

ADSPIRATE CANENTI: THE MUSES IN VIRGIL'S AENEID

The Virgilian employment of the Muses in his epic *Aeneid* has been called “purely conventional”¹. The present study will consider closely every appearance of these patronesses of song in the poem, with a view to demonstrating how Virgil’s attention to the Muses presents a significant aspect of his use of divine machinery in the explication of his larger themes about the import of his epic, in particular its concern with the relationship of Aeneas’ Troy to Turnus’ Italy in the establishment of the future Rome².

The “Muse” is the first divine being mentioned in Virgil’s poem, as the narrator calls on her to recall the causes of the anger of Juno that spelled such trouble and strife for Aeneas:

*Musa, mihi causas memora, quo numine laeso
quidve dolens regina deum tot volvere casus
insignem pietate virum, tot adire labores
impulerit. Tantaene animis caelestibus irae?* (1.8-11)³

This famous passage from the proem of the epic is the subject of the celebrated “Virgil Mosaic” found in Sousse, Tunisia and now housed in the Bardo Museum in Tunis⁴. Virgil is seated between two Muses, the scroll on his lap inscribed with verse 8 and the first word of verse 9. The muse on the left is reading from her own scroll, while the one on the right is holding a tragic mask. The second muse is thus confidently identified as Melpomene; the other has been labeled either Calliope – the muse of epic – or Clio, the muse of history.

The passage inscribed on the Virgil mosaic is the first of half a dozen invocations of the Muses in the *Aeneid*. The association of the goddesses with memory is alluded to in the imperative *memora*⁵. A singular muse is em-

¹ So C. Bailey, *Religion in Virgil*, Oxford 1935, 172.

² Essential reading on the Virgilian Muses in the illustrated entry of W. Suerbaum, *Muse*, in F. Della Corte (ed.), *Enciclopedia virgiliana*, III, Roma 1987, 625-641; cf. P. E. Knox, *Muses*, in R. F. Thomas - J. T. Ziolkowski (eds.), *The Virgil Encyclopedia*, vol. II, Malden Ma 2014, 856-858; also Bailey, *op. cit.*, 172-174.

³ All quotes from the epic are taken from G. B. Conte, *Publius Vergilius Maro: Aeneis*, Berlin-New York 2019².

⁴ On this mosaic note especially M. Yacoub, *The Splendours of Tunisian Mosaics*, Ministry of Culture and heritage conservation, 2007, 143-144; also J. K. Newman - F. S. Newman, *Troy's Children: Lost Generations in Virgil's Aeneid*, Hildesheim-Zürich-New York 2005, 79-80. For the controversial question of date note R. S. Conway, *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Primus*, Cambridge 1935, 23-24.

⁵ Cf. here A. Seider, *Memory in Virgil's Aeneid*, Cambridge 2013, 125-130. For the etymological issues involved, see J. J. O'Hara, *True Names: Vergil and the Alexandrian Tradition of Etymological Wordplay*, Ann Arbor 2017², 115.

ployed, as in the first verses of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* of Homer⁶. The muse is specifically invoked to recall the causes of the anger of Juno, the principal motivation of the plot of the epic – the anger that will not be fully put to rest until the reconciliation of Juno with Jupiter in the poem's last book⁷. That anger relates *inter alia* to the goddess' wrath regarding Troy from the time of the judgment of Paris as well as the abduction of Gany-mede⁸. The Muse's song is to be focused on the causes of the wrath of Juno toward the Trojans. That divine wrath will be put to rest by the end of the poem (arguably transferred to Aeneas, whose furious act of vengeance provides a coda for the epic). One can see why the historical Muse Clio has been associated with the opening of the epic: the poem calls for a historical account of why Juno is threatened by Aeneas' Trojan exiles.

It is noteworthy that this signal passage from near the very opening of the epic is the only references to Muses in the first, Odyssean half of the poem⁹. The remaining five invocations of the Muses come in the poet's books of war, with two in Book VII, two in Book IX, and one in Book X. In addition, there are two references to the Muses that come outside of the language of poetic invocation; these passages occur in Books IX and X.¹⁰

The muse of Book VII is named: Erato – the muse of love – will in some sense preside over the start of the second half of the epic:

*Nunc age, qui reges, Erato, quae tempora rerum,
quis Latio antiquo fuerit status, advena classem
cum primum Ausoniis exercitus appulit oris,
expediam et primae revocabo exordia pugnae.
Tu vatem, tu, diva, mone ... (7.37-41)*

The new invocation to the muse is more striking and involved than the first. The muse is now named, and the anaphora in combination with the change of imperative (*memora* now replaced by *mone*) contributes to a sense of increased urgency.

⁶ How many Muses were there? On this frequently raised question see M. L. West, *Hesiod: Theogony*, Oxford 1966, 176. Something of the flexibility regarding the answer can be seen on the Tunisian Virgil mosaic, to which we shall return.

⁷ 12.791 ff.

⁸ *Aeneid* 1.27-28.

