

Hyginus' *De Astronomia* and Virgil's *Aeneid*

Abstract: Several minor characters in Virgil's *Aeneid* have names that are shared by other heroes cited in mythology and mytho-history. Close consideration of details about such homonymous figures as recorded in the *De Astronomia* of Hyginus reveals intriguing layers of meaning and potential significance for the poet's choice of particular names, a finding that is rendered more interesting by the possibility of Virgilian access to Hyginus' work.

Keywords: Virgil; Hyginus; Phorbas; Cretheus; Orsilochus.

The *De Astronomia* ascribed to Hyginus has languished in relative obscurity for some time, notwithstanding its great popularity in the Middle Ages and Renaissance.¹ The extant remains break off abruptly in the fourth book, just as the author embarks on his discussion of the intercalation of months. Book 2, containing a lengthy catalogue of star myths, is the most celebrated section of the work. While the author was willing and able to highlight infelicities and imperfections in Aratus' *Phaenomena*, he was no Geminus of Rhodes in terms of being qualified to write technical treatises (even elementary ones) on astronomy and mathematics; his interests were polymathic and diffuse, and his intent was far removed from that of such specialized manuals.²

Paramount among the scholarly problems associated with this surviving Latin handbook are the related questions of authorship and date. Are we to conclude that the author of this astronomical compendium was Gaius Julius Hyginus, the freedman of Augustus and friend of Ovid, a noted *grammaticus* and Palatine librarian? Is the text that has descended to us actually an epitome of the original, to be assigned to sometime in the second century A.D.? What is the relationship between the *De*

¹ For the text see VIRÉ 1992; cf. also LE BŒUFFLE 1983. There is a partial English translation with brief annotation in HARD 2015 (the Hyginus is not complete). On the enduring popularity of the work, see e.g. HAYE 2007. I am indebted to the helpful criticisms and corrections of the anonymous referee, which greatly improved this study, and for the assistance of Marina Andrijašević.

² Geminus is more concerned with the technical aspects of astronomy than with star lore. AUJAC 1975 provides a critical text with extensive annotations, star charts, and glossary of technical terms; EVANS AND BERGGREN 2006 provides an English translation with detailed commentary. Geminus' date is contested, though a strong case can be made for the first century B.C. We cannot prove that Virgil read it, though certainly it is possible. The great value of Geminus lies in his providing a snapshot of the state of astronomical knowledge in Virgil's century, while Hyginus offers an easily digestible account of the legends surrounding the heavens, of the sort that would appeal to poets in particular.

Astronomia and the other surviving work ascribed to the same author, the so-called *Fabulae*?³ Do we have the works of two men, from two different centuries?⁴ At least in the forms in which they have survived, is the *De Astronomia* a genuine work of late republican/early imperial prose, and the *Fabulae* a compilation of later antiquity? Certainty on these points is impossible, though a valid case can be argued that Virgil could have used the former, even if it is significantly more difficult to assert the latter with confidence.⁵ Matters are so disputed that the Teubner editors of the two extant works of “Hyginus” do not agree on the problem of identification, with Ghislaine Viré opting for the Augustan *libertus*, and Peter Marshall for a writer in the second century.⁶

Suetonius relates that Hyginus was from Spain, while citing the view of some that he was in actuality an Alexandrian, brought to Rome as a boy after the capture of the city in the wake of Caesar’s engagement with Ptolemy.⁷ He is a fascinating, enigmatic figure, one whose prolific, prodigious productivity has suffered from the ravages of time.⁸

To summarize: Hyginus was a contemporary of Virgil, then (possibly born around 64-60 B.C., a decade or some half dozen years before the poet), though he outlived him by a significant margin of years. We know that he lived to write on Virgil.⁹ While Virgil is quoted in the extant text of the *Fabulae*, there is no reference to him in the *De Astronomia*. We cannot be sure that Hyginus’ astronomical work was available to Virgil, let alone in its present form.¹⁰ What is certain is that there

³ The best texts are available in the Teubner and Budé series (MARSHALL 1993 and BORIAUD 1997 respectively). Not to be confused with the “mythological” Hyginus is the author on the surveying of land known conventionally as Hyginus Gromaticus, or the “Pseudo-Hyginus” to whom a brief extant treatise on the delineation and construction of Roman camps is ascribed.

⁴ Vid. further here MASCOLI 2002, 119-25.

⁵ Again, we speak with reference to the surviving texts. The *Fabulae/Genealogiae* possibly existed in an earlier form, which Virgil may have known. But this original edition as it were was probably merely expanded by the insertion of new, sometimes duplicating material. In the absence of new evidence, we are left unable to do more than offer speculation. Because it is significantly more problematic to argue that Virgil had access to an original edition of the *Fabulae*, our focus in the present study remains on the *De Astronomia*, though inevitably we shall make reference to material from the former.

