

## MUTATI ARTUS: SCYLLA, PHILOMELA AND THE END OF SILENUS' SONG IN VIRGIL *ECLOGUE* 6

Quid loquar aut Scyllam Nisi, quam fama secuta est  
candida succinctam latrantibus inguina monstros  
Dulichias uexasse rates et gurgite in alto  
a! timidos nautas canibus lacerasse marinis; (Virgil, *Ecl.* 6.74–7)

The last section of Silenus' song in *Eclogue* 6 contains a notorious *crux*.<sup>1</sup> Virgil is here describing the Homeric sea monster Scylla and her white loins girded by barking monsters. Although his description identifies this Scylla with the Homeric creature described in *Odyssey* 12.85–7, Virgil prominently refers to this character as the daughter of Nisus (*Scyllam Nisi*, 74). In doing so, he appears to confuse the Homeric Scylla with Scylla, the daughter of the Megarian king Nisus. The Megarian Scylla is known for her betrayal of her father whose magic lock she cut and handed over to Minos, who at that time was besieging her city, and whose metamorphosis into the bird *ciris* is narrated by Virgil in *Georgics* 1, by Ovid in *Metamorphoses* 8, and in the pseudo-Virgilian *Ciris*.<sup>2</sup> This character is thus distinguished from the Homeric Scylla, daughter of Phorcys and Cratais, who, according to a version found not in Homer but rather in later sources, was transformed into a monster by Circe in her anger at being rejected by Scylla's suitor, Glaucus.<sup>3</sup>

The conflated version of Scylla from *Eclogue* 6, which explains the Homeric sea monster as the product of the transformation of Nisus' daughter, becomes popular in the Augustan period.<sup>4</sup> It is surely significant that one and the same poet can

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<sup>1</sup> R.F. Thomas, 'Voice, poetics, and Virgil's sixth *eclogue*', in J. Jasanoff, H.C. Melchert and L. Oliver (edd.), *Mir Curad: Studies in Honor of Calvert Watkins* (Innsbruck, 1998), 669–76, reprinted in R.F. Thomas, *Reading Virgil and his Texts* (Ann Arbor, 1999), 288–96; J.J. O'Hara, 'Callimachean influence on Vergilian etymological wordplay', *CJ* 96 (2001), 369–400, at 392–4, and J.J. O'Hara, *True Names. Vergil and the Alexandrian Tradition of Etymological Wordplay* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1996), 144–5, are the latest treatments of the passage. On the references to Scylla in the *Aeneid*, see also M. Paschalis, *Virgil's Aeneid. Semantic Relations and Proper Names* (Oxford, 1997), 147 and 186.

<sup>2</sup> See also Aesch. *Cho.* 613–22; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.15.8; Hyg. *Fab.* 198.

<sup>3</sup> Homer (*Od.* 12.124) has Cratais as Scylla's mother. For different versions of her lineage, see Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 4.828 with *Schol. in Ap. Rh.* ad 4.825–31 g. The story of Scylla's transformation at the hands of Circe is found in Ov. *Met.* 13.730–14.222 and Hyg. *Fab.* 199, and seems to have been told by the third-century poetess Hedyle (*SH* 456; cf. Ath. 7.297b). On Glaucus as a subject matter of poetry, see A.S. Hollis, *Fragments of Roman Poetry c. 60 BC–AD 20* (Oxford, 2007), 152–3. For other references to the Homeric Scylla, see Eur. *Med.* 1343–4 and 1358–9; Catull. 64.156 *Scylla rapax*; Lucr. *DRN* 5.892–3: *aut rabidis canibus succinctas seminarinis / corporibus Scyllas*.

<sup>4</sup> See Prop. 4.4.39–40; Ov. *Am.* 3.12.21–2, on which see J.C. McKeown, 'Ovid *Amores* 3.12', *PLLS* 2 (1979), 163–77; *Ars Am.* 1.331–2; *Rem. Am.* 737; *Her.* 12.123–5; *Fast.* 4.500, on which see S. Hinds, 'Cave canem: Ovid, *Fasti* 4.500', *LCM* 9 (1984), 79. See further, S. Timpanaro, 'De cirri, tonsillis, tolibus, tonsis et de quibusdam aliis rebus', *MD* 26 (1991), 103–73, at 117–18, reprinted in S. Timpanaro, *Nuovi contributi di filologia e storia della lingua latina* (Bologna, 1994), 87–164, at 101–2; R. Degli Innocenti Pierini, 'Due note sul mito di Scilla (in Ovidio e nella *Ciris*)', *AR* 40 (1995), 72–7, and C. Tsitsiou-Chelidoni, 'Nomen omen: Scylla's eloquent name and Ovid's reply (*Met.* 8, 6–151)', *MD* 50 (2003), 195–203.