⁹ The invocation of underworld deities at 6.264 offers something of a parallel expression, but has nothing to do with the Muses (*pace* some commentators). For the association of the Muses with the Sirens, note M.C.J. Putnam, *The Poetry of the Aeneid: Four Studies in Imaginative Unity and Design*, Cambridge Ma 1966, 102.

¹⁰ The Italian *Camēnae* are not mentioned in the *Aeneid* (cf. *Eclogue* 3.59-60, where they are contrasted with the *Musae*); the (probably related) prophetic nymph Carmenta figures at *Aeneid* 8.335 ff.

The identification of Erato as the muse has attracted significant critical attention¹¹. On the one hand, the reference comes as a nod back to the start of the second half of Apollonius' epic *Argonautica*, where Erato was invoked after the Argonauts arrived at Phasis¹². In Apollonius, the lovers were Jason and Medea, and the hero successfully retrieved the Golden Fleece through the assistance of his sorceress-paramour¹³. Homeric reminiscence of invocations of goddesses of song is now joined by Apollonian.

In Virgil the source of scholarly controversy regarding this passage is the absence of any erotic detail from the subjects of which Erato is to admonish the poet. Erato's charge – the subject matter the narrator will relate – is identified as the state of affairs in ancient Latium when first the *advena exercitus* arrived on Ausonian shores, and the first fight that will unfold¹⁴. Aeneas and his Trojans are that “stranger army,” and the geographical markers are Latium and Ausonia.

Those who read on in Book VII, to be sure, will learn soon enough of the problem of King Latinus' daughter Lavinia and the rival suitors for her hand in marriage. The question of Lavinia's nuptials serves as the “erotic” matter of the struggle of the Iliadic *Aeneid*. Lavinia was alluded to in the very first verse of the poem, with its reference to the “Lavinian shores” to which the Trojan Aeneas would arrive¹⁵. The geographical note about Lavinium from 1.2-3 now takes on personhood in the contest for Lavinia.

In Book I, Aeneas was a *profugus* or exile from Troy; now his arrival is associated collectively with that of his *advena exercitus*. The emphasis is on invasion from a foreign power. *Advena* is not a particularly common word in Virgil. Dido uses it of Aeneas in a moment of emotional frenzy as she realizes that the Trojans are departing from Carthage – rather a reversal of the situation at the start of Book VII, where the Trojans have arrived at their

¹¹ For a start here see N. Horsfall, *Virgil, Aeneid 7: A Commentary*, Leiden-Boston-Köln, 2000, 69-71; also W. P. Basson, *Pivotal Catalogues in the Aeneid*, Amsterdam 1975, 95 ff.; K. W. Gransden, *Virgil's Iliad: An Essay on Epic Narrative*, Cambridge 1984, 39-43.

¹² *Argonautica* 3.1-5; on this intertext note D. Nelis, *Vergil's Aeneid and the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius*, Leeds 2001, 266-272.

¹³ On Virgil's erotic debt to Apollonius see further W. Clausen, *Virgil's Aeneid: Decorum, Allusion, and Ideology*, München-Leipzig 2002, 202-203.

¹⁴ *Prima* at 7.40 is a sometimes overlooked adjective. It probably refers to the war of the second half of the *Aeneid* as the *prima pugna* with reference to the further conflicts that are destined to arise in Latium, conflicts that are not the subject of the poet's epic. Otherwise the *prima pugna* must refer to the battle scenes of Book VII alone, which seems less likely. For a rather different analysis cf. H. P. Stahl, *Poetry Underpinning Power: Vergil's Aeneid...*, Swansea 2016, 355-356.

¹⁵ There are verbal parallels between the invocation of Erato in Book VII and the start of Book I: cf. 7.39 *cum primum Ausoniis exercitus appulit oris* and 1.1 ... *qui primus ab oris*.

destined home¹⁶. The Arcadian Pallas invokes the *advena* Hercules who once visited central Italy – a clear enough typological association of Hercules with Aeneas, even if Pallas' prayer will be unfulfilled¹⁷. Virgil underscores the connection at 10.515-517, where Aeneas is the *advena* who had visited Pallas and Evander, and who will now surrender to his rage as he seeks vengeance for the death of his young charge. Lastly, in the closing book of the poem the augur Tolumnius will denounce Aeneas as an *advena* who came to Italy with hostile intent¹⁸.

The occurrences of the appellation are thus neatly balanced: Aeneas is the martial stranger referenced in Books VII and XII; he is juxtaposed with Hercules as an *advena* in the narrative of Pallas' doom in Book X; he was a stranger whose arrival and departure from Carthage spelled so much misery for both Dido's city and the Rome that would be cursed to fight three brutal wars against her descendants.

Certainly we might think that Dido is a more appropriate candidate for the patronage of Erato than the "shadowy" Lavinia, whom Aeneas never even sees¹⁹. But this is exactly the poet's point: the question of who will marry Lavinia is the driving force of the personal element of contention and struggle that the Rutulian hero Turnus brings to the battlefield; Aeneas' personal involvement with the Carthaginian queen and his subsequent lack of emotional involvement in the amatory questions of the Iliadic *Aeneid* – *contra* the case of both Apollonius' Jason and Virgil's Turnus – is deliberate²⁰. *In fine*, the second half of the *Aeneid* will be concerned with the question of how Aeneas' Trojans and Lavinia's Latins will be joined in a new political entity, as history continues inexorably toward a Roman reality.

