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## OVID, *METAMORPHOSES* 5,254–6,2, AND THE TERMS FOR THE MUSES IN GREEK AND ROMAN CULTURE

ABSTRACT: Mojsik Tomasz, *Ovid, 'Metamorphoses' 5,254–6,2, and the Terms for the Muses in Greek and Roman Culture* (Owidiusz, *Metamorfozy* 5,254–6,2 i określenia Muz w kulturze grecko-rzymskiej).

The article analyzes the epithets and terms used by Ovid for the Muses in Book V of the *Metamorphoses* (5,254–6,2). In conclusion, I propose to read the poet's choices as a voice in the discussion on the early history of the Muses and the emergence of metapoetic geography.

Keywords: Ovid; *Metamorphoses*; Muses; myth; metapoetic language; Helicon; Pieria

In Homer's *Iliad*, the Muses are described as dwelling on Olympus (*Il.* 2,484: Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι). Hesiod already uses two spatial terms tying the Muses with both Olympus (*Th.* 25: Μοῦσαι Ὀλυμπιάδες, κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο) and Helicon, close to the narrator. The term *Heliconiades* is used for the first time in Hesiod and in ancient literature, in general. It appears as early as line 1 of the epic – Μουσῶων Ἑλικωνιάδων ἀρχώμεθ' ἀεΐδειν – when the poet summons the local Muses, who are dancing on the mountain slopes near Ascrea.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the term *Pierides*, sc. living in Macedonian Pieria, at the foot of Olympus, which in later literature is among the most frequent references to the Muses of Olympus, appears much later, as late as in Ps-Hesiodic *Scutum* (206) and in Safona (fr. 103 Voigt). In the Augustan poets, however, especially in Virgil's bucolics, the latter term became so common that it lost the value of an epithet and became a symbol of the Muses in general, with no clear connection to space in Macedonia.

These three terms – *Olympiades*, *Pierides* and *Heliconiades* – would become canonical phrases for the Muses in ancient culture and bear upon spatial orientation / representation in depicting the goddesses. In Roman times, these 'mountain' references to the Muses would be complemented by Mount

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<sup>1</sup> Later instances see e.g. *Ib.* S151,24 PMGF; *Pi.* fr. 52h,19.

Parnassus, which would then go on to have a staggering career in European culture.<sup>2</sup> This can be seen both in the phraseology (to climb or conquer Mount Parnassus, *gradus ad Parnassum*) and in the way the Muses are depicted in art, starting with Raphael's *Il Parnasso*. Today, the Muses, as literature or art in general, reside on Parnassus, even if Hesiod and Callimachus would find this choice surprising.

But the ancient metapoetic repertoire is much more extensive than the image of the Muses dancing on peaks or mountainsides, especially when we analyze this phenomenon from a diachronic perspective to notice chronological changes, and literary fashions, as well as the influences from the generic convention, audience and local colour. Other commonly deployed phrases include references to their external appearance, origin, voice/sound/song, spatial references, such as springs or rivers, and phrases indicating their religious or social functions.<sup>3</sup> Among the most common are references to their dancing and singing choir, we also encounter such terms as “fellow citizens”, “like-minded”, “stepsisters” or local “Ardalides”.<sup>4</sup> There are also instances of seemingly confusing and erroneous epithets, especially in the case of spatial references.<sup>5</sup> My use of the word “seemingly” is deliberate here for the simple reason that the metapoetic language does not need to conform to the conventional obligations of geographical correspondence. Muses can be at the same time both from Helicon and Pieria, while the terms used and accrued over time have sometimes more in common with the literary tradition than specific topographies. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that such ‘mistakes’ and casual use of spatial cross-references become characteristic, especially in the literature of Roman times, and proliferate in scholarly criticism.<sup>6</sup>

Despite such a rich repertoire, most poets limit the number of terms for the Muses – two or three at most – and avoid the accumulation of epithets. Nor are we familiar with many hymns to the goddesses, for which such an accretion of epithets would be characteristic. It is true that three hymns to the Muses have survived – Homeric (25), Orphic (76) and one by Neoplatonic Proclus – but they

<sup>2</sup> See Schröter 1977.