indiscriminately refer to the pure and to the contaminated Scylla at different points of his career, as Ovid and Propertius do.<sup>5</sup> Thus, it is not by ‘mistake’ that the Augustan poets refer to the Homeric monster as the daughter of Nisus, since they are equally capable of producing the conventional version of the story of the Megarian heroine, as is Virgil in *Georgics* 1.<sup>6</sup> It seems pretty clear that the conflated Scylla found in Propertius and Ovid is a Virgilian affectation.<sup>7</sup> However, this does not exclude the possibility that Virgil found the conflated version in a source which has not survived. Evidence for the existence of one or more such sources is scant, but nevertheless compelling. Ovid, for example, emphatically declares that Scylla, by whom he means the conflated version of her legend that we find in *Eclogue* 6, owes her existence to the poets (Ov. *Am.* 3.12.21–2): *per nos Scylla patri caros furata capillos / pube premit rabidos inguinibusque canes*. The author of the *Ciris* complains that many poets misguidedly told the story of the Megarian Scylla’s transformation into the sea monster.<sup>8</sup> Tibullus refers to the story of Nisus’ *coma* in a passage illustrating the power of poetry to confer immortality.<sup>9</sup> These references hint at the existence of a distinguished poetic source for this hybrid Scylla, one potentially pre-Virgilian.<sup>10</sup>

An unplaced fragment of Callimachus’ *Hecale* may offer evidence for the existence of a conflated version of Scylla already in the Hellenistic period:

Σκύλλα γυνή κατακάσα καὶ οὐ ψύθος οὖνομ’ ἔχουσα  
πορφυρέην ἤμμησε κρέκα (Hecale fr. 90 Hollis / 288 Pf.)

‘Scylla shameful woman with a name that is not a lie cut the purple lock’

The fragment refers to Scylla’s cutting of Nisus’ lock, thus identifying without a doubt the named character with the Megarian heroine. The phrase οὐ ψύθος οὖνομ’ ἔχουσα, ‘with a name that is not a lie’, clearly signposts an etymological wordplay on Scylla’s name, even suggesting the word ‘etymology’.<sup>11</sup> So how is Scylla’s name true to her character?

<sup>5</sup> Propertius, for example, tells of Scylla, daughter of Nisus, at 3.19.21–8, and mentions the Homeric sea monster at 2.26.53–4, *crede mihi, nobis mitescet Scylla nec umquam / alternante uorans uasta Charybdis aqua*, and 3.12.28, *Scyllaque et alternas scissa Charybdis aquas*. On the story of the sea monster Scylla in Ovid *Met.* 13.730–14.74, see S.K. Myers, *Ovid’s Causes. Cosmogony and Aetiology in the Metamorphoses* (Michigan, 1994), 98–104, and N. Hopkinson, *Ovid Metamorphoses 13* (Cambridge, 2000), 41–3; cf. also *Met.* 7.62–5, on which see S. Hinds, ‘Medea in Ovid: scenes from the life of an intertextual heroine’, *MD* 30 (1993), 9–47, at 11–21 (on the relation between this passage and *Her.* 12.123), and A. Michalopoulos, *Ancient Etymologies in Ovid’s Metamorphoses: a Commented Lexicon* (Leeds, 2001), 157–8. *Met.* 8.1–151 is devoted to the tale of Nisus’ daughter.

<sup>6</sup> Discussion in Thomas (n. 1).

<sup>7</sup> See, in particular, Prop. 4.4.39–40: *quid mirum in patrios Scyllam saeuisse capillos, / candidaque in saeuos inguina uersa canis?* Cf. *candida* ... *inguina* in *Ecl.* 6.75. See G.O. Hutchinson, *Propertius. Elegies Book IV* (Cambridge, 2006), 126 on 4.39–40.

<sup>8</sup> *Ciris* 54–7: *complures illam magni, Messalla, poetae / (nam uerum fateamur: amat Polyhymnia uerum) / longe alia perhibent mutatam membra figura / Scyllaeum monstro saxum infestasse uoraci*.

<sup>9</sup> Tib. 1.4.63–6: *carmine purpurea est Nisi coma; carmina ni sint, / ex uero Pelopis non nituisset ebur. Quem referent Musae, uiuet, dum robora tellus, / dum caelum stellas, dum uehet amnis aquas*. The story of Pelops and Tantalus is referred to as a hackneyed topic in *G.* 3.6–7: *cui non dictus Hylas puer .... umeroque Pelops insignis eburno*.

<sup>10</sup> Thus McKeown (n. 4), 169, ‘Ovid’s phrase *per nos* (through us poets) (21) is therefore a sly hit at his predecessors’.

<sup>11</sup> ‘with a name that is not a lie’, i.e. ‘with a true name (*etumon*)’: O’Hara (n. 1 [1996]), 77. R. Pfeiffer on Callimachus fr. 288 points to the Platonic derivation of this phrase: *Ap.* 34e; *Cra.* 38c; *Plt.* 281b. Cf. Virgil, *G.* 3.280–1: *hic demum, hippomanes uero quod nomine dicunt / pastores,*