There is a second invocation to the Muses in *Aeneid* VII. Virgil commences his great catalogue of the Italian heroes who will fight against Aeneas and his Trojans with a powerful invocation to the goddesses of Helicon, the storied Muses:

*Pandite nunc, Helicon, deae, cantusque movete,
qui bello exciti reges, quae quemque secutae
complerint campos acies, quibus Itala iam tum
floruerit terra alma viris, quibus arserit armis.
Et meministis enim, divae, et memorare potestis (7.641-645)*

¹⁶ 4.591.

¹⁷ 10.460.

¹⁸ 12.261.

¹⁹ So C.J. Fordyce, *P. Vergili Maronis libri VII-VIII*, Oxford 1977, 63-64, who looks forward to the Old French *Roman d'Enéas* for the full explication of the erotic theme of Lavinia and Aeneas. Cf. also S. F. Wiltshire, *Public & Private in Vergil's Aeneid*, Amherst 1989, 92.

²⁰ For Turnus' emotions in regard to Lavinia cf. 12.54-80.

This is the dramatic opening of the great roll call of warriors that will commence with Mezentius and draw to a close with Turnus and (strikingly) the Volscian heroine Camilla. From the singular, unspecified Muse of Book I and the singular Erato of the start of Book VII, we proceed to the goddess Muses summoned here to open Helicon. The allusion to the power of memory recalls the *Musa, mihi causas memora* of 1.8; the reference to the kings roused in martial fervor echoes the *qui reges* of 1.37 – once again the poet closely links his references to the Muses and their messages²¹. Italy is prominently highlighted here, the Italy that is the *terra alma* of such dear and poignant associations for Virgil's contemporary audience. These are, of course, the very warriors who are ranged against Venus' son, the Trojan Aeneas. They are the heroes of *Italia terra alma* (7.643-644) – a phrase so dear, no doubt, to Virgil's contemporary audience.

The next invocation of the Muses comes as Turnus prepares his attempt to set fire to the Trojan fleet:

*Quis deus, o Musae, tam saeva incendia Teucris
avertit? tantos ratibus quis depulit ignes?
dicite ...* (9.77-79)

Once again there is a recollection of a previous passage: the *taetae irae* that the poet narrator ascribed to celestial powers (notably the wrathful Juno) manifest here as the flames that Turnus seeks to use against Aeneas' ships – an action that follows on the similar efforts of Juno (via her messenger Iris) in Book V.²² Indeed, the metaphorical fire from the invocation to the Muses at 7.644 *quibus arserit armis* becomes the all too real fire with which Turnus menaces Aeneas' navy. The allusion is Homeric – the Muses were invoked when Hector tried to set fire to the Achaean vessels²³. From the Heliconian goddesses of the catalogue of Italian warriors, we move to the Muses who are called on near the start of the book that can fairly be called the book of Turnus: the hero's greatest successes are recorded therein²⁴.

One might reasonably conclude that the magical episode of the attempted firing of the ships and the transformation of the vessels into sea nymphs was of particular importance to the poet for him to resort to an otherwise rela-

²¹ On Virgil's manipulation of Greek traditions about the Muses with respect to what they know and what wisdom they may impart to their audience, note E. Henry, *The Vigour of Prophecy: A Study of Virgil's Aeneid*, Carbondale 1989, 133-134.

²² 5.604-663.

²³ *Iliad* 16.112-113; for the parallel see P. Hardie, *Virgil: Aeneid Book IX*, Cambridge 1994, 89; also J. Dingel, *Kommentar zum 9. Buch der Aeneis Vergils*, Heidelberg 1997, 67.

²⁴ This is thus the fourth invocation of the Muses in the poem, and the second that is made generically.

tively rare address to the Muses²⁵. The present passage comes as the first of an extraordinary two invocations of the Muses in Book IX, and the first of three references to the Muses in the book – all of them connected in some way to Turnus.

The ships of Aeneas are saved by the extraordinary intervention of Jupiter in response to the appeal of the Trojan goddess *par excellence* – the Berynthian mother Great Goddess Cybele. She had long before begged that the ships might be immune from harm; Jupiter had granted the request, with fulfillment to come once the Dardanian leader had been conveyed to Ausonia/Laurentum (9.98-100). The transformation of the ships – which are of course no longer needed – comes as a direct result of the safe arrival of the Trojans in Latium. The *quis deus* of the poet's invocation of the Muses refers to Jupiter; the averting of Turnus' flames is – like the similar divine intervention on Aeneas' behalf in Book V – a great gesture of favor and aid to Aeneas' Trojans, though ultimately not so significant an act relative to the final disposition of affairs in Latium – a settlement to which neither Cybele nor Venus (the main divine Trojan patrons in the epic) will be privy²⁶. It is wondrous theater and dazzling spectacle. But it does not contribute to the ultimate destiny of Troy or Rome.