<sup>3</sup> Muses as daughters, virgins, mothers: Hes. *Th.* 25 (κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο); Pi. *N.* 3.1 (ᾧ πότνια Μοῖσα, μάτερ ἀμετέρη); N. 3,10 (θύγατερ); I 6,75 (κόραι); I.8,57 (Ἑλικώνια παρθένοι). Muses' appearance: Bacch. 9.2 (Μουσαῖν ἰοβλεφάρων); Pi. *O.* 6.91 (ἠὺκόμων Μοισαῖν); I.1,1–2 (ἰοπλοκάμων Μοισαῖν); I.1,12 (βαθυκόλων τε Μοισαῖν). Muses' voice and sound: Pi. *O.* 13,22 (Μοῖσ' ἀδύπνοος). Other instances: Pi. I.8,6 (χρυσέαν Μοῖσαν); Ar. *Ran.* 865–6 (ἀγναί / Μοῦσαι).

<sup>4</sup> *Fellow-citizens* (πολιῆτιδες): Posidipp. 118 AB; *like-minded* (ὁμόφρονας): Hes. *Th.* 60, see Serv. comm. in Verg. *Aen.* 1.8. *Ardalides*: Paus. 2.31.3; *σύντροφοι*: Athen. 341b–d (Machon [9,79–80 Gow] about poet Philoxenos).

<sup>5</sup> See German. *Arat.* 218: “in Pierio Helicone”; Auson. 19,51: “Lesbia Pieriis Sappho soror addita Musis, / εἰμ' ἐνάτη λυρικῶν, ᾿Αονίδων δεκάτη”.

<sup>6</sup> See Ioannes Pediasimus, *Schol. in Hes. Scut.* 630,17: Αἱ Μοῦσαι δὲ αἰ ἐν τῇ Πιερίᾳ τῷ ὄρει τῶν Θηβῶν κατοικοῦσαι.

contain only idiosyncratic authorial terms or standard epithets, commonly used to describe other gods as well.

In this context, Ovid's approach in the *Metamorphoses* is distinct. Indeed, in Book V, in the scene when Minerva/Athena meets the Muses on Helicon and in the description of the poetic contest with Pierus' daughters, as many as 7 different terms for the Muses appear, most of which have spatial associations. In addition, two of these terms appear here for the first time in the known ancient testimonies. Leaving aside the musical agon itself, together with its implications and the adventure with Pyreneus, the subsequent discussion will concentrate solely on the image of the Muses and the connotations of the epithets used in the text.<sup>7</sup> A close reading will allow a better understanding of this complex scene and the poet's choices.

Let us begin by considering Ovid's characteristic approach to the Muses as traditional metapoetic symbols. In most works by the poet, but especially in the early pieces, we encounter a traditional image of the goddesses of inspiration. Ovid invokes "genialis Musa" (*Amores* 3.15.19), "mea Musa" (*Fasti* 2.359), "Musa praesentia numina vatum" (*Met.* 15.622).<sup>8</sup> However, in certain parts of his oeuvre, the poet clearly tests the limits of metapoetic language, challenges established patterns and seeks new paths. This is particularly well demonstrated in the *Metamorphoses*, where in the initial lines of the invocation, he first addresses the soul ("fert animus") and then the gods in general ("di... adspirate").<sup>9</sup> As is usually believed, the omission of a traditional pattern and this unconventional form of invocation reflects the innovation of the *Metamorphoses* as an epic à rebours (Johnson 2008). The invocation in this form is almost programmatic for the work and encourages the reader to read attentively. Ultimately, instead of traditional tales of transformation affirming the established world order, in the *Metamorphoses* the reader will receive a wayward tale that highlights pervasive violence and the abuse of power that goes with the position.

The poet's innovative choices in the first lines of the epic by no means indicate that Ovid erased the Muses from the work. On the contrary, the *Metamorphoses* contains perhaps the most elaborate ancient story about the goddesses, which in terms of literary significance can be placed right after Hesiod's descriptions. Its popularity can be illustrated by the fact that the scene of the poetic contest (*Met.* 5,254–6,2) and the transformation of the false Pierides into magpies is recalled, for example, by Dante in the *Divine Comedy. Purgatory* in its first lines includes the summoning of the Muses:

<sup>7</sup>On other aspects of the duel scene, see comm. ad loc. in Bömer 1976 and Rosati, Chiarini 2009; Johnson 2008.