By far the most obvious etymology of the name Scylla is one which arguably connects the Megarian Scylla to the Homeric monster. As Pfeiffer argued in his note to the fragment, Callimachus is here suggesting as an etymology of the name Scylla the noun σκύλαξ, a Greek word for 'young dog'.<sup>12</sup> The etymology of Scylla from *skylax*, if evoked, must bring about a connection with the Homeric sea monster, as some commentators have reluctantly acknowledged.<sup>13</sup> For the etymological word play which derives Scylla from *skylax* was first made by Homer himself in the *Odyssey* when he compared Scylla's horrible voice to that of a newborn puppy (σκύλαξ), and appears in several late grammatical sources.<sup>14</sup> In addition, it is surely significant that Callimachus should choose to play on the etymology of Scylla's name at all, as the other attested sources which treat the story of the Megarian Scylla focus instead on the origin of the word *ciris*, the name of the bird into which she is transformed, quite possibly to avoid confusion with the Homeric Scylla whose well-established canine etymology acts as a reminder of her bitch-like features.<sup>15</sup> As first noted by Shechter, the noun Scylla could be seen to be connected with the verb σκύλλειν, which refers to hair shaving and hair disheveling, but no ancient source mentions this derivation.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, other attested etymological explanations clearly apply to the Homeric monster. To start with, the basic meaning of the verb σκύλλειν is to 'trouble' or 'annoy', a term which well describes the Homeric Scylla's habit of harassing the sailors who pass near her.<sup>17</sup> Virgil himself alludes to this etymological connection between Scylla and σκύλλειν by using the verb *uexo* in line 76 (*Dulichias uexasse rates*) of the sea monster's destructive action at the expense of Ulixes' ships.<sup>18</sup> Also relevant is a possible derivation from the verb σκυλεύω (σκυλάω) meaning 'to strip off', 'despoil', glossed by Roman authors with the epithet *rapax* by which the sea monster is sometimes described.<sup>19</sup>

*lentum distillat ab inguine uirus* pointing to the etymology of *hippomanes* from *hippos* and *mania* (madness of mares). See S. Shechter, 'The *aition* and Virgil's *Georgics*', *TAPA* 105 (1975), 347–91, at 363–4. On etymological signposts, see further Michalopoulos (n. 5), 4–5.

<sup>12</sup> Pfeiffer on Callimachus fr. 288: 'Call. formula fere Platonica usus dixisse Scyllam uero nomine "canem" esse, i.e. impudentem'.

<sup>13</sup> Timpanaro (n. 4), 116, n. 29 = 102, n. 29: 'a malincuore l'identificazione andrà accettata'; Tsitsiou-Chelidoni (n. 4), 202–3 is more tentative.

<sup>14</sup> *Od.* 12.85–7: ἐνθα δ' ἐνὶ Σκύλλῃ ναίει δεινὸν λελακυῖα / τῆς ἥ τοι φωνὴ μὲν ὅση σκύλακος νεογυλῆς / γίγνεται, αὐτῇ δ' αὖτε πέλωρ κακόν. This etymology was recognized and discussed by grammarians: *Schol. Plat. Epist.* 7, 345E Σκύλλα λέγεται ... καὶ πολύμορφος φωνὴν τε ἀφίεῖσα οἷα σκυλάκων νεογνῶν (ἐξ οὗ καὶ τοῦνομα εἰλήφεν); Orion in *Etym. Magn.* s.v. Σκύλλα: Παρὰ τὸ φωνὴν ἔχειν σκύλακος. "Ὁμηρος, Τῆς δ' ἥν φωνὴ μὲν ὅσον σκύλακος νεογυλῆς; Orion in *Etym. Magn.* s.v. Σκύλος: Κυρίως ἐπὶ κυνὸς νεογνοῦ· ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐπισχεῖν ἐπὶ τὸ ὑλακτεῖν, σκύλαξ τις ὤν. See O'Hara (n. 1 [2001]), 393–5 for discussion.

<sup>15</sup> The Megarian Scylla is turned into the bird known in Greek as *ciris* whose name reminds generations to come of her cutting (κείρειν) of Nisus' purple lock, as Ovid makes explicit at *Met.* 8.150–1: *in auem mutata uocatur / Ciris et a tonso est hoc nomen adepta capillo*; cf. *Ciris* 488: *esset ut in terris facti de nomine ciris*. In the passage devoted to Scylla in *G.* 1, Virgil suggests the name of the bird and its etymology by repetition of the verb *seco*: *secat aethera pennis*, 406; *secat aethera pennis*, 409.

<sup>16</sup> Shechter (n. 11), 359 cites Nic. *Alex.* 410: πολλάκι δὲ σκύλαιο κάρη; O'Hara (n. 1 [2001]), 393 cites Mel. *AP* 5.175.5: ἔσκυλται δ' ἀκόλαστα πεφυρμένος ἄρτι κίκιννος. With this etymology signalled by the verb ἤμηση, the reader would be invited to gloss Scylla as she who shaves, thereby connecting her name with her infamous cutting of her father's lock.

<sup>17</sup> Beda, *Gramm. Lat.* 7.289.9: *Scylla habet nomen a spoliando siue uexando nautas: spolio enim et uexo Latine, Graece dicitur scyllo*.

<sup>18</sup> O'Hara (n. 1 [2001]), 393, n. 79, notes that the verb caused concerns among the ancient commentators: see Servius ad *Ecl.* 6.76; Gell. 2.6.2; Macrob. 6.7.4.