Erato had been invoked to recall to the poet the state of affairs in ancient Latium; Calliope – the muse of epic verse – is invoked to tell of the *aristeia* of Turnus:

*Vos, o Calliope, precor, adspirate canenti
quas ibi tum ferro strages, quae funera Turnus
ediderit, quem quisque virum demiserit Orco,
et mecum ingentis oras evolvite belli.*

[*et meministis enim, divae, et memorare potestis.*] (9.525-529)

The bracketed verse – identical to 7.645 – appears only in the codex Romanus among the capital manuscripts; Servius does not know it²⁷. It is clearly interpolated from the invocation of the Heliconian Muses at the catalogue of heroes, and is rightly omitted here. Calliope is called upon to tell of the exploits of Turnus in the book that will witness his most impressive martial achievements, as he essentially assaults the Trojan camp singlehandedly. That assault will end, significantly, with his reception in the waters of the Tiber²⁸. The Calliope/Turnus invocation provides a parallel to the Heliconian

²⁵ Cf. here A. Syson, *Fama and Fiction in Vergil's Aeneid*, Columbus 2013, 146-148.

²⁶ I.e., the agreement struck by Jupiter with Juno at 12.829 ff. whereby the future Rome is guaranteed to have the Ausonian element dominate over the Trojan, which will sink down in comparison (12.836 *subsident Teuceri*, etc.).

²⁷ Though Tiberius Claudius Donatus does.

²⁸ 9.815-818.

Muses/Italian catalogue sequence from Book VII, where Turnus figures prominently as leader of his cause.

This passage offers the only reference to Calliope in the epic²⁹. The epic muse is particularized, even as the language reflects plural muses³⁰. Significantly, Turnus alone of the heroes of the poem receives such an invocation to describe his battlefield exploits.³¹ The participle *canenti* recalls *arma virumque cano* from 1.1³². 9.527 ... *quem quisque virum demiserit Orco* presents an interesting ambiguity: *virum* may be either genitive plural or accusative singular.

The question about the case of *virum* relates to a noteworthy detail in the next reference to the Muses, one which comes in the midst of Turnus' battle exploits. One of his victims is the singer Cretheus, who was a friend and companion of the Muses – a point the poet underscores by repetition:

... *et amicum Crethea Musis,*
Crethea Musarum comitem, cui carmina semper
et citharae cordi numerosque intendere nervis:
semper equos atque arma virum pugnasque canebat. (9.774-777)

The brief vignette of the doomed poet Cretheus has rightly attracted critical attention³³. The connection of Cretheus to the poet Virgil – signaled by the reference to Cretheus' songs about the arms of men (9.777) – has been raised as a possible self-allusion by the author³⁴. With the Crethean connection to the Muses we may compare the poet's own reflection on his aspirations for close union with the goddesses of song at *Georgics* 2.475 ff.³⁵

Here the Cretheus' *arma virum* is undoubtedly a genitive expression – he sings of the “arms of men”. At 1.1 *arma virumque*, the “man” was accusative singular, an Odyssean allusion to Aeneas. At 9.527, the *virum* could be either accusative singular or genitive plural, both in both cases with references to a victim of Turnus' battlefield triumphs. The ambiguous reference

²⁹ At *Eclogue* 4.56-57 she is identified as the mother of Orpheus. Bailey, *op. cit.*, 173 identifies this passage as one of only two occasions where the Muses have “any kind of personality,” the other being *Eclogue* 6.64-66 where one of them is said to have guided Gallus to the Aonian mountains.

³⁰ From the powerful vocative *Vos* to the plurals imperatives *adspirate* and *evolite*.

³¹ Cf. 11.664-665, where Camilla is apostrophized before her great *aristeia*. Aeneas is not accorded a passage similar to Turnus'.

³² For the prominence that Virgil gives to himself in relation to the Muses (cf. 9.528 *mecum*), note R.O.A.M. Lyne, *Further Voices in Vergil's Aeneid*, Oxford 1987, 226.

³³ Cf. T. Power, *Vergil's Cretheus and Iopas Reconsidered*, “*Vergilius*” 63, 2017, 93-123.

³⁴ So L. Fratantuono - C. Faxon, *Atque arma virum: Turnus' Killing of Virgil in Aeneid IX*, “*Latomus*” 72, 2013, 400-411.

³⁵ On this passage note especially P. Hardie, *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium*, Oxford 1986, 33 ff.

of 9.527 *virum* bridges the certain cases of 1.1 and 11.777. The collocation of “arms” and “man/men” helps to secure the self-referential allusion to the poet’s own epic. If the poet of *Aeneid* 1.1 sang of Iliadic arms and an Odyssean man, then Cretheus sings an Iliadic song, of horses and the arms of men. It is the song of the second half of Virgil’s epic. And Turnus slays this poet.

The Cretheus passage is one of only two times in the *Aeneid* where the Muses appear outside of their traditional role in an invocation. The invocations near the start of Books I and VII – whatever their individual perplexities and interesting twists on Homeric and Apollonian precedents – could well be considered conventional enough: the poet calls on the Muses as he commences the first and second halves of his poem. Book VII, however, also contains a second invocation of the Muses, as the great catalogue of Italian heroes starts in earnest. In Book IX, then, we find two more invocations, and, in addition, the Cretheus passage with its emphasis on the singer’s connection to the Muses³⁶.