<sup>8</sup>See Johnson, Malamud 1988; Sharrock 2002; Johnson 2008, esp. 72–73 and n. 84.

<sup>9</sup>Ov. *Met.* 1,1–4: "In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas / corpora; di, coeptis (nam vos mutastis et illas) / adspirate meis primaque ab origine mundi / ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen".

Here, O ye hallow'd Nine! for in your train  
 I follow, here the deadened strain revive;  
 Nor let Calliope refuse to sound  
 A somewhat higher song, of that loud tone,  
 Which when the wretched birds of chattering note  
 Had heard, they of forgiveness lost all hope. [transl. The Rev. H. F. Cary, M.A.]

Ovid disguises his tale of the musical contest as a transformation narrative, fashionable since the Hellenistic period. In the process, he also touches upon other important themes of metapoetic imagery, including, for example, the relationship between music and the natural world. The story suggests that, while it is true that birds sing, it is not the Muses, nor is it *mousikē*, and some birds only squawk.<sup>10</sup> One can also sense that the story deals, as is common in the *Metamorphoses*, with the concept of power, and that the meaning of the story of transformation is far less innocent than it initially appears. Johnson also points out (2008, 41–73) that the contest scene is one of five statements in the *Metamorphoses* concerning the creative process, its functions, context and limitations. The turning of the “Pierides” into magpies continues in the competition between Minerva and Arachne, and the work also contains extensive passages about Daedalus, Pygmalion and Orpheus.

The very scene of the rivalry between the Muses and “Pierides” is usually analyzed because of the songs performed by one of Pierus’ daughters and by Calliope. Less attention has been paid to the image of the Muses and to the connotations of the terms chosen by the poet. And there is much to study, indeed, since the description of the meeting contains an accumulation of terms and epithets to be found in no other ancient work. Beginning with v. 254, the Muses and Pseudo-Muses are referred to as *Mnemonides*, *doctae sorores*, *Thespiades*, [*Pierides*], *deae Heliconae colentes*, *Emathides* or *Aonides*. Some of these terms, such as *Aonides* or *Emathides*, appear in the *Metamorphoses* for the first time in the known and existing ancient works.

Minerva’s visit to Helicon constitutes a framework for the entire storyline. Like a tourist, she wishes to see Hippocrene, the water spring that recently emerged on the slopes of the virgin mountain (“virgineumque Heliconae petit” [v. 254]). Interestingly, the phrase “virgineus Helicon” is used in the *Metamorphoses* for the second time (earlier in: 2,219; cf. 5,274: “virgineam mentem”). In both cases, the phrase suggests the ancientness of the place and indicates that the action is situated at the very origins.<sup>11</sup> A similar inference can be drawn from the contest scene (v. 311–313), when one of Pierus’ daughters proposes that the winner of the competition take possession of both Helicon and Pieria. Thus, we are in the primeval time, when the Muses are nothing but local virgins from

<sup>10</sup> About the relationship between the Muses and the natural world, see recently LeVen 2021.

<sup>11</sup> See McPhee 2019.

Helicon, and their metapoetic world is still being constructed, or rather, to put it in the language of the Romans: it has not yet been fully conquered.

As McPhee recently pointed out, in these scenes the term *virgineus* may also have other connotations, since “in the early books, the adjective *uirgineus* and the related nouns *uirgo* and *uirginitas* are regularly applied to victims of attempted or perpetrated rape” (McPhee 2019, 773). It is significant, therefore, that in 2,219, next to the “virgin Helicon”, appears the figure of Oeagrus, who, according to tradition, will later beget Orpheus with Calliope. In Book V, on the other hand, the first story of the Muses for Minerva concerns an attempted rape by Pyreneus. Rape will also be the main theme of Calliope’s song during her rivalry with the “Pierides”. In the story, Pyreneus is a Thracian king (v. 276–277), as are Boreas and Tereus, with whom stories of kidnapping and sexual violence are associated. As a result, the term *virgineus Helicon* used in the scene takes on dark connotations, and the whole depiction shows a primordial world in the making. The brutality of the transformation affects even the Muses (and music), and Ovid implicitly points to the contradictory traditional motifs of both the virginity of the goddesses and the numerous stories of their motherhood (Rhesus, Orpheus, Musaeus, etc.). A century later, Pausanias (9,29,4) will argue that the so-called sons of the Muses are in fact the sons of the mortal daughters of Pierus. Ovid’s choices are undoubtedly innovative, but they are also a display of the author’s erudition.