<sup>19</sup> A point made by A. Michalopoulos, 'Some etymologies of proper names in Catullus',

Commentators have traditionally been reluctant to see a reference to the Homeric monster behind the etymologizing of the name Scylla, and to acknowledge what would appear to be a case of *contaminatio* on the part of Callimachus. Since the image of a dog was used figuratively of a shameless woman, it is argued that Callimachus is simply pointing to a connection between Scylla's shameless nature, as described by the participle *κατακάσα*, and her name.<sup>20</sup> Thus, while accepting the standard etymological wordplay connecting Scylla to *skylax*, proponents of this theory argue that the latter is to be understood as a synonym for *kuôn* and need not trigger an association with the other Scylla, the Homeric monster with the voice of a yelping *skylax*. In his commentary, for example, Hollis acknowledges that Callimachus' reference to Scylla's true name must point to a connection between the character's name and the bitch-like lasciviousness which leads her to cut her father's lock and betray her fatherland. However, he is loath to accept that Callimachus may be implicitly referring to Scylla's transformation into a sea monster with the voice of a yelping *σκύλαξ*, commenting 'there need be no suspicion that Call. has conflated the two heroines'. In addition, Callimachus, it is argued, may have told the 'correct' story of the Megarian Scylla's transformation into the bird *ciris* in the *Aetia*, if we are to judge from the scant remains of an unplaced fragment (fr. 113 Pf. / 63 Massimilla), in which Pfeiffer argued the name *ciris* can be restored, together with the Greek noun *oiōnos*.<sup>21</sup>

It all depends, however, how one approaches the issue of mythological lore in the original Callimachean source. For sure, it is not desirable to see the *doctus poeta*, Callimachus, making such a blatant mistake. It is, however, equally undesirable to exclude a readily available connection with the Homeric Scylla and her puppy-like voice which the clever and learned Callimachean implied reader could hardly be expected to miss. Furthermore, there is good evidence that play on mythological homonyms was a standard feature of the learned poetry of the Hellenistic period. Such play frequently included conflation and simultaneous allusion to multiple etymologies and it is against this background that a contaminated version of the story of Scylla may be best understood.<sup>22</sup> By evoking the standard etymology of the noun

*PLLS* 9 (1996), 75–81, at 76–7, and Michalopoulos (n. 5), 157. For Scylla as *rapax* see Catull. 64.156; *Culex* 331; *Ov. Met.* 7.65 and *Her.* 12.123. Is Ovid alluding to this derivation in *Met.* 8. 85–7 (*fatali nata parentem / crine suum spoliat, praedaeque potita nefanda / fert secum spoliū sceleris*)? Line 87, which is omitted by some manuscripts, is highly suspect (it is considered an interpolation by the latest editor of the *Metamorphoses*, R.J. Tarrant), so the argument is inconclusive: there is some discussion in Tsitsiou-Chelidoni (n. 4), 197.

<sup>20</sup> For the history of the concept of a shameless woman as a 'bitch', see the note in West on *Hes. Op.* 67 and Fraenkel on *Aesch. Ag.* 1228. Cf. *Hom. Il.* 1.225; 3.180 and 6.344. Scylla is described as *κυνόφρων* in *Aesch. Cho.* 621. Garvie on *Cho.* 619–21 points to the fact that the word is a *hapax legomenon* and suggests that 'Aeschylus plays upon the etymology of Skulla, connecting it, as did Homer (*Od.* 12.85ff.) with *skylax*, a young dog'.

<sup>21</sup> G. Massimilla, *Callimachus Aetia 1–2* (Pisa, 1996), 374–5 on fr. 63, places it tentatively in the first book. There are a number of reasons to suspect that the *ciris* version of the story found in Virgil, Ovid and the *Ciris*, is a Hellenistic creation, perhaps going back to the *Aetia* fragment tentatively restored by Pfeiffer, or to some other source. Critics often point to the heavily artistic and neoteric character of the Scylla passage in *G.* 1. Cf. R.F. Thomas, *Virgil Georgics 1–2* (Cambridge, 1988), 136 on 1.404–9: 'such concinnity and striving for visual effect is a mark of neoteric, rather than Virgilian, poetry'.

<sup>22</sup> Discussion in N.M. Horsfall, 'Virgil, Parthenius and the art of mythological reference', *Vergilius* 37 (1991), 31–6, at 34. In general, on etymological games in the Hellenistic period, see O'Hara (n.1 [1996]), 21–42. For a specific example, cf. the play between *Argos* / *Argo* in Catull. 64.4–9, and see R.F. Thomas, 'Catullus and the polemics of poetic reference', *AJP* 103 (1982), 144–64, at 148–52.

Scylla from *skylax* which is first found in Homer, Callimachus, I suggest, is here making a characteristically learned allusion to a conflated version of her story in which she is transformed into a barking sea monster as a punishment for her lasciviousness. The truthfulness of her name does not simply suggest her lascivious nature, but rather points forward to the Homeric monster and prophesizes the Megarian Scylla's subsequent transformation into the sea creature known from the *Odyssey*.

