” . . .

...
fragrat acerbus odor patriique **expirat Averni**
halitus, unum omnes incessere planctibus, unum
infestare manus. inhiat Cocytia nubes
luxurians ipsoque ferens fastidia visu.
(VF 4.454–6, 493–6)

495

A rank odor reeks, and **the breath of** their father’s
Avernus breathes out; only one do they all assail with
their cries, only one does the band attack. The cloud of
Cocytus gapes open, in gross excess and rousing disgust
by its very appearance.

B. Their parentage

quippe neque extorem tantum nec lucis egentem
insuper Harpyiae **Typhoides**, ira Tonantis,
depopulant ipsoque dapes praedantur ab ore.
(VF 4.427–9)

Indeed, not just an exile, and not just lacking light, but in
addition the Harpies, **Typhoeus’s daughters**, the
Thunderer’s wrath, ravage him, and the banquets are
snatched from his very mouth.

C. Their (inherited) volcanic nature

sicut, prorupti tonuit cum forte Vesevi
Hesperiae letalis apex, vixdum ignea montem
torsit hiems, iamque eoas cinis induit urbes:
turbine sic rapido populos atque aequora longe 510
transabeunt nullaque datur considerare terra.
(VF 4.507–11)

510

Just as, when the peak of ruptured Vesuvius, deadly to
Hesperia, has thundered unexpectedly, scarcely has a
fiery storm wracked the mountain, and ash now has
cloaked the eastern cities: thus, in a swift whirlwind,
they travel far over peoples and waters, and it is granted
them to settle in no land.

15. Deadly halitosis

A. Typhon’s bad breath

corpora dum soluit tabes et digerit artus,
trahit iners caelum fluidae contagia pestis
obscuram in nubem. **tali spiramine Nesis
emittit Stygium nebulosis aera saxis
antraque letiferi rabiem Typhonis anhelant.**
(Lucan, *BC* 6.88–92)

90 While rot loosens the bodies and separates the limbs, the sluggish sky has drawn up the contagion of the flowing disease into a dark cloud. **With such an exhalation does Nesis send forth the Stygian air from its mist-laden rocks, and the caves of death-bearing Typhon pant their madness.**

B. Inherited bad breath

fragrat acerbus odor patriique exspirat Avernii halitus. unum omnes incessere planctibus, unum infestare manus. inhiat Cocytia nubes luxurians ipsoque ferens fastidia visu.
(VF 4.493–6)

495 **A rank odor reeks, and the breath of their father’s Avernus breathes out;** only one do they all assail with their cries, only one does the band attack. The cloud of Cocytus gapes open, in gross excess and rousing disgust by its very appearance.

16. The earth’s volcanic fever

A. Volcanoes as *sacer ignis*

numquis enim nostrum miratur, si quis in artus
accepit calido febrim fervore coortam
aut alium quemvis morbi per membra dolorem?
opturgescit enim subito pes, arripit acer
saepe dolor dentes, oculos invadit in ipsos,
existit **sacer ignis** et urit corpore serpens
quam cumque arripuit partem repitque per artus,
ni mirum quia sunt multarum semina rerum
et satis haec tellus morbi caelumque mali fert,
unde queat vis immensi procreescere morbi.
sic igitur toti caelo terraeque putandumst
ex infinito satis omnia suppeditare,
unde repente queat tellus concussa moveri
perque mare ac terras rapidus percurrere turbo,
ignis abundare Aetnaeus, flammescere caelum;
id quoque enim fit et ardescunt caelestia templa
et tempestates pluviae graviore coortu
sunt, ubi forte ita se tetulerunt semina aquarum.
(Lucretius, *DRN* 6.655–72)

655 For who among us marvels if someone has taken fever into his limbs, arisen from warm temperature, or any other grief of sickness throughout his body-parts? For suddenly his foot swells up, a sharp pain often seizes his teeth, it invades his very eyes; the **sacred fire** emerges
660 and, slithering over his body, burns whatever part it has seized and creeps through his limbs—undoubtedly because there are atoms of many things, and this earth and sky bear enough of evil sickness to enable the force of measureless sickness to grow forth. Thus therefore
665 one must think that all things are supplied to the whole sky and earth from an infinitude, so as to enable the earth suddenly to be moved, having been shaken, and a swift whirlwind to run across sea and lands, the fire of Aetna to overflow, the sky to be on fire; for this, too,
670 happens, the celestial regions burn and rainy storms are more heavily amassed where the atoms of waters have by chance so carried themselves.

B. Typhon’s *sacrae flammae*

scopulis sed maximus illis
horror abest, Sicula pressus tellure Typhoeus. 24
hunc profugum et **sacras** revomentem pectore **flammas,**
ut memorant, presum ipse comis Neptunus in altum
abstulit implicuitque vadis totiensque cruenta
mole resurgentem torquentemque anguibus undas
Sicanium dedit usque fretum cumque urbibus Aetnam
intulit ora premens. trux ille eiecat adesi 30
fundamenta iugi, pariter tunc omnis anhelat
Trinacria, iniectam fesso dum pectore molem
commovet experiens gemituque reponit inani.
(VF 2.23–33)

But the greatest horror is absent from those cliffs, Typhoeus, weighed down by Sicilian earth. As they recount, Neptune himself stole him away into the deep, caught by the hair as he fled, belching forth **sacred flames** from his breast, and entangled him in the shallows and – as he so often rose again with his blood-stained mass and churned the waves with his snakes – flung him as far as the Sicilian strait and stuck Aetna with its cities on top of him, weighing down his face. He, savage, heaves at the foundations of the eaten-away hill; then all Trinacria pants at the same time, while he heaves the mass that was thrown atop him with his wearied breast, testing, and puts it back with a useless groan.

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