Urania greets Minerva on behalf of the Muses, and she will be the goddess’s guide. The choice of this particular Muse, rather than, for example, the oldest Calliope, is not obvious, but there are many indications that it is deliberate and intertextual. Hinds (1987, 6–16) proved some time ago that the derivation of the entire story from Pegasus and Hippocrene spring is a reference to Aratus’ *Phainomena*, which Ovid was supposed to have translated in his youth. Hinds also showed that the phrase “pedis ictibus” (v. 264) used in the text of the *Metamorphoses* appears in the translation of Aratus by Germanicus (v. 220), and that Book V of the *Metamorphoses* evidently reveals a structural similarity to Aratus’ choices in the *Phainomena* (order: Andromeda – Pegasus). This means that Urania was deliberately chosen as a guide, and it would further suggest astronomical connotations and point to other texts describing transformations. Thus, not only the Muses are “doctae” here, but the poet also flaunts his erudition once again.

The story continues with an anonymous Muse as the narrator (268: “una”), and only Calliope, who represents the Muses in the singing competition, is still referred to by name. Her leading role in the choir, foremost of the Muses, has been traditionally acknowledged since the time of Hesiod (*Th.* 79: Καλλιόπη θ>ή δὲ προφερεστάτη ἐστὶν ἀπασέων). This fact is also confirmed by the Muse-narrator herself, who explains at the end of the story that Calliope is “e nobis maxima” (v. 662).

The above considerations allow us now to move on to a selection of direct terms for the Muses in Book V of the *Metamorphoses*. At the very beginning of the story, in line 255, the goddesses are called “doctae sorores” (“learned sisters”). The term *sorores* conveys the idea of the girls’ kinship and their collective action as a chorus. In this form, it is a traditional term and more common in Latin literature than the Greek *θυγατέρες*.<sup>12</sup> For several reasons, the adjective *doctae* is more interesting. First, it has no clear Greek antecedent, and in Latin poetry it becomes one of the more important metapoetic terms.<sup>13</sup> At the end of Book V, Calliope’s song will also be described as “learned” (v. 666 – “doctus cantus”).<sup>14</sup>

In addition, while we notice the lack of a simple Greek equivalent, designating the Muses and poetry in this way is undoubtedly rooted in Greek culture. It evokes the instant connotations with the learned poetry of Alexandria, which in Roman literature is certainly the key source of inspiration for this way of describing the Muses. Let us recall here, for instance, that Callimachus (fr. 612) states he does not sing anything that is not affirmed.<sup>15</sup> The close connection between the Muses, education and intellectual development also provides additional context, evidence of which can be found in the iconography of the Classical era, the goddesses’ protection of literacy, and the Alexandrian Mouseion and library.<sup>16</sup> As Strabon (10,3,10) formulates it in *Geography*: “all educated people are servants of the Muses” (πρόπολοι δὲ τῶν Μουσῶν οἱ πεπαιδευμένοι πάντες). On the other hand, when Cicero in the *Tusculan Disputations* (5.23) compares Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse, with Archimedes, whose tomb he found during his quaestorship in Sicilia, he concludes: “cum Musis id est cum humanitate et cum doctrina” (“with the Muses, that is to say with liberal education and refinement” [transl. J.E. King]).