Evidence for the existence of a conflated version of Scylla to which Callimachus might be alluding gains further support from careful analysis of the sources. It has not thus far adequately been noticed how the conflation, much criticized by the poet of the *Ciris*, might actually serve a specific aetiological purpose. For there is at least one important point of contact between Scylla, the daughter of Nisus, and her Homeric counterpart. According to a scholium to Dionysius Perigetes, Parthenius of Nicaea told the story of how Minos, upon learning of Scylla's betrayal, tied her to his ship's rudder and 'left her to be dragged (σύρεσθαι) along in the sea, whence the sea is called "Saronic"'.<sup>23</sup> Now, according to Eustathius, in Parthenius Scylla was changed into a bird.<sup>24</sup> Yet, as the author of the *Ciris* is quick to notice, the natural step for Scylla, upon being dragged along the sea by Minos, would have been to change into a sea creature rather than a bird:

Sed tamen aeternam squamis uestire puellam  
Infidosque inter teneram committere pisces  
Non statuit (nimium est auidum pecus Amphitrites) (Ciris 484–6)

A scholium to Euripides' *Hippolytus* relates the same aetiology of the Saronic gulf found in Parthenius but explains that after falling into the sea, Scylla, daughter of Nisus, 'became a beast and did not change her own nature at all' (*Sch. in Eur. Hipp.* 1200: ἐκπεσοῦσα δὲ ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ καὶ θηρίον γενομένη τὴν οἰκείαν φύσιν μετέβαλεν οὐδαμῶς). It is quite tempting to see in the word θηρίον a reference not to the elegant *ciris*, but rather to the monstrous Homeric Scylla.<sup>25</sup> Parthenius and his anonymous Roman follower seem to be correcting an alternative version in which Scylla, daughter of Nisus, was turned into the Homeric sea monster in the process of being dragged across the sea.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, Virgil's description of the Homeric Scylla in *Aeneid* 3 would seem to support the existence of a version in which Nisus' daughter is turned into the sea monster by being dragged. In describing Scylla's destructive action against the ships at 3.424–5, Virgil uses the verb *traho*:

At Scyllam caecis cohibet spelunca latebris  
Ora exsertantem et nauis in saxa trahentem.

Here, Scylla's drawing in of the ships makes up for her being dragged in the sea by Minos (cf. Propertius 3.19.26, *pendet Cretaea tracta puella rate*; *Ciris* 390, *per mare*

<sup>23</sup> Lightfoot fr. 24 a. Text and translation of the fragment from her edition.

<sup>24</sup> Lightfoot fr. 24 b, εἰς ὄρνεον μετεβλήθη.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Eur. *Med.* 1342–3: τῆς Τυρσηνίδος Σκύλλης ἔχουσιν ἀγριωτέραν φύσιν; Sen. *Med.* 407–8: quae ferarum immanitas, quae Scylla, quae Charybdis; Catull. 60.5 nimis fero corde of the lover to whom Scylla is mother.

<sup>26</sup> R.O.A.M. Lyne, *Ciris. A Poem attributed to Virgil* (Cambridge, 1978), 299 on 484ff. agrees that the author of the *Ciris* is dismissing the variant of the story in which Scylla is metamorphosed into a fish, for which see below.

*caeruleum trahitur Niseia uirgo*). The Megarian Scylla, once dragged in the sea, executes her revenge by dragging the unfortunate sailors who sail past her.

Finally, Servius *ad Aen.* 6.286 attests to the existence of a version in which Scylla was turned into a fish, as distinct from another version in which she was turned into a bird.<sup>27</sup> He is commenting on Virgil's use of the plural *Scyllae biformes* in his description of the monsters at the gates of *Dis*:

Bene plurali usus est numero: nam et illa Nisi secundum alios in auem conuersa est, secundum alios in piscem.

It is relevant to note here that the passage in *Odyssey* 12 containing the description of Scylla was a *locus conclamatus* of Homeric criticism and one that was therefore likely to invite ingenious interpretative approaches. The evidence from the scholia shows that ancient commentators were somewhat puzzled by the barking voice of the Homeric Scylla and some went as far as deleting the lines in *Odyssey* 12 containing the description of Scylla.<sup>28</sup> The story of the daughter of Nisus' transformation into the Homeric monster provides an aetiology for the sea creature's canine features, now explained as reminders of the bitch-like character of the monster's former self. This phenomenon, whereby a character is punished by being turned into a bird or plant whose name and features evoke the very sin for which they are paying, is a common one.<sup>29</sup> This conflated version of Scylla would have found support in the tradition of reading the Homeric Scylla as a symbol of shamelessness as attested by the *Homeric Allegories* of Heraclitus, according to whom Scylla represents an allegory of *ἀναιδεια*.<sup>30</sup> The allegorical interpretation of the Homeric Scylla's canine features as symbols of shamelessness thus provides a readily available connection with the lustful Megarian heroine.

To sum up, I have argued that in the *Hecale* fragment Callimachus constructs or alludes to an unusual, learned version of the story in which the Megarian Scylla is turned into the sea monster known from *Odyssey* 12 by being dragged across the sea by Minos. Far from being a 'mistake', this conflated variant, as I have suggested, explains the barking voice of the Homeric Scylla as a reminder of the character's former wickedness and shamelessness.