⁶ We concur with Viré (and Le Bœuffle) on this problem, *contra* Marshall (and KASTER 1995, 208), though the choice does not impinge on our conclusions herein about certain passages in Virgil.

⁷ *De Grammaticis* 20.

⁸ There is a comprehensive overview of what we can aspire to know in CORNELL 2013, 474 ff.

⁹ For what remains vid. Funaioli, pp. 528-33. “... probably not a commentary ...”, concludes ZETZEL 2018, 66. For the fragments of Hyginus’ work on Cinna’s *Propempticon*, cf. Funaioli, p. 527. Hyginus seems to have been interested in law and religion in particular (standard concerns for an antiquarian).

¹⁰ Cornell, *op. cit.*, p. 480 considers the question of whether Hyginus’ works on Italian cities and Trojan families was influenced by the *Aeneid*, or whether the reverse were true, with sympathy to the view that Hyginus was not an influence on the catalogue of Italian heroes in Book 7, or on the parallel Etruscan material in Book 10.

are interesting bits of obscure lore preserved in Hyginus that may shed light on various scenes from Virgil's *Aeneid*.

While it is impossible in the absence of further evidence to prove that Hyginus was a source for Virgil, it can be a profitable exercise for readers of the *Aeneid* to consider material from the *De Astronomia*, derivative as it is from Hellenistic and other works (most of them lost). Study of such evidence – much of it relatively obscure – is of potential value for adding layers of meaning and significance to incidental details in Virgil's eminently Alexandrian epic. It is within the realm of reasonable speculation to think that Virgil knew Hyginus. Like the Augustan Age freedman and librarian, Virgil would have had access to Eratosthenes' star myths alongside a significant quantity of other lost Hellenistic works. Depending on its date of composition, he may have had access to the *De Astronomia*, which (significantly, we might think) names Cicero (in connection with his *Aratea*), but never Virgil or Ovid.¹¹ We may proceed to a consideration of particular passages from Virgil's epic, first one from the Dido tragedy of *Aeneid* 4, and then an assortment of scenes, with focus on a selection of minor figures from later books of the epic.

Dido and the Hesperidean Apples

The setting is Carthage, where amatory indulgence has turned to disaster. Virgil's Dido is depicted as engaging in magical rituals ostensibly aimed at ending her passionate love for Aeneas.¹² The Punic queen credits a Massylian priestess as the source of her knowledge about amatory spells, a woman whose *curriculum vitae* includes keeping the dragon of the Hesperides lulled and somnolent:

hinc mihi Massylae gentis monstrata sacerdos,
Hesperidum temple custos, epulasque draconi
quae dabat et sacros servabat in arbore ramos,
spargens umida mella soporiferumque papaver. (4, 483-6)¹³

Hyginus relates that the sentinel dragon of the Hesperides is said to have guarded the golden apples that were presented originally as a nuptial present to Juno on the occasion of her union with Jupiter.¹⁴ The giver of the apples was Terra; the dragon was one assigned by Juno to safeguard the magical fruit in her garden near Mount Atlas. Hyginus cites Pherecydes as the source for the detail about the provenance of the apples, one of the occasions on which the author names a predecessor.¹⁵ This

¹¹ Hyginus' manual may date between Cicero's and Germanicus' translations of Aratus.

¹² For commentary *ad loc.* note especially PAESE 1935, AUSTIN 1955, and FRATANUONO AND SMITH 2022, the first and last with exhaustive annotations.

¹³ Passages from the *Aeneid* are cited from CONTE 2019.

¹⁴ 2, 3.

¹⁵ Cf. Pherecydes Atheniensis, fr. 16*^c FOWLER. See further FOWLER 1999.

passage about the apples may be paralleled in the extant *Catasterismi* of Pseudo-Eratosthenes, where Pherecydes is also credited as the source.¹⁶ Hyginus, we can be confident, used Eratosthenes as a source for his manual. It has been argued that star handbooks of this sort may be employed as potential intertexts with Augustan verse.¹⁷ Hyginus frequently cites Eratosthenes; certainly he had access to the third century B.C. original, not the first or second century A.D. epitome that has survived.¹⁸ Hyginus' work was meant to be a convenient repository of information of potential use to poets as well as amateur stargazers; indeed his interests were more literary than scientific.

But what of serpents and fruits? Dido's Massylian mage is the custodian of the Hesperidean dragon that guards the storied golden apples. When we read of the role of the Massylian, Hesperidean witch in Dido's magical rites by which (allegedly) she seeks either to win back Aeneas or to break the amatory spell recalls Virgil's description of the queen's quasi-wedding ceremony in the fateful cave that witnessed her union with Aeneas:

speluncam Dido dux et Troianus eandem
deveniunt. primae Tellus et pronuba Iuno
dant signum; fulsere ignes et conscius aether
conubiis, summoque ulularunt vertice Nymphae. (4, 165-8)

There has been scholarly question as to why Tellus is involved in this would-be wedding, given that he was not customarily invoked in Roman nuptial liturgies.¹⁹ Why is the earth referenced here prominently, and in close association with Juno, the *pronuba* of the doomed union?