In order fully to appreciate the significance of the Cretheus vignette and its place among the other “Muse” scenes of the epic, we must consider the last references to the Muses in the poem, beginning with the invocation of the Heliconian goddesses in Book X at the start of the catalogue of Aeneas’ Etruscan allies:

*Pandite nunc Helicon, deae, cantusque movete,
quae manus interea Tuscis comitetur ab oris
Aenean armetque rates pelagoque vehatur.* (10.163-165)

The passage offers an exact parallel to the catalogue of Italian heroes from Book VII; indeed the first verse is deliberately repeated³⁷. The Etruscan contingents in alliance with Aeneas’ Trojans come by ship; this harks back to the invocation of the Muses in the matter of the fantastic transformation of Aeneas’ ships into mermaids. Virgil underscores this connection by depicting an encounter of Aeneas with those new sea creatures immediately after the Etruscan catalogue³⁸. Virgil even emphasizes the importance of the Muses by a brilliant intertext with another of his poetic predecessors: at

³⁶ “Cretheus” is also the name of a second victim of Turnus, a Greek hero who is addressed as *Graium fortissime*, the “bravest of the Greeks” (12.538-539). “Presumably one of Evander’s Arcadians” (R. Tarrant, *Virgil: Aeneid Book XII*, Cambridge 2012, 228). It redounds to Turnus’ credit that he is able to slay such a superlative warrior.

³⁷ 10.163 = 7.641. On this repetition cf. S. J. Harrison, *Virgil: Aeneid 10*, Oxford 1991, 112. For the catalogue as a whole see especially Basson, *op. cit.*, 157 ff. (with detailed commentary); also G. Binder, *P. Vergilius Maro Aeneis: Ein Kommentar*, Band 3, *Kommentar zu Aeneis 7-12*, Trier 2019, 344 ff.

³⁸ 10.215 ff.

10.215-218 Aeneas is depicted onboard ship at night, just after the catalogue of Etruscan allies and just before the appearance of Cymodocea. The lunar goddess Phoebe is striking the midst of Olympus: 10.215-216 *iamque dies caelo concesserat almaque curru / noctivago Phoebe medium pulsabat Olympum*. The description is borrowed in part from Ennius, where it is applied to the Muses: *Musae quae pedibus magnum pulsatis Olympum*³⁹. The Muses had been invoked to tell of the miraculous transformation of the ships (a story of such wondrous quality is understandably enough ascribed to divine inspiration) – and that earlier invocation will be recalled soon after this new one, as the transformed ship Cymodocea appears to Aeneas. The *rates* of 10.165 are Etruscan ships that now convey Aeneas, Pallas, and the rest – the Trojans ships are mermaids.

Once again the language of the present invocation recalls prior parallel passages. The Etruscan ships do not offer quite the same dramatic import as the much longer catalogue from *Aeneid* VII, and no figure in the array of Etruscan allies can come close to the importance to the plot of such heroes as Mezentius, Camilla, Turnus, and even Messapus. It is a decidedly less significant occasion for the goddesses of song to be asked to open Helicon; the very repetition of the same verse from Book VII only serves to highlight the difference⁴⁰. Not a single hero from the present catalogue is of significance to the subsequent plot of the epic; indeed only one is mentioned again in a context other than a brief obituary⁴¹. It is a strikingly mediocre assembly of heroes compared to the Book VII catalogue of worthies.

While the individual heroes may not play a noteworthy part in the unfolding war, the second of two references to Muses apart from invocations comes amid the description of Cupavo's father Cyncus and his sorrow for the lost Phaëthon. Cupavo is one of the Etruscan captains; he is memorable for his father's strange history. Cyncus soothed his sad misery over his lost love with the Muse:

dum canit et maestum Musa solatur amorem (10.191)

³⁹ *Annales* fr. 1 Skutsch. On this see further J. D. Reed, *Virgil's Gaze: Nation and Poetry in the Aeneid*, Princeton, 2007, 189-190.

⁴⁰ On this and other repetitions in *Aeneid* X note J. Sparrow, *Half-lines and Repetitions in Virgil*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1931, 106-107.

⁴¹ As Harrison, *op. cit.*, 112 notes, the first name in the catalogue – King Massicus – does not reappear again in the poem, and as soon as X, 655 his Clusians are ascribed to King Osinius. The second figure – Abas – “reappears only to die at 427” (Harrison, *op. cit.*, 114; cf. the similar case of Aulestes). Astur does not reappear at all; likewise, Cunarus and Cupavo (despite the mythological digression for the latter as the son of Cyncus); Ocnus (notwithstanding his connection to the poet's native Mantua). Only Asilas is recycled *sine morte*, and his reappearances are never of importance.

Poetry and song is here presented as a relief for the depressed lover⁴². Stephen Harrison has observed that Virgil's "work shows limited interest in Etruria and the Etruscans"; as for the catalogue, "Its heroes are largely invented, and its expansions cover the homoerotic and metamorphic story of Cynus, and the history of the barely Etruscan Mantua"⁴³. Turnus' victim Cretheus was a poet and companion of the Muses; Cynus – destined to be transformed into a swan – seeks solace for his sad love in the Muse⁴⁴.

