



Classical Art and Archaeology: Teaching Latin and the Humanities with the Monuments of Rome with Karen Moore

Lecture I: The Study of
Latin Manuscripts

Outline:

“It is by looking at these visual monuments and reading the words that describe them...that we really begin to illuminate this study for our students and bring the lingua latina to life.”

Introduction

This course consists of 8 lessons looking at the monuments and sculptures of ancient Rome.

- The aim is to put them in their proper context through the words of ancient authors, such as
 - Pliny
 - Vergil
 - Tacitus
 - Suetonius
 - Josephus
- These authors will show us how to look at these objects with a goal of being able to bring them to life in the classroom.
- Putting the written text alongside the material evidence will illuminate classical studies for our students.

The Study of Manuscripts

We must begin with a study of manuscripts, by which the words of these ancient authors are transmitted. This study has 3 parts:

- Codicology
 - Study of how physical books/manuscripts are put together
 - From Latin *caudex* (bark), the material first used for creating books



- Varro: Latin *liber* (book) is related to the Latin *liber* (free) because the bark has been “freed” from the tree.
- Paleography
 - Study of ancient writing systems
 - παλαιο (old) + γραφ (to write)
 - Deciphering and dating of historical manuscripts
- Textual Criticism
 - How we proceed from a set of manuscripts to published ‘original texts’
 - Displaying relationships of various manuscripts
 - Stemmata: “genealogical” relationships
 - Archetype: what we believe to be the oldest, original manuscript
 - Critical apparatus: footnotes in a critical edition to explain variations within the manuscript tradition
 - The study of manuscripts combines two disciplines: classics and archaeology.
 - Study of texts = classics
 - Study of physical manuscripts = archeology
 - Studying both elements together gives us a better understanding of the literary tradition.

The Creation of a Manuscript

- Manuscript Materials
 - Parchment: animal skin, usually sheep or goats
 - Vellum: calf skin
 - Both types of animal skin are prepared by soaking in caustic-lye solution
 - Soak/scrape/dry/repeat until sufficiently smooth and thin
 - Paper: introduced in 13th century through the Chinese
- How many sheep to make an average-sized manuscript?
 - As many as 50 (or 500 for a Bible!)
 - Codex Amiatinus (Latin Vulgate c. 700 AD) took 450 sheep, thus manuscripts were costly and valuable items
 - Codex Purpureus Petropolitanus: 6th c. Greek Gospels written on purple parchment with gold and silver lettering
- Anatomy of a Manuscript
 - Folium - one leaf, i.e. a single page consisting of both sides
 - Recto (r) - front side of the leaf
 - Verso (v) - back side of the leaf
 - Prickings - puncture marks to guide ruling



- Rulings - faint lines across the page
- Rubric - text heading, often written in red (*ruber*)
 - In liturgical texts, the rubric often directs the responses of the congregation
- Illuminated initial - decorated first letter of a work or subsection
- Incipit - introduction or beginning of a book or chapter, especially by a particular author; Explicit indicates the end

Tools for Reading Manuscripts

- Shelfmark: Notation of numbers and letters indicating manuscript and page information
 - eg. “MS. Urb. Lat. 368, f.141r, sec.xv” = Manuscript Urbanus Latinus 368, folium 141 recto (front side), saeculum (age) fifteenth century
- [Medieval Writings - Index of Scripts](#): online tool for learning to read ancient manuscript fonts
 - When planning to use a particular manuscript with students, the type of script should be provided in the description.
 - First give students the text to learn in normal Times New Roman 12-sized or similar font, then use this tool to introduce them to the original script style and alphabet.
- Ligatures and Abbreviations: Since parchment was valuable and scarce, scribes needed to find ways to condense text and save space.
 - Words were often abbreviated by dropping consonants; this is indicated by a long mark over the previous vowel
 - Similarly, a “ligature” joins two letters together with a glyph
 - eg. the ampersand (&) is a ligature combining the *e* and *t* of *et* (“and”)
 - A dot under a letter can indicate an error
 - A semi-colon (;) at the end of *quem* indicates “que” (i.e. *quemque*)
- [Capelli Online](#): a resource for textual abbreviations; 2 ways to search
 - character input
 - word input
- [St. Patrick’s Confessio](#): a resource of actual manuscripts from St. Patrick’s Confession from different eras
 - Clicking on the manuscript thumbnail image will provide manuscript info and a view of the manuscript in full
 - The story of St. Patrick’s Confession is included in the Latin Alive! Reader.



- Classroom activity: Teachers can read the story with their students in the reader first, then visit the website to explore it through different manuscripts.
- [Digital Vatican Library](#): a free resource for viewing digitized manuscripts of the Vatican Library
 - [Manuscript - Vat.lat.3533](#): a 15th century complete copy of Pliny's *Historia Naturalis*
 - Be sure to view folium 1r, the beautifully illuminated opening page describing the work
 - A table of contents is provided on 3v and 4r
 - A beautiful image of the cosmos pigmented with blue *lapis lazuli* is found on 19r.[01.fx.0000] containing the first word of the work, *Mundum*
 - These digital collections remind us that they are the work of modern day scribes who preserve and make them available to us today, just like their ancient counterparts.
 - Flip to folium 505v at the end and zoom in for first reading:
 - *Trabes ex eo fecere Reges quodam certamine obeliscos vocantes solis numini sacratos. Radiorum eius argumentum in effigie est.*
 - Roughly translated: The kings made from the stone's beams in a certain contest calling them obelisks. Sacred to the divinity of the sun, it is in appearance the mark of its rays.