In the wake of the failure of the attempted joining of Trojan and Carthaginian, Dido's actions at 4, 474-503 constitute a ruse by which to trick her sister Anna into assisting in the queen's suicide scheme. She claims that her plan is of the typical amatory sort: either you win back your love, or you are freed from your obsession. The woman credited with assisting her in her dabbling in magic – the Massylian mage – is connected to the lore of the Hesperidean apples, apples that were a Junonian wedding gift from Terra. In Virgil, Tellus and Juno are the principal deities involved in the mysterious, fateful affair in the cavern. When Dido seeks to end her life via elaborate, theatrical subterfuge and scheming, she references the very gift that the earth had given to Juno as a wedding gift. There is something of the closing of a ring here, as we move from a virtual parody of nuptial rites in a cave, to Dido's recourse to black magic to make a definitive end of her amatory passion. Earth and Juno had

¹⁶ *Cat.* 3, for which see MASSANA 2013, with text, French translation, and full commentary.

¹⁷ For a study of the possible use of the work by Ovid, cf. ROBINSON 2013.

¹⁸ See further CONDOS 1970.

¹⁹ Cf. BINDER 2019, 303.

witnessed the wedding, and the consequences of the nuptials will be ameliorated by the guardian of the draconian sentinel of the gift Earth had once bestowed on Juno. A snippet of lore preserved in star handbooks thus provides mythological background that lends an additional shade of meaning to a passage in the epic poet that has occasioned critical comment and question.

We shall endeavor now to consider a selection of names of mythological figures cited in Hyginus' *De Astronomia* that appear also in the *Aeneid* in association with minor characters. Investigation of these names of homonymous characters will reveal that Virgil sometimes may allude to mythological astronomical lore in his naming of such figures. The star stories evoked by such names may provide interesting subtexts for appellations that otherwise might be dismissed as mere ornament devoid of special meaning. At the very least, the mytho-astronomical lore preserved by writers such as Hyginus occasionally provides richer insight into why Virgil chose this or that name for a character of brief and passing import. Virgil's onomastic games have occasioned a variety of scholarly approaches, not least semantic.²⁰ Our approach will be to consider how to interpret "mere names" on the basis of recollections of extant lore about the same or homonymous figures, in order to identify possible associations Virgil's readers may have made between his names and the allusions they perhaps engendered.

What have been our criteria of inclusion? We have not considered the many references in Hyginus to Olympian divinities and other major figures (e.g., Achilles). We have focused on minor characters for whom interesting background stories from astronomical lore offer meaningful insights into Virgil's purpose in using this or that character name.²¹

Phorbas in *Aeneid* 5

In Hyginus' account of the constellation Ophiuchus, Phorbas is highlighted as a dragon slayer and herpetological hero.²² The source cited is Polyzelus of Rhodes,²³

²⁰ Cf. PASCHALIS 1997. GÓMEZ 1984 is a useful and comprehensive survey of the question of onomastic questions in Latin literature.

²¹ Some homonyms provide nothing noteworthy by way of commentary: cf. the Virgilian Harpy Celaeno, who has nothing to do with the Pleiad Celaeno (*De Astronomia* 2, 21); also the case of Lynceus and Idas, concerning whom there is nothing in Virgil that connects them to Castor and thereby to stories found in Hyginus, nor with one another except insofar as they are both slain by Turnus. Indeed there are several relatively minor figures in Virgil whose names can be cited in Hyginus and elsewhere for whom no clear allusions or particular points of noteworthy astronomical or mythological connection can be made; the present study focuses on interesting cases where delving into the more obscure byways of star lore offers additional layers of meaning to support Virgil's choice of particular names for certain of his characters.

²² 2, 14. He does not appear in Pseudo-Eratosthenes.

²³ *FGrHist* 521 F7 (= Hyginus, *De Astronomia* 2, 14).

about whom little is known; in c. 300 B.C. he seems to have composed a *Rhodiaca*, which is attested to by Athenaeus.²⁴ The story of Phorbas and the snakes is known also to Diodorus Siculus (5, 58.4-5), but is otherwise quite obscure.