What remains to be examined is the purpose served by the Callimachean reference in *Eclogue* 6, to which I now return. The passage concerning Scylla and Philomela, which represents the concluding section of Silenus' song and as such arguably occupies a prominent position, gains added emphasis by Virgil's refusal to tell the

<sup>27</sup> The painter Androcydes of Cyzicus was famous for the meticulous care with which he depicted the fish surrounding Scylla in a painting representing her story: Ath. 8.341a; Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* 4.665d. In art, the Homeric Scylla is often represented with the torso of a beautiful maiden and the lower body half-made of dogs and half-made of fish, as in the Scylla group from Tiberius' villa in Sperlonga: G.B. Waywell, 'Scylla nell'arte antica', in B. Andreae, C. Parisi Presicce (edd.), *Ulisse. Il Mito e la Memoria* (Rome, 1996), 108–19.

<sup>28</sup> The problem seemed to have been reconciling Scylla's terrifying cry with her puppy-like voice. See *Schol. in Od.* 12.86: *ἐνθεν αὐτῇ κυνῶν μὲν κεφαλὰς οἱ νεώτεροι περιέπλασαν. ἀθετοῦνται δὲ σίχοι τρεῖς. πῶς γὰρ ἡ δεινὸν λελακυῖα δύναται νεογνοῦ σκύλακος φωνὴν ἔχειν; δύναται δὲ τὸ ὅση ἀντὶ τοῦ οἷα κείσθαι, ἵνα μὴ πρὸς τὸ μέγεθος, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὴν ὁμοιότητα εἴῃ ἡ παραβολή.*

<sup>29</sup> Myers (n. 5), 37–9.

<sup>30</sup> Heraclitus, *Alleg. Hom.* 70.11, *Σκύλλαν δὲ τὴν πολύμορφον ἀναιδείαν ἡλληγόρησε, διὸ δὴ κύνας οὐκ ἀλόγως ὑπέζωσται προτομαῖς ἀρπαγῇ, τόλμῃ καὶ πλεονεξίᾳ πεφραγμέναις.* Cf. also Eustathius in *Od.* 2.8.40, and see N.M. Horsfall, *Virgil, Aeneid 3* (Leiden, 2006), 317 on *Aen.* 3.427.



story in full. For the *praeteritio* (*quid loquar*), which prominently marks the transition to the final section of Silenus' song, seemingly advertises the fact that the poet is glossing over a story that has already been told.<sup>31</sup> If we assume that Virgil found the conflated version of the story of Scylla in Callimachus, the rhetorical question could be interpreted as genuine: what need is there to tell a story that has already been told?<sup>32</sup> On a different level, however, the *praeteritio* is markedly ironic and self-referential: by stating that there is no need to tell the relatively obscure tale of Nisus' Scylla's transformation into a sea monster, Virgil draws attention precisely to the fact that he is using an untraditional and somewhat controversial version of the story.<sup>33</sup> From a rhetorical and formal point of view, the *praeteritio*, with its apparent rejection of Scylla and Philomela as appropriate subjects of poetry, links the end of Silenus' song to the main narrative frame, and specifically to the *recusatio* at the beginning of the poem in which the speaker similarly, albeit for different reasons, declines to sing about a specific topic (*reges et proelia*).<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the conflated Scylla of lines 74–7 with its Callimachean background nicely balances the beginning of the poem (*cum canerem* ..., 2–5), which opens with an adaptation of the *Aetia* prologue (fr. 1.23–4 Pf.). Indeed, Virgil advertises his dependence on a model in several conspicuous ways. First, the reference to *fama* in line 74 can be regarded as an instance of the so-called 'Alexandrian footnote', a device whereby the alluding poet draws attention to his use of a learned source.<sup>35</sup> It may also serve as a distancing device, giving a clue to the reader that the poet does not necessarily endorse the conflated version.<sup>36</sup>

Virgil, however, is undoubtedly doing more than paying homage to his Hellenistic predecessor. Servius, confronted with the 'mistake' raised by the text, had already argued that the Virgilian Scylla was either a case of poetic licence (*poetarum more*) or a compressed allusion to both stories (*hysteron proteron*), that of the Homeric Scylla and that of Nisus' Scylla.<sup>37</sup> Besides the 'mistakes', what has attracted the attention of commentators is the somewhat strained syntax of the passage. The meaning of *secuta*

<sup>31</sup> On *praeteritio* as a transitional device, see R. Gibson, *Ovid Ars Amatoria Book 3* (Cambridge, 2003), 164 on 3.169–70, *quid de ueste loquar?*: 'the transition to a new subject is signposted with the self-referential question commonly used in didactic verse in these contexts'. For discussion of this passage, see Z. Stewart, 'The song of Silenus', *HSCP* 64 (1959), 179–205, at 195–6.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Virgil, *G. 1. 104 quid dicam ...?* introducing a markedly Homeric passage describing a river flood. Thomas (n. 21), 84–5 on 1.104–10, describes the passage as 'the first of many extended literary adaptations in the poem'.