Another term for the Muses that we encounter in the work is *Mnemonides* in line 268. The narrator presents Minerva’s comment after visiting the site of Helicon: “felicesque vocat pariter studioque locoque / Mnemonidas” (“Fortunate, she said, the daughters of Memory were alike in their pursuits and in their home”). The epithet reemerges later as a form of addressing the Muses by Pyreneus, the Thracian king; the Muses comment in return: “cognorat enim” (“for he recognized us”). This term may be derived from the very origin of the

<sup>12</sup> *Sorores*: Tib. 3,4,45; Manilius, *Astron.* 2,49;

<sup>13</sup> The only parallel can be Μοῖσαι σεσοφισ]μέναι (Ib. fr. 282,23 PMG). I am indebted for this observation to Janek Kwapisz. Examples in Latin literature: Cat. 65,2: “doctae uirgines”; Tib. 3,4,45: “doctae sorores”; Ov. *Tr.* 2,13; *Buc. Einsidl.* 1,35: “doctarum turba sororum”; Mart. 10,58,6: “doctae Pierides”; Manilius, *Astron.* 2,49: “doctae sorores”; cf. Hor. *c.* 1,1,29: “doctae frontes” (sc. of the poet); Propert. 1,7,11: “docta puella” (about Cynthia).

<sup>14</sup> See also Ov. *Met.* 5,308: according to Pierus’ daughters, the Muses cheat “indoctum vulgus”.

<sup>15</sup> See Bing 1988.

<sup>16</sup> See Queyrel 1988; MacLeod 2000.

Muses, namely the Titaness Mnemosyne (Hes. *Th.* 52–57), which would mean that the *Mnemonides* are simply “daughters of Mnemosyne”.<sup>17</sup>

This otherwise unknown name of *Mnemonides* – the so-called patronymic being in this case derived from the mother’s name, which is also uncommon in ancient culture – evokes the question of genealogy, as it is one of the determinants of the suffix -id. Let us note at this point that this is the first but not the only term with the suffix -id/-ad that refers to the Muses in this scene of the *Metamorphoses*. Such a suffix denotes subordination and collectivity, as well as spatial or, most significantly, genealogical aspects.<sup>18</sup> A meticulous reading of the entire array of terms for the Muses in this scene of the *Metamorphoses* suggests that Ovid is aware of the linguistic ambiguity, and that he uses this uncertainty (genealogy or space?) for literary purposes. The term *Mnemonides* seems to have a strong genealogical dominant, but other terms – *Thespiades*, [*Pierides*], *Aonides*, *Emathides* – have a definitive geographical association. It seems as if the poet simultaneously posed the question of the precise origin of the Muses and their fatherland (motherland?). It is worth noting at this point that the very phrase “virgineus Helicon” suggested that we are at the origins. Consequently, are we dealing with a poetic voice in the discussion about the origins of the Muses (and literature)?

However, since we are at Helicon (this is where the action of Book V takes place), it is worth recalling that in the local Heliconian tradition, Mneme is the name of one of the Muses. Pausanias, who recounts it, presents the story as follows (9,29,1–3):

The first to sacrifice on Helicon to the Muses and to call the mountain sacred to the Muses were, they say, Ephialtes and Otus, who also founded Ascra. (...) The sons of Aloeus held that the Muses were three in number, and gave them the names of Melete (Practice), Mneme (Memory) and Aoede (Song). But they say that afterwards Pierus, a Macedonian, after whom the mountain in Macedonia was named, came to Thespieae and established nine Muses, changing their names to the present ones. [transl. W. H. S. Jones]

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Auson. 336,30, p. 201 Peiper: *Et lyrici vates numero sunt Mnemosynarum*.

<sup>18</sup> See Calame 1997: 30–32, and especially p. 30: “If the signifiers of these names and their morphology are analyzed, we see that they are almost all derivatives in -id- and -ad-. Semantically, such derivatives are most often characteristic of terms signifying the feminine. The suffix -id- denotes subordination and belonging; it is used to form many patronymics and some terms denoting geographic association. The suffix -ad- is often used to form terms indicating geographic association; it is most often found in the names of groups of women who serve a god or goddess (Dryads, Orestiads, Maenads, etc.)” See also p. 31: “A geographic designation is also given to the Muses, who are often called the Pierides, the daughters of Pieria if not Olympiades, daughters of Olympos or Helikoniades, daughters of Helicon. (...) The signifiers in -id- and -ad- therefore often include the semantic features ‘female’ and ‘collective’ and always the feature ‘geographical/family association.’ Used in the context of a choral performance, the bond between the chorus members created by age is widened by the bond of their common origin”.