The name “Phorbas” occurs once too in passing in the *Aeneid*, in the scene of the loss of the Trojan helmsman Palinurus.²⁵ The Trojans are making their way from Sicily to Italy, and Neptune assures Venus that this crucial, final leg of the great voyage to Hesperia will be safe. The god demands the sacrifice of one life, a request that the ever capricious Venus does not contest. The god Somnus soon enough assumes the mortal visage of one Phorbas, as he prepares to see to the sacrifice of Palinurus so as to ensure the safety of Aeneas’ fleet: ... *puppi deus consedit in alta / Phorbanti similis funditque has ore loquellas* (5, 841-2).²⁶

It is a typical Virgilian onomastic exercise: a name is offered with nothing in the way of explication, for a figure who will vanish from the scene almost as soon as he is introduced. Why did the poet choose “Phorbas” as the disguise for Somnus’ maleficent machinations? Here there are multiple levels and layers of semantic and other references, but one new insight may be considered.

In Hyginus, we are told that the Rhodians would sacrifice to Phorbas before they embarked on long sea voyages: *Itaque Rhodii, quotienscumque longius a litore prodeunt classe, prius sacrificant Phorbantis adventu ...* A ready connection can be drawn then: “Phorbas” was associated with the sacrifices of the inveterate sailors of Rhodes before they would set out on potentially perilous marine voyages, and in Virgil “Phorbas” is the figure whose appearance Somnus assumes before seeing to the sacrificial offering of Palinurus to ensure the safe passage of Aeneas’ vessels.²⁷

There is more evidence too, that may point to the Rhodian Phorbas as being a source, perhaps the key source, for Virgil’s Somnus-masquerade. In one account of the mytho-history of this proto-Rhodian, Phorbas was cursed by his brother and suffered shipwreck. He swam successfully to Ialysos.²⁸ This story is echoed in the fate of Virgil’s Palinurus, who is cast overboard and then, Aeneas learns much later, managed to swim safely to the Italian coast (6, 347 ff.) – admittedly to his doom. Phorbas of Rhodes relates thus to the role of Palinurus as a sacrifice, and to the

²⁴ 8, 61.30.

²⁵ See further here WILLIAMS 1960 and FRATANTUONO and SMITH 2015; also G. GARBUGINO, “Forbante,” in *EV* II, pp. 557-8.

²⁶ LYNE 1989, 176-9 sees etymological connections between the name of Phorbas and notions of cannibalism (Neptune as consumer of sacrifices).

²⁷ Further, we may note that at *Fabulae* 14, 9 *Tiphys Phorbantis et Hyrmines filius, Boeotius; is fuit gubernator navis Argo* Hyginus makes note in his catalogue of Argonauts that the helmsman Tiphys was the son of Phorbas. Tiphys was another doomed helmsman, like Palinurus; cf. *Fabulae* 18.

²⁸ The source cited is Dieuchidas, a fourth-century historian who wrote on Megara. Vid. *FGrHist* 485 F7 (= Athenaeus, *Deip.* 6, 262-3).

motif of shipwreck and swimming to land. Virgil thus evokes a range of rich and relevant lore via the passing reference to Sleep's mortal guise.

Cretheus in *Aeneid* 9

We may proceed to Cretheus.²⁹ This victim of the Rutulian Turnus has attracted some critical attention, mostly on account of his status as a poet somehow lost amid the horrors of war.³⁰ In Hyginus (2, 20), "Cretheus" is noted by some to have been a royal son of Aeolus.³¹ There is a nod to this tradition in Virgil. As the poet enumerates casualties of Turnus in his *aristeia*, we encounter Clytius the son of Aeolus, and Cretheus, beloved to the Muses: *et Clytium Aeoliden et amicum Crethea Musis* (9, 774). Hyginus notes that Aeolus had many sons: *Alii dicunt Crethea et Athamantem cum aliis compluribus Aeoli filios fuisse*. In a nice nod, that is exactly what we may conclude from Virgil's list of Turnus' victims, where the detail about Clytius comes before the name of someone else who was cited elsewhere as a son of Aeolus. Virgil has significant concerns in the Cretheus vignette with his self-referential highlighting of Cretheus as the poet who sang of the "arms of men" (9, 777 *semper equos atque arma virum pugnasque canebat*)³², but especially for those who know the tradition of Cretheus as one of many sons of Aeolus, he has a surprise as he moves from Clytius *Aeolides*, to Cretheus as not so much a son of Aeolus, as a beloved of the Muses.

"Clytius" does not appear in the *De Astronomia*. In the *Fabulae* he figures in the catalogue of Argonauts, where he is the son of Eurytus (a noteworthy archer who was taught by and vied with Apollo), doomed to be slain by Aeetes.³³ Another "Clytius" is mentioned in the list of Helen's suitors.³⁴ The name is common in mythology, and of Trojan associations,³⁵ though by no means exclusively.³⁶ In Virgil "Clytius" is also the father of Camilla's victim Euneaes (11, 666), as well as the father of Lyesian Acmon (10, 129) and, notably, the *objet d'amour* of Cydon (10, 325). But in Virgil's listing of Turnus' casualties, the single appearance of a Clytius

²⁹ *Deest* in Pseudo-Eratosthenes.