The only story related in the Etruscan catalogue is thus one of transformation; it is also one redolent with the spirit of homoeroticism that culturally posed problems of convention in Virgil's Rome. It also concerns a bird of Venus whose significance in the poem is underscored by its appearance in parallel omen scenes in Books I and XII that illustrate via ornithology one of the unaddressed problems of the epic: the goddess Venus is never made aware by her father Jupiter of the final disposition of the future settlement of Rome that is struck by the supreme god with his wife Juno⁴⁵. The patroness of Troy would not, we may be certain, be happy at the revelation.

We may now examine more closely the relationship between all of Virgil's references to the Muses, with particular focus on the poet's purpose in arranging his passages as he does.

The one mention of a muse in the first half of the epic is concerned specifically with the problem of the wrath of the immortals (Juno in particular). It stands alone as the only passage in the poem in which the singular *Musa* is used in an invocation.

In the parallel case of Book VII – the opening of the poet's *Iliad* – the muse Erato is called upon, as we move from the problem of the wrath of Juno to the question of the state of affairs in *antiquum Latium*, where the

⁴² The story was probably borrowed from the Hellenistic poet Phanocles, where Cynus is Phaëthon's lover (fr. 6 Powell).

⁴³ S. Harrison, *Etruria and Etrusci*, in R. F. Thomas - J. T. Ziolkowski, *The Virgil Encyclopedia*, vol. I, Malden Ma 2014, 457.

⁴⁴ For the metonymy of "Muse" for song and the "pastoral digression" of the Cynus vignette, see Harrison *ad* 10.190-191. Swans were sacred to Venus; cf. 1.393-398 (the disguised Venus compares the safe arrival of Aeneas' ships in Carthage to swans that have escaped a harassing eagle); 12.244-256 (Juturna points to a similar swan/eagle omen as part of her efforts to secure the breaking of the truce between Trojans and Latins).

⁴⁵ At 9.563-564, Turnus is compared to an eagle that has snatched up a hare or a swan. The adolescent Camilla also slew swans as part of her hunting exploits (11.580). The swans of Book I are clearly analogous to Aeneas' ships; the swan of Book XII in the Juturna portent is Turnus, saved from an eagle by other swans (cf. the association of Messapus' men to swans at 7.699-702, and of the Latins to swans at 11.456-457). From the Trojan swans of Book I we progress to the Latin swans of Book XII.

preeminent question is the marriage of Lavinia⁴⁶. Indeed, Book VII is the book in which Juno's wrath finally begins to show some sign of abatement: she restrains the fury Allecto from any further works of rage and madness in the works of war⁴⁷. By the close of Book XII and the epic, Juno will be happy (12.841 *laetata* – a marked contrast from Aeneas' mood in his closing appearance).

Book VII also offers an invocation to the Muses of Helicon – the *deae* who are called on to open Helicon – as preface to the roster of Aeneas' Italian enemies. Erato had been called on to remind the poet of the kings of central Italy, and prominent among them are such figures as Lavinia's suitor Turnus and the exiled Etruscan lord Mezentius. Virgil had noted that the second half of his epic presented the greater theme – *maius opus moveo*⁴⁸ – and so the dramatic “second” invocation to the Muses is no surprise, nor the parallel double invocations of the Muse in Book IX – first of the plural *Musae* with reference to the Jovian aversion of the flames from Aeneas' fleet, and second of the epic muse Calliope, in regard to Turnus' martial exploits. The balanced double invocations are also in reverse order, as we move from 1) Erato to 2) *deae* to 3) *Musae* to 4) Calliope. Lavinia was introduced in Book VII, the book of Erato. She does not figure at all in Book IX, which is largely dominated by the narrative of Turnus' assault on the Trojan camp⁴⁹. This is the province of epic, the realm of Calliope.

After these carefully arranged invocations, the first of two passages that reference the Muses outside the formal language of poetic inspiration and admonition comes with Turnus' slaying of the Muses' companion Cretheus. As Fratantuono and Faxon have demonstrated⁵⁰, Turnus is associated not only with Homer's Achilles in his *aristeia*, but also with Odysseus; several of his victims are borrowed from Homer's account of Odysseus' slaying of the Lycians in *Iliad* V. In some sense Virgil's depiction of Turnus as a poet-

⁴⁶ Cf. the observation of M.C.J. Putnam, *Virgil's Epic Designs: Ekphrasis in the Aeneid*, New Haven 1998, 223 n. 52.

⁴⁷ Cf. 7.540 ff. On Juno's incipient restraint see L. Fratantuono, *Dirarum ab sede dearum: Virgil's Fury Allecto, the Dirae, and Jupiter's Parthian Defeat*, “Bollettino di studi latini” 41, 2011, 525. The sequence is an important step on the inexorable progress of the epic in effecting the transference of Juno's wrath from the poem's proem to Aeneas in the final scene, as something of the spirit of the rage of the first verse of Homer's *Iliad* is recreated in Aeneas, the neo-Achilles.