Undoubtedly, this story is a game of precedence: three Muses or nine; which names are older; who was the first to make them offerings; who dedicated Helicon to the goddesses? Similarly to the contest between the Heliconiades and the “Pierides” in Ovid, we are dealing with the figure of Pierus. However, in the account by the inhabitants of the Helicon area (9,29,1: λέγουσιν) that Pausanias presents us with, Pierus is not the father of the “Muses”, but a cultural hero who, wandering south, changes the names of the Beotian goddesses to those known from Hesiod’s story. The paradox, at least from our perspective, is that the names introduced by the poet from Heliconian Ascrea turn out to be an innovation brought from outside, from Macedonian Pieria. It remains unclear how this version originated. However, Pausanias’ account proves that there was an ongoing discussion in the ancient world regarding the origin, number and names of the Muses, as well as that there was some sort of rivalry between Pieria and Helicon.

In this context, the rivalry between the Muses of Helicon and Ovid’s false Pierides can be seen from a different perspective. Let us also remember that the name Mneme, which appears in the Helicon tradition, resonates with the term *Mnemonides*, since this epithet means, first and foremost, the “daughters of Mneme”, not “Mnemosyne”. It should also be added that Plutarch’s dialogue on the number of Muses (*Quaest. conv.* 14) informs us that the goddesses are also called *Mneiai*.<sup>19</sup> Of course, we can assume that Mneme is just a derivative form of the name Mnemosyne, but it is worth keeping this local Heliconian tradition in mind.

The phrase *Mnemonides* also has other connotations that stem from the meaning of the mother’s name, which also makes them “daughters of Memory”. It goes without saying that memory plays a role in creating and preserving meanings, and also fame. Let us therefore turn our attention to the connotations of the phrase used in this form by Ovid. Johnson (2008, 45) claims that the entire story of the contest with the “Pierides” is presented in a way that suggests that the victor controls the story, and in other words, the memory of what happened. The song of Calliope is long and detailed, but the song of “Pierides” is very short and apparently presented arbitrarily. The Muse’s account, therefore, does not capture all the details of the competition and is a subjective version of events. Consequently, as victors, the Helicon residents can ‘remember’ whatever they want, and the story and memory of the events depend entirely on their words.<sup>20</sup> *Mnemonides*, the Muses as “daughters of Memory”, may therefore be an ironic and bitter-tasting term. Finally, we should add that the role of memory can also be associated with the earlier term “doctae”, since scholarliness evokes the image

<sup>19</sup>Plut. *quaest conv.* 9, 14, [743d]; see Hesych. *mu* 1488, 1: <μναμονόοι> Μοῦσαι.

<sup>20</sup>See Johnson 2008: 45: “Like Minerva in the weaving contest, the victors control the contest’s, and the Emathides’ subsequent history”.



of the library, knowledge and memory of earlier texts. In Ovid's discussion of the Muses as part of the metapoetic apparatus, calling the goddesses *Mnemonides* results in multiple connotations, including metatextual ones.

The story of the meeting with Pyreneus (v. 268–293) goes beyond the scope of this article. However, we learn from the account by an anonymous Muse that before meeting the Thracian, the goddesses were heading (apparently from Helicon) to Parnas (v. 278: “*templa petebamus Parnasia*”). This spatial reference may suggest an increasing awareness of this mountain range in Roman literature.<sup>21</sup> The information may also allude to the ancient musical competitions at Delphi and anticipate, as it were, another agon, which will be described shortly.

The tale of Pyreneus is suddenly followed by a flurry of wings, a screech of magpies, and the Muse-narrator introduces Minerva (and us) to the story of the contest with Pierus' daughters. She explains the girls' origin in the following way (v. 302–304):

Pieros has genuit Pellaeis dives in arvis,  
Paeonis Euipe mater fuit; illa potentem  
Lucinam noviens, noviens paritura, vocavit.