³⁰ On Cretheus note especially HARDIE 1994 and DINGEL 1997, *ad loc.*; also FRATANTUONO AND FAXON 2013; POWER 2017; QUINT 2018 (on Cretheus as an image of Virgil). HARDIE 1986, 53 n. 43 argues that "we are told of the habitual subject-matter of the bard ... but only as a passing reference in an obituary notice ..."

³¹ At *Fabulae* 12, Pelias is identified as the son of Cretheus and Tyro.

³² "... a little biography that could almost be Virgil's ..." LEE 1979, 80).

³³ 14, 8. There is a textual question as to the name Aeetes. In Diodorus Siculus (4.37.5), this same Clytius is said to have been slain by Heracles during the hero's campaign against Eurytus.

³⁴ 81.

³⁵ Cf. Homer, *Iliad* 3, 148 and 20, 238.

³⁶ Cf. Homer, *Odyssey* 15, 540 and 16, 327, where "Clytius" is the father of Telemachus' friend Peiraeus and an attendant of the son of Odysseus.

Aeolides immediately before Cretheus offers a nod to the tradition of a prolific Aeolus as recorded by Hyginus.

Orsilochus in *Aeneid* 11

According to Hyginus, some authorities credit to Orsilochus the invention of the four-horse chariot.³⁷ In Virgil the name is applied to a victim of the Volscian heroine Camilla.³⁸ Orsilochus is slain alongside his Trojan *confrère* Butes:

Protinus Orsilochum et Buten, duo maxima Teucrum
corpora, sed Buten aversum cuspidē fixit
loricam galeamque inter, qua colla sedentis
lucent et laevo dependet parma lacerto,
Orsilochum fugiens magnumque agitata per orbem
eludit gyro interior sequiturque sequentem;
tum validam perque arma viro perque ossa securim
altior exurgens oranti et multa precati
congeminat: vulnus calido rigat ore cerebro. (11, 690-8)

This death scene is the second of two vignettes of Orsilochus. He appears in the opening stage of the cavalry battle before Laurentum, before the advent of Camilla. He attacks the horse of Remulus, which throws its rider to the ground:

Orsilochus Remuli, quando ipsum horrebat adire,
hastam intorsit equo ferrumque sub aure reliquit;
quo sonipes ictu furit arduus altaque iactat
vulneris impatiens arrecto pectore crura:
volvitur ille excussus humi. (11, 636-40)

Reversal of fortune: Orsilochus wounds Remulus' mount, which throws its man to the ground. We do not actually learn of Remulus' fate, even if we might surmise it. In the depiction of Orsilochus' demise, we learn in grisly detail of his end. His companion Butes is slain quickly. With Orsilochus, Camilla engages in a game: she flees the hero, only to move so quickly that soon the pursuer is the pursued.³⁹ One of Camilla's hallmark characteristics is her astonishing fleetness of foot.⁴⁰ She could

³⁷ 2, 13. Again, he is not referenced in Pseudo-Eratosthenes.

³⁸ Cf. GRANSDEN 1991, ALESSIO 1993, HORSEFALL 2003, FRATANTUONO 2009, and MCGILL 2020, *ad loc.* A. Fo in *EV* III, p. 892 draws attention to the theory of KRAGGERUD 1960 that Orsilochus has astronomical associations with Arctophylax (Orsilochus is slain alongside Butes, after all, sc. Boötes). Ursine connections for Orsilochus may reflect traditions surrounding Artemis at Brauron, fittingly enough given Camilla's connection to Diana. If Orsilochus were a "bear slayer" then Camilla defeats the hunter; if his name evokes "bear warden," then the feral Camilla slays him all the same. Once again we have a character of diverse mythological associations, with multiple correspondences.

³⁹ On Camilla's ruse note ARRIGONI 1982, 40.

⁴⁰ Highlighted already at 7, 806-11.

outrun even the wind. Camilla's feat in vanquishing Orsilochus by virtue of her exceptional swiftness is all the more impressive if one remembers that some thought that the constellation Heniochus – the celestial charioteer – was Orsilochus, the *inventor quadrigarum*: the speedy Camilla is able even to outpace the inventor of the four-horse chariot. Significantly, in the earlier Orsilochus-Remulus encounter and the climactic Orsilochus-Camilla engagement, there is an emphasis on horses and the chase, as befitting the doomed hero whose name recalls the premier charioteer.⁴¹

The Pholuses of *Aeneid* 8 and 12

Next we may consider the centaur Pholus/Pholos.⁴² In Hyginus he is associated with the constellation Centaurus, and he is identified as a centaur of outstanding skill in soothsaying.⁴³ This centaur Pholus is cited in the Salian hymn to Hercules, who is credited with his slaying.⁴⁴ There is no complication or arcane, obscure exegesis needed to explicate Pholus' presence in the hymn: he was a noteworthy victim of the great hero.⁴⁵

