

You will not be Ptolemy: Performing a Callimachean Hymn in Vergil's Underworld

What is the relationship between Callimachus' *Hymn to Delos* and Vergil's *Aeneid*?

While scholars have already clarified many of the theocentric (Miller 2009) and technical (O'Hara 2001) aspects that link Callimachus' and Vergil's poetry, the intersection between the Hellenistic author's Delos hymn and the "Parade of Heroes" in *Aeneid* 6 has yet to be satisfactorily explained in its generic context. Two epigrams from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE ambassador-poet Crinagoras suggest a close relationship between Callimachus's poetry and the younger Marcellus, and their poetic relationship invites a closer look at Anchises' lament for the would-be Augustan heir that brings Vergil's book 6 underworld to its conclusion.

With Feeney's *Literature and Religion at Rome* and North's *Roman Religion* as a contextual lens for Vergil's portrayal of Marcellus in *Aeneid* 6.854-92, I begin at 6.833's *tu Marcellus eris* and its Callimachean counterpart of Ptolemy II in *Hymn to Delos* 188 (ἐσσόμενε Πτολεμαῖε). I then trace how the intertextual connections between the two passages extend to the entire end of Anchises' speech rather than 833 alone: Marcellus the younger is framed in terms of his illustrious ancestor, the elder Marcellus, and the elder's martial lineage revolves around Gallic conquest and spoils—just as Ptolemy is portrayed in Callimachus' hymn. The Marcelli are also linked to Ptolemy II through Nilotic imagery, and the relationship between the elder and younger Marcellus is emphasized as one of succession in Romulan terms; here again, a Crinagoran epigram that calls the younger Marcellus σκυλοφόρος—a word elsewhere only used of Romulus and the first triumph in Dionysius of Halicarnassus—invites readers of the *Aeneid* to form a link between Callimachus' Ptolemy laden with Apolline trophies, the elder Marcellus and the *spolia opima*, and Augustus' own potential heir.

From these observations, I argue that Vergil suggests the performance of ritual through allusion; the intertextual hymn is a mode of poetic communication different from the more explicit Salian hymn to Hercules in *Aeneid* 8 that John Miller has recently addressed (Miller 2014). Immediately after the Marcellan intertext with Callimachus, Anchises offers the reader an intratextual rite: “Grant that I may scatter lilies, purple flowers (*purpureos flores*), to the abundant shades and heap up, at least, the soul of my descendant with these gifts, and I will fulfill this vain service” (*Aen.* 6.883-6). These *purpureos flores* are also present in Aeneas’ herocult rites at 5.79, emphasizing that though Marcellus is worthy of the same noble continuity that Anchises and Aeneas enjoy, this can never be.

What does a better understanding of the Vergil/Callimachus Marcellus intertext afford our reading of Vergil’s underworld? Shackleton Bailey (1986) explores the many interpretive possibilities that Vergil’s line 6.833 presents, concluding that the words preceding this line, *si qua fata aspera rumpas* (832), must be read as aposiopesis. On an ideological level, O’Hara (1990) suggests the possibility of discontinuity at the end of the “Parade of Heroes,” and I show how the allusion to Callimachus makes this effect clearer by juxtaposing the young Roman with a Ptolemy whose sovereign fate has been guaranteed. Ultimately, I demonstrate that the presence of Callimachus’ Delian Ptolemy behind Vergil’s mournful panegyric highlights the futility of dynastic succession that underscores the poem’s hope of the Roman heroes to come.

## Works Cited

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