⁴⁸ 7.45. It is thus appropriate that there are five invocations of the Muses in the second half of the poem *versus* but one in the first – the greater work requires more divine inspiration.

⁴⁹ Where the camp takes on something of the attributes and image of the doomed city of Troy.

⁵⁰ *Op. cit.*, 403-405; 411.

slayer illustrates how thanks in part to the actions of Turnus, the ending of Virgil's *Iliad* will be very different from that of Homer's⁵¹. It is as if Turnus' slaying of the Muse's companion Cretheus ushers in a very different song as we proceed to Book X and the last quarter of the epic. "... Turnus can be said to kill the poet of the epic's first line: [he] introduces complications into the epic that were not clearly envisioned in its proem"⁵².

The two references to the Muses in Book X come in the aftermath of the dramatic events of the book of Turnus. First Virgil repeats *verbatim* his Heliconian invocation, as now he announces the arrival of Aeneas' Etruscan allies. It is a pale imitation of its predecessor from Book VII, and strikingly so. Inserted within it is the strange story of Cyncus, who in mourning for his lover Phaëthon was transformed into a swan⁵³. The muse of his solace in grief; poetry and song helped at least for a while to assuage his sorrow, before metamorphosis replaced music as the remedy for lost love.

The homoerotic relationship referenced in the story of Cyncus and Phaëthon is reminiscent of the story of the doomed Trojan lovers Nisus and Euryalus from Book IX. At 10.324 ff., Cydon narrowly escapes death at the hands of Aeneas while following his new *eromenos* Clytius. Tellingly, Virgil notes that had Cydon died, he would be free from care regarding the loves of young men that were always his preoccupation⁵⁴.

The references to the Muses thus change as we turn from *Aeneid* IX to *Aeneid* X. Turnus' killing of Cretheus marks the divide. Whatever the rationale for the change, it is marked and noteworthy. In the repetition of the *Pandite nunc Helicon, deae* formula for the Etruscan catalogue, we begin again, as it were, with a new song for the Muses to inspire. That song contains, as it were, a reference to the Ligurian Cyncus' sad song for his lost lover. The Etruscans were stereotypically associated by the Romans with luxury and decadence⁵⁵; the pederastic relationship implied between Cyncus

⁵¹ The parallel is dramatically emphasized by a unique device: *Aeneid* 9.767 is an exact copy of *Iliad* 5.678 – "the only such instance in 5" (so Hardie *ad loc.*).

⁵² Fratantuono - Faxon, *op. cit.*, 411.

⁵³ Admittedly one of the problems for Virgil in this regard is that the Trojans do not offer scope for a catalogue of heroes on the scale of the Italians; the only room for such treatment comes with respect to the Etruscan allies they secure in Book VIII. The Arcadians do not lend themselves to a catalogue either. Even the Etruscans are of limited potential in this regard; they are divided, and the exiled Mezerntius still commands significant support.

⁵⁴ 10.326-327 ... *securus amorum / qui iuvenum tibi semper errant*. For "Cydon" as possibly evoking the stereotypical Cretan penchant for pederasty, see Harrison, *op. cit.*, 159. It may also be significant that the Trojan Aeneas is interrupted before he can kill someone who is associated with the same sort of pederastic relationship that would have been culturally acceptable in Troy, Crete, or Etruria, though not in the future Rome.

⁵⁵ Cf. S. McGill, *Virgil: Aeneid Book XI*, Cambridge 2020, 240.

and Phaëthon would not have been culturally acceptable in Rome⁵⁶. Further, the catalogue tribute to Cynus concerns a father, not a son currently in the ranks of battle. Cupavo is not as famous as Cynus, at least in terms of memorable lore.

Indeed, what is most telling about the Etruscan figures of whom the Heliconian Muses are asked to remember in Book X is how forgettable they are. Asilas is the only hero ever to be mentioned again in the epic, and he never is credited with any memorable act⁵⁷. The only one accorded any special vignette is connected with a relationship that would not have been sanctioned according to the social conventions of Virgil's Rome. After the killing of Cretheus, the remaining references to the Muses in the epic represent a decidedly lower register of significance, and come only in association with Aeneas' relatively insignificant Etruscan allies. The catalogue the Muses are asked to inspire does not even include the great hero Tarchon, the successor to Mezentius; his contingents are included, to be sure, but he is named only before the catalogue, not within⁵⁸. In Book XI he will in fact upbraid his men for exactly the sort of luxurious behavior that was commonly associated with the Etruscans⁵⁹. The emphasis on the poet's native Mantua in the catalogue perhaps accords with the death of the poet's *alter ego* Cretheus in Book IX: the Muse's song of Etruria in Book X is a dead song, a song associated with heroes of little significance, especially in light of the future settlement of affairs in Latium⁶⁰. That settlement would offer a privileged place to the Italy of Latinus, Turnus, and Camilla *versus* the Troy of Aeneas. Etruscan culture, too, would subside in light of the realities of Roman history and the fate of the Tarquins whose line could be traced back to their homonymous regal ancestor Tarchon.