Pholus is also the name of a victim of Turnus, one of three casualties cited in one verse at XII, 341 *iamque neci Sthenelumque dedit Thamyrumque Pholumque. Incipiunt iam mysteria*: why these names? No details are offered for the deaths of these unfortunates, save that the latter two were slain at close quarters, and Sthenelus at a distance (12, 342 *hunc congressus et hunc, illum eminus ...*).⁴⁶ The Greek Sthenelus of 2, 261 is one of the rejoicing invaders who emerge from the Wooden Horse.⁴⁷ The name Thamyrys may be reminiscent of the ill-fated singer Thamyris, who was said to have been injured by the Muses as the ultimate conse-

⁴¹ There is also something of a brilliant reversal of Homer at play in Virgil's narrative: in the *Odyssey* (13, 260 ff.), "Orsilochus" appears in a story fabricated by Odysseus as an alleged son of Idomeneus of Crete. That Orsilochus was said to have been the swiftest runner in Crete; Odysseus claims to have killed him in nighttime ambush after the Cretan had tried to steal his Trojan plunder in consequence of being angry that Odysseus refused to serve under Cretan command at Ilium. In Virgil, the swift Camilla outruns the hero whose name recalls the exceedingly swift Orsilochus from Homer, and she outfoxes him as well, in a manner that Odysseus might have found amusing.

⁴² 2 38. Not in Pseudo-Eratosthenes.

⁴³ He is not mentioned in the *Fabulae*.

⁴⁴ 8, 293-4. For the role of Bacchus/wine in the downfall of the centaur, cf. *Georgic* 2, 454-7, with THOMAS 1988, and MYNORS 1990, *ad loc.*

⁴⁵ Paschalis, *op. cit.*, p. 292 connects the name to the notion of hiding and lurking in a lair.

⁴⁶ On the relatively little that can be said about this trio see R. Tarrant, *Virgil: Aeneid XII*, Cambridge, 2013, *ad loc.* There is no comment on the names in TRAINA 2017.

⁴⁷ A. Fo in *EV* IV, p. 1021 speculates that the shared name of Aeneas' warrior and the Greek hero from Book 2 may point to the Sthenelus of Book 12 being an Arcadian ally. The Sthenelus of Book 2 was a son of Capaneus; for his prominence in the *Iliad*, status as a suitor of Helen, and association with Diomedes see HORSFALL 2008, 231.

quence of his temerity in challenging them to a contest.⁴⁸ Richard Tarrant observes that “Thamyrus” appears nowhere else in surviving literature (though note Valerius Flaccus’ Pelasgian Thamyrus at *Argonautica* 3, 127-8).⁴⁹ We may think of the similar name Thamyris, and we may note the vulgate reading *Thamyrimque* here, which may deserve more consideration than it has received, though the reminiscence of Thamyris can still be felt with the spelling Thamyrus.⁵⁰ No explanation, at any rate, is given in the standard commentaries for why these three names appear here.⁵¹ In Book 9, Turnus’ victim Cretheus was not harmed by the Muses, but was dear to them as a singer of songs; if Thamyris recalls Thamyrus, then this trio of casualties offers the reminiscence of another singer (indeed, of a celebrated poet), a centaur, and a hero associated with the Trojan horse narrative from Book 2. The trio is thus of potentially meaningful interest, with Sthenelus and Pholus in frame, both with equine associations – and the figure in the middle recalling a singer of songs. We may recall the description of Cretheus from 9, 777: *semper equos atque arma virum pugnasque canebat*, such that in the scenes from Books 9 and 12 Turnus is connected to the image of the slaying of poets of war, poets who sang of horses, the arms of men, and of battles. Our interpretation admittedly requires memory of Sthenelus from Book 2, alongside other associations. Still, it is better than no explanation, and especially in light of how Cretheus sang of horses and the arms of men, there is an attractive association of military figures with equine connections framing a name that recalls a poet.

Addendum: The Interconnectedness of the “Abases” of *Aeneid* 1

We append here a consideration of Virgil’s use of the name “Abas” for three discrete figures in his poem. The Argive Abas is another figure in Virgil’s epic who is cited in Hyginus.⁵² As with Virgil’s King Idas, so Hyginus’ King Abas from Argos is mentioned merely as a passing patronymic. In the case of this Greek hero, we have an exact correspondence of characters between Virgil and Hyginus (as opposed to mere homonyms). Hyginus mentions Argive Abas fleetingly, as does Virgil. While the name of this Greek is mentioned but incidentally, it comes in a passage of tremendous import for the poet’s contemporary Augustan regime.⁵³ Near the site

⁴⁸ The story is as old as Homer (*Iliad* 2, 594-600). On the Muses as figures of menace and dread, see MURRAY 2002, 36 ff.