<sup>33</sup> For this ironic use of *praeteritio* to highlight mythological innovations, see, for example, Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 3.311–4: *Κίρκην ἑσπερίης εἴσω χθονός, ἐκ δ' ἰκόμεσθα / ἀκτὴν ἠπείρου Τυρσηνίδος, ἐνθ' ἔτι νῦν περ / ναιετάει, μάλα πολλὸν ἀπόπροθι Κολχίδος αἴης. / ἀλλὰ τί μύθων ἦδος*; where the rhetorical question (τί μύθων ἦδος) emphasizes Apollonius' use of a recondite version of Circe's story: see R.L. Hunter, *Argonautica Book 3* (Cambridge, 1989), 134 on 3.314. Cf. 3.1096–9 where Jason glosses over the story of Ariadne with a similar rhetorical question. See also, Eur. *Hel.* 142–3: *σφαγαῖς ἀδελφῆς οὐνεκ' ἐκπνεῦσαι βίον. ἄλις δὲ μύθων*. R.J. Tarrant, 'Roads not taken: untold stories in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*', *MD* 54 (2005), 65–89, at 66–7, similarly notices Ovid's tendency to display his *doctrina* by explicitly suppressing as well-known stories that are just as recondite as the ones he chooses to tell.

<sup>34</sup> On the similarity between *praeteritio* and *recusatio*, see Tarrant (n. 33), 67.

<sup>35</sup> For the term, see D.O. Ross, *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry: Gallus, Elegy and Rome* (Cambridge, 1975), 78.

<sup>36</sup> N.M. Horsfall, *Virgilio. L'epopea in alambicco* (Naples, 1990), 126; cf. *Ciris* 54–91 with Lyne (n. 26), 125 on 54–91.

<sup>37</sup> Servius ad *Ecl.* 6.74: *modo ergo Vergilius aut poetarum more miscuit fabulas et nomen posuit pro nomine, ut diceret 'Scyllam Nisi' pro 'Phorci' ... aut certe sit hysteronproteron, ut quasi utriusque fabulae uideatur facere commemorationem*.

*est* in line 74 has caused the most problems. Is it the *fama* who has pursued Scylla ('Scylla who has been pursued by the story that she attacked ...')? Or is *sequi* being used intransitively ('as *fama* subsequently developed')?<sup>38</sup> The harshness of the syntax, I argue, is no mistake: the notion of *fama* pursuing Scylla implicitly refers to the omitted version in which Nisus pursues (*insequitur*, *G.* 1.408) Scylla, as Wendell Clausen already hinted at in his commentary.<sup>39</sup> This learned game whereby a poet chooses one account of a story but subtly alludes to the omitted version is paralleled in Ovid's treatment of Scylla's legend.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the verb *sequi*, which is often applied to an author's relationship to his sources, draws attention to the process of artistic *imitatio*.<sup>41</sup>

So far I hope to have shown that in *Eclogue* 6 Virgil is following a version of the story which conflates the two Scyllas and which retrospectively explains the Homeric barking sea monster as the product of the transformation of Nisus' daughter. This account, which, as I have argued, he may well have found in Callimachus' *Hecale*, is in competition with another version in which Scylla, daughter of Nisus, is metamorphosed into a bird, a version which Virgil does not explicitly adopt but implicitly acknowledges.

Virgil's 'mistakes' in this passage, however, do not end with Scylla. It has long been noticed that Virgil refers to Philomela when mention of her sister Procne would be expected.<sup>42</sup>

aut ut mutatos Terei narrauerit artus,  
quas illi Philomela dapes, quae dona pararit,  
quo cursu deserta petiuerit et quibus ante  
infelix sua tecta super uolitaueit alis? (Virgil, *Ecl.* 6.78–81)

Traditionally, it was Procne, Tereus' wife, who punished her husband for the brutal rape of her sister Philomela by serving him their son Itys for supper.<sup>43</sup> Virgil, on the other hand, makes Philomela, not Procne, the avenger.<sup>44</sup> In the Greek tradition,

<sup>38</sup> The translation is from R. Coleman, *Virgil Eclogues* (Cambridge, 1977), 199 on *Ecl.* 6.74–5. J. Conington and H. Nettleship, *The Works of Virgil* (London, 1883–98), 82–3 on *Ecl.* 6.74, speaks of the phrase *quam fama secuta est* as a 'tame and unmeaning parenthesis'.

<sup>39</sup> W. Clausen, *Virgil Eclogues* (Oxford, 1994), 205 on *Ecl.* 6.74.

<sup>40</sup> Degli Innocenti Pierini (n. 4); Hinds (n. 4).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Lucr. *DRN* 3.3 (of Epicurus) *te sequor, o Graiae gentis decus*; Plin. *Ep.* 7.30.5 (of Demosthenes) *Quam sane, cum componerem illos, habui in manibus, non ut aemularer – improbum enim ac paene furiosum –, sed tamen imitarer et sequerer*. See A. Reiff, *Interpretatio, Imitatio, Aemulatio. Begriff und Vorstellung literarischer Abhängigkeit bei den Römern* (Inaugural Diss., Cologne, 1953), 107–8.