After the death of the Muse's friend Cretheus at the hands of Turnus, the only mention of the Muses is enshrined in the poet's tribute to the mediocrities of Etruria who gather in support of Aeneas' Trojan cause. In part this reflects a more complicated fulfillment of the proem of the epic than one may have envisaged. Aeneas will indeed find the Lavinian shores, and, besides, he will secure victory in his struggle for Lavinia's hand in marriage

⁵⁶ See further here T. K. Hubbard, *Pederasty*, in R. F. Thomas - J.T. Ziolkowski (eds.), *The Virgil Encyclopedia*, vol. II, Malden Ma 2014, 983-985.

⁵⁷ Cf. 11.620; 12.127, 550.

⁵⁸ 10.153-154.

⁵⁹ Cf. 11.725-758, where he ultimately triumphs over the Latin king Venulus, whose name recalls the goddess Venus.

⁶⁰ Strikingly different is the poetic vision and attendant references to the poet's Muses at *Georgics* 2.475 ff. and 3.10 ff. Elsewhere in the *Georgics* the Muses are invoked at 4.315 with respect to Aristaeus and the magical regeneration of the Bugonia.

(though significantly the poet never affords a neat resolution to that and other threads of his narrative). But Troy will indeed be dead in fulfillment of Juno's wish (12.826-827 *sit Latium, sint Albani per saecula reges, / sit Romana potens Itala virtute propago: / occidit, occideritque sinas cum nomina Troia*). Etruria is destined to share something of the fate of Troy in light of future developments in Roman history, not least in the transition from monarchy to republic. The *Aeneid* will not offer a straightforward song of Trojan success and Italian defeat. It will instead tell a more complicated tale in which the side of the vanquished Turnus and Camilla enjoys a real victory of Italy over Troy, and in which Juno emerges as more successful than Venus. The end of Book IX offers a foreshadowing of the future relationship of Troy and Italy. Both Jupiter and Juno – the key deities of the settlement negotiation near the end of Book XII – are active in the plot. Turnus is prevented from utterly destroying the Trojan camp by Jupiter's divine intervention. His escape from the camp is accomplished by a leap into the waters of the Tiber that will receive him with its soft waves, ready to purify him from the blood and gore of the fight and to send him rejoicing to his comrades (9.816-818 ... *ille suo cum gurgite flavo / accepit venientem ac molibus extulit undis / et laetum sociis abluta caede remisit*)⁶¹.

It is straightway after Turnus' slaying of the Muse's friend Cretheus that the tide of battle begins to turn. Mnestheus and Serestus proceed to rouse the Trojans, urging them to remember their unlucky country, their old gods, and great Aeneas (9.786-787 *non infelicis patriae veterumque deorum / et magni Aeneae, segnes, miseretque pudetque?*)⁶². Turnus begins to retreat – he is literally one man against an entire camp – and he makes his way to the river, to the Tiber⁶³. Juno is strictly forbidden to aid Turnus; Jupiter sends Iris to warn her off. The relationship between the two immortals toward the end of Book IX is thus more contentious than in the closing divine scene of Book XII: Jupiter demands that Turnus leave the camp, and he forbids any assistance from Juno. What is telling is that Jupiter's demand that Turnus leave – *ni Turnus cedat Teucrorum moenibus altis* (9.805) – is couched in language that reflects the eventual settlement of affairs in Italy. There will be no “lofty walls of the Teucrians”, but rather the Latin race, the Alban fathers, and the “lofty walls of Rome” (1.6-7 ... *genus unde Latinum / Albanique patres atque altae moenia Romae*). Jupiter is demanding nothing less than the Italian

⁶¹ The rejoicing of Turnus finds a parallel in Juno's aforementioned happy departure from Jupiter in the wake of her victory at 12.841.

⁶² The descriptor *infelicis* refers to the fall of Priam's city; it also anticipates the ultimate fate of Troy.

⁶³ 9.790.

Turnus' departure from the Trojan "city" to the Tiber that is most naturally associated with the future Rome.

Turnus' slaying of the Muse's companion Cretheus constituted what might one might judge to be a shocking act of impropriety. Unknown either to him or Aeneas, however, a new song was being composed for Rome – one that would bring about the vision of a Latin Rome that was imagined just before the inaugural invocation of the Muse of *Aeneid* 1.8. Something of the future reality in Rome was conveyed by the solemnity of the invocation of the Muses before the great procession of Italian heroes; in killing the poet of the Muses, Turnus in some sense reveals his ignorance of the poet's song and the future new order that was prefigured in the heroes of his cause. Turnus will be destroyed as part of the coming to be of that new order, as will Camilla. The song of the Muses would be in part a requiem both for Troy and Etruria, as the wrath of Juno whose causes the Muse was asked to recall gives way to the joy of the goddess and, at poem's end, the wrath of Aeneas.

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ABSTRACT:

Virgil employs the Muses (especially Calliope and Erato) as key figures in the divine apparatus of his epic *Aeneid*. Careful consideration of the references to the Muses in his poem illustrates his concern with exploring the relationship of Aeneas' Troy and Lavinia's Italy.

KEYWORDS:

Virgil, *Aeneid*, Muses, Calliope, Erato.