⁴⁹ See here MANUWALD 2015, *ad loc.*

⁵⁰ Orthography is easily confused here; cf. DEKEL 2012, 78, who misleadingly spells the Homeric singer’s name as “Thamyrus.”

⁵¹ But cf. A. Fo in *EV V**, p. 27; also SAUNDERS 1940, the latter of whom is sympathetic to the association of the name with the mythical singer.

⁵² II, 18.

⁵³ For commentary cf. WILLIAMS 1962, HORSFALL 2006, and HEYWORTH AND MORWOOD 2017, *ad loc.*; note also STAHL 2016, 66-8, and especially MILLER 1993. POWELL 2008, 92 and 121 considers the

of the future battle of Actium, Aeneas dedicates arms captured from the Greeks, specifically the shield of Abas.

The Argive Abas of Book 3 is the second of three Virgilian homonymous characters.⁵⁴ Elsewhere in Virgil, “Abas” is the name of a Trojan (1, 121),⁵⁵ and of an Etruscan (10, 170, 427).⁵⁶ The Etruscan Abas is a casualty of Lausus. Abas of Argos is mentioned in passing in Hyginus as the father of Proetus, during the account of the Bellerophon story in the description of the constellation Equus.

There are interesting connections between Virgil’s three “Abases,” who have not received much critical attention (notwithstanding the connection Virgil draws between the Greek Abas and the site of Actium). The first Abas is a victim of the Junonian storm: *iam validam Ilionei navem, iam fortis Achatae, / et qua vectus Abas, et qua grandaevus Aletes, / vicit hiems ...* (1, 120-2). “... un troiano, presumibilmente di una certa autorità” (D’Anna). Of the four victims cited here, three are mentioned later in the epic. Abas is not, though apparently he survives: the ship that is lost in the tempest is that of the Lycian Orontes, not that of Abas. Still, he disappears from the narrative after the account of the storm, his fate left rather in limbo.⁵⁷

What conquered the vessels was the *hiems*; when next we encounter “Abas,” *hiems* once again is mentioned, as Aeneas notes the progress of time and season: *interea magnum sol circumvolvitur annum / et glacialis hiems Aquilonibus asperat undas* (3, 284-5). We think of winter storms that customarily impede nautical transit. But the “Abas” mentioned now is the Argive, whose shield marks the spot of the memorial of the future battle at Actium: *aere clavo clypeus, magni gestamen Abantis, / postibus adversis figo et rem carmine signo: / AENEAS HAEC DE DANAIIS VICTORIBUS ARMA* (3, 286-8).⁵⁸ Aeneas sets up arms in memorial (as opposed to

significance of the obscurity of the reference.

⁵⁴ They are disentangled by G. D’Anna in *EV* I, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁵ He merits not even a comment in AUSTIN 1971, except for how Virgil varies the language of his miniature catalogue of unfortunates.

⁵⁶ Note here HARRISON 1991, *ad loc.*

⁵⁷ The error in Janell’s Teubner index whereby the Abas of Book 1 is the same as the one referenced in Book 3 is probably mere carelessness, but it remains noteworthy that we never hear of Abas *Troianus* post-tempest.

⁵⁸ The Argive Abas – the son of Lynceus and Hypermestra – had particular connections to shield lore; cf. Hyginus, *Fabulae* 170, with mention of the quinquennial games established by Abas, for which a shield was awarded and not a crown. D’Anna, *op. cit.*, p. 1 explores the difficult problem of how Aeneas managed to acquire the shield. There may be a connection between the dedication of the armor of the son of the sole survivor of the Danaid massacre, and the *balteus* of Pallas with its fateful artwork that Turnus dons to his doom. In the tradition recorded in the *Fabulae*, Hypermestra’s Lynceus was saved; Danaus eventually dies; Abas first brings the news to Lynceus, who seeks a gift for his son and sees the shield of the youthful Danaus, which the dead king had dedicated to Juno. Lynceus gives the shield to Abas (which is then rededicated), and the aforementioned games were established. In Virgil, games are established with a shield dedication *before* the final victory. Pallas’ baldric depicts

wearing them himself – always a perilous undertaking). And the weapons are part of a religious ritual in honor of Jupiter.⁵⁹

When we meet the third and final “Abas,” we might remember Actium as we see the Etruscan naval commander leading his force under the protection of Apollo, who was after all the patron god of Augustus’ Actian victory: *una torvus Abas: huic totum insignibus armis / agmen et aurato fulgebat Apolline puppis* (10, 170-1).⁶⁰ An auspicious beginning for Aeneas’ ally, only to come to naught as the Etruscan is the first victim of Mezentius’ son Lausus: ... *primus Abantem / oppositum interimit, pugnae nodumque moramque* (10, 427-8).⁶¹ Notwithstanding his prominence and the Apollonian protection of his vessel, Abas falls to the young hero.⁶² There is nothing necessarily discordant here with the ultimate defense of Augustus under the alleged favor of Actian Apollo.⁶³ Lausus and Abas represent two sides in the civil discord of Etruria, with some Etruscans favoring Lausus’ father Mezentius (and, by extension, his ally Turnus), and others the cause of the Trojan Aeneas. Ultimately both men are doomed. The fact that the future Augustus will be preserved in naval combat under Apollo’s patronage does not mean that every ally of Aeneas is ensured the same defense, even if his ship bears the god’s insignia, and even if Apollo traditionally is a defender of Troy.⁶⁴