<sup>42</sup> See Thomas (n. 1), 670 = 289. A version of the story in which Philomela, and not Procne, is Tereus' wife is posited by Clausen (n. 39), 206 on 78–81: 'as in the case of the two Scyllas, an ambiguous tradition permitted V. to conflate the roles of the two sisters'. A. Hudson-Williams, 'Some passages in Virgil's *Eclogues*', *CQ* 30 (1980), 124–32, at 130, proposes to see Philomela as a 'composite figure, symbolizing the two sisters'. More recently, in discussing *Ecl.* 6, S.J. Harrison, *Generic Enrichment in Virgil and Horace* (Oxford, 2007), 57, points to a fragment of Parthenius (fr. 33 Lightfoot) which, however, refers to the standard story of the nightingale's mourning for her dead son.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Ov. *Met.* 6.412–74. D. Hurley, 'Ovid, *Met.* 6.640: a dialogue between mother and son', *CQ* 47 (1997), 320–2, has a useful discussion of the episode and of Ovid's adaptation of the tragic version of Tereus' and Procne's story.

<sup>44</sup> In line 79 it is Philomela who is serving Itys' remains. In Ovid it is Tereus' wife (Procne) who initiates the feast: *Met.* 6.647–9. There is some disagreement as to the subject of *uolitaueit* in line 81. The epithet *infelix* would seem to apply more naturally to Tereus but the change of subject is harsh. It is thus better to take Philomela as the subject of lines 78–81.



Procne is known as Tereus' wife and she is transformed into a nightingale, who is often represented in the act of mourning her son Itys (or Itylus). Philomela, on the other hand, is known as Procne's sister and she is transformed into a swallow.<sup>45</sup> In the Roman tradition, the identities of the swallow and nightingale respectively are often reversed, with Philomela being referred to as the nightingale (Virgil, *G.* 4.511–15) and Procne as the swallow (Ovid, *Fast.* 2.853–6; *Ars Am.* 2.383 and *Tr.* 3.12.9). In an effort to explain this curious switch, scholars have invoked a folk etymology of Φιλομήλα as 'she who loves song' (μέλος).<sup>46</sup> The folk etymology would certainly support a revised version in which the character of Philomela is transformed into a nightingale, a bird to whom poets often compare themselves, particularly in the Hellenistic period.<sup>47</sup> If so, this folk etymology of the name Philomela might also invite the reader of *Eclogue* 6 to gloss the word *artus* (78) with the Greek μέλη, which means both limb and song.<sup>48</sup> Now, in addition to the unexpected role assigned to Philomela, Virgil has significantly altered the narrative order of events: the final stage of the story, namely Tereus' transformation (*mutatos artus*), is mentioned first, followed by the middle stage, the ill-omened banquet (*dapes*). The prominent reference to Tereus' transformed limbs (*mutatos artus*) which opens the very last section of the song should then be read as a self-conscious commentary by Virgil on his use of modified versions of myths, as well as on his appropriation and transformation of poetic models in the poem as a whole.

The passage devoted to Scylla and Philomela represents the concluding section of Silenus' song. The *carmen*, which opened with the story of the creation of the world and the change and combination of elements to create shapes (*rerum paulatim sumere formas*, 36), appropriately ends with the two stories of Scylla and Philomela, whose main characters are subject to change and transformation. But, by his bold adoption of innovative and unusual variants of myths in this passage, Virgil further thematizes change and innovation not just as a subject for his poetry, but as a poetic strategy and as a way to approach the tradition. It is appropriate, therefore, that in this final passage, creation is not an act of God or nature happening in a void (*magnum per inane*, 31). Instead, the *mutati artus* of Scylla and Philomela, coming as they do after Gallus' poetic initiation, focus the attention of the reader on poetry's power to change, recreate and refashion the mythical past.

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<sup>45</sup> See F. Bömer, *P. Ovidius Naso Metamorphosen: Kommentar, Buch VI–VII* (Heidelberg, 1976), 115–19 on *Met.* 6.412–674.

<sup>46</sup> T.E. Page, *Bucolica, Georgica, Aeneis* (London, 1895), 148; Coleman (n. 38), 200–1 on 6.78. Further discussion in W. Frentz, *Mythologisches in Vergils Georgica* (Meisenheim, 1967), 93–7.

<sup>47</sup> Callim. *Aet. fr.* 1.16 (restored by Pfeiffer) and *Epigr.* 34. Cf. *Ov. Am.* 2.6.7–10.

<sup>48</sup> *Artus* is sometimes glossed as Greek μέλος: *Gramm. Lat.* 4.578.20. In addition, similarly to *membrum*, which can apply to a physical as well as to a literary entity, poets sometimes ascribe to their own *artus* the qualities of their poetry: e.g. *Ov. Am.* 2.10.23 *graciles non sunt sine uiribus artus*; *Tib.* 2.3.9 *nec querer quod sol graciles exueret artus*; *Prop.* 2.22A.21–2 *sed tibi si exilis uideor tenuatus in artus / falleris*. On the ancient practice of employing body parts to refer to grammatical and rhetorical units, see further G.W. Most, 'Disiecti membra poetae: the rhetoric of dismemberment in Neronian poetry', in R. Hexter and D. Selden, *Innovations of Antiquity* (New York, 1992), 391–419, at 406–7.