Virgil thus connects three different men, as we move from a storm at sea to a stormy scene at Actium, to a ship bearing the emblem of Apollo and then ultimately to Lausus’ victory over the Trojan ally. While Hyginus does not reference any stories to help us to appreciate the Argive Abas, Virgil’s careful linkage of his

the slaughter of the husbands of the Danaids (10, 495-9); the young Arcadian dies like one of those ill-fated bridegrooms, as will the other unmarried man who will wear it. Turnus was like a Danaid as he slew Pallas (and note that his father’s name Daunus recalls Danaus). The implications of Aeneas’ anger and his vengeful killing of Turnus have exercised critical acumen and ingenuity; cf., e.g., the careful analysis of GIANCOTTI 1993, 106 ff.

⁵⁹ Cf. 3, 278-80, with FARRELL 2021, 210. We would note that strictly speaking, at Actium Aeneas ignores the admonition of Helenus from 3, 435-440 about propitiating Juno above all; to the degree that she is not reconciled, matters will remain unresolved and hazardous.

⁶⁰ On this mysterious figure see in particular BASSON 1975, 174-6. “It is significant that no other antiquarian or mythological source connects this hero with Etruria ...”

⁶¹ “Lausus moves on .. as inexorably as the last two feet of the hexameter – and already we can tell that he has claimed a victim, by the nominative and accusative next to one another” (TANFIELD 2016, 24).

⁶² For the significance of Lausus’ slaying of a particularly noteworthy foe, see CLAUSEN 2002, 207.

⁶³ If anything, Aeneas’ Actian dedication is somewhat premature. At the time he makes it, he considers the war at Troy to be the climax of his military life, and his Hesperian destiny likely to be peaceful. What he does not know as yet is that there will a rebirth of the *Iliad* in Latium, another Achilles and another war. Aeneas dedicates the arms of one defeated Abas, unaware that another Abas will fall in battle, fighting for the Trojan cause.

⁶⁴ Relevant here is the question of the ultimate disposition of affairs for the future Rome in accord with the reconciliation of Juno (cf. 12, 791 ff.). Aeneas himself slays a priest of Apollo (10, 537 ff.).

three homonymous heroes is noteworthy, and does not seem to have been noted in previous scholarship. None of Virgil's Abases are particularly fortunate: while some critical attention has been paid to Virgil's second, Argive Abas in particular, it may be most profitable to consider all three Abases together, especially in light of how the connections between them may be taken to offer comment on key themes of the epic as we move from 1) a Trojan in peril to 2) the memory of a storied, defeated Greek to 3) the evocation of civil war in Italy, with naval peril and the image of Actium looming over all. Simply stated, much work remains to be done in the process of establishing the future Rome, and of restoring its security in the person of the savior Augustus.

Conclusion

We have explored several passages and minor characters in Virgil's epic, in particular the references to Tellus and the Hesperidean apples in Book 4; to Phorbos in 5; to Cretheus in 9; to Orsilochus in 11; to Pholus in Book 12. In each case we have seen how Virgil may allude to recondite mythological, astronomical lore in his choice of names. In the absence of new evidence, we may not be able to prove that Virgil used the handbook of Augustus' freedman Hyginus alongside his numerous other Alexandrian and other sources. But we have shown that material preserved in Hyginus' *De Astronomia* may help to shed further light on the poet's onomastic choices, and whether Virgil's influences included Hyginus, Eratosthenes, or any of a number of Hellenistic or Roman republican authors, at minimum we are able to delve into extant stellar sources to glean interesting insight into the possible implications of the poet's fondness for this or that name in his epic.

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Higinovo delo *O astronomiji* i Vergilijeva *Eneida*

Apstrakt: Nekoliko sporednih karaktera u Vergilijevoj *Eneidi* deli imena sa drugim herojima koji se pominju u mitologiji i mitskoj istoriji. Bliže ispitivanje detalja koji se tiču takvih homonimnih figura, kako ih beleži Higinovo delo *De Astronomia*, otkriva zanimljive slojeve značenja i moguće uticaje na pesnikov izbor određenih imena. To otkriće još značajnijim čini činjenica da je Vergilije mogao imati pristup Higinovom delu.

Ključne reči: Vergilije, Higin, Forbant, Kretej, Orsiloh.