Their father was rich Pierus, a squire  
Of Pella, and Paeonian Euipe  
Their mother. To her aid nine times she called  
Lucina and nine times she bore a child  
[transl. A.D. Melville]

The way in which the female opponents are portrayed, and especially the nine-fold summoning of Lucina, reminds us of Hesiod's narrative of the birth of the Muses (*Th.* 53–57). And the very derivation from Pierus, in turn, connotes the common in ancient literature term *Pierides*. In this case, however, the *Pierides* turn out to be not the goddesses of Pieria (geographical association), but the daughters of Pierus, king of that land (genealogical meaning).<sup>22</sup> And while the word itself is not mentioned in the text, we clearly feel that in Ovid “*Pierides*”, a respectable epithet with a long literary pedigree, becomes a reproach. Somewhat in the manner of the rationalizing mythographer Palaephatus, Ovid seems to be exploring the ambiguity of the suffix *-id*.

In addition, as other testimonies indicate, this way of understanding the term *Pierides* results from a discussion in the ancient world on the origin of goddesses. Indeed, the Muses as daughters of Pierus and the nymph Pimpleia

<sup>21</sup> See Verg. *Georg.* 3,290–291 (“*sed me Parnasi deserta per ardua dulcis / raptat amor*”); Stat. *Silv.* 4.4; Pers. *Prolog* 1–3 and scholia ad loc., and esp. Comm. Corn. ad Pers. *Prolog.* 2: “*tangit autem Ennium, qui dixit vidisse se somnium in Parnaso Homerum sibi dicentem quod eius anima in suo esse corpora*”.

<sup>22</sup> *Etym. Magn.* 671, 35: <Πιερία>: Ὀνομα τόπου, ἔνθα αἱ Μοῦσαι ἐγεννήθησαν.

appear as early as in Epicharmus, thus in the early fifth century.<sup>23</sup> However, while in that case we are not quite certain in which context this version of the genealogy emerged (it may be a humorous interpretation of the epithet *Pierides* referring to Macedonian cultural aspirations), other later pieces of evidence result from proliferating stories about the Muses and the rationalizing interpretations thereof.<sup>24</sup>

The stories about the relationship between the Muses and Pierus are numerous and diverse. Some concern the role of the eponym in introducing the cult of the Muses or point in general to his original connections with music and goddesses.<sup>25</sup> In another version, he is the father of the divine Muses, but, for example, only their 3rd generation. This is how the matter is presented, for instance, by Cicero in his work *De natura deorum*. His version suggests mythographic procedures to explain the epithet *Pierides* rationally and to reconcile divergent versions of genealogies and names (see Paus. 9,29,1–3). In this way, he aims to assemble the conflicting poetic and mythographic interpretations into a chronologically coherent story (*De nat. deor.* 3,54):

Iam Musae primae quattuor Iove altero natae, Thelxinoë Aoede Arche Melete, secundae Iove tertio et Mnemosyne procreatae novem, tertiae Piero natae et Antiopa, quas Pieridas et Pierias solent poëtae appellare, isdem nominibus et eodem numero quo proximae superiores.

Again, the first set of Muses numbers four, the daughters of the second Jupiter, Thelxinoë, Aoede, Arche and Melete; the second set are the offspring of the third Jupiter and Mnemosyne, nine in number; the third set are the daughters of Pierus and Antiopa, and are usually called by the poets the Pierides or Pierian Maidens; they are the same in number and have the same names as the next preceding set. [tr. H. Rackham]

Cicero cannot be the author of this rendering, for it has all the hallmarks of mythographic practice. The interpretation cited by the speaker makes it possible to reconcile traditional names (Hesiod) with local versions that claimed precedence (Helicon). It also offers the opportunity to explain the origin of epithets, and to propose a division, though not as clear-cut as in Ovid or Pausanias, into the divine daughters of Zeus and the daughters of Pierus. In the version quoted by Cicero, however, Pierus' daughters still remain, as in Epicharmus, the Muses.

A similar enquiry into myth rationalization can be found in Pausanias' *passus* on the so-called sons of the Muses, which has been cited earlier. The most radical

<sup>23</sup> Epich. fr. 35 PCG, with the names of the Muses: Neilō, Tritōnē, Asōpō, Heptaporē, Ache-lōis, Tipoplō, Rhodia.

<sup>24</sup> About the rationalizing myth, see Hawes 2014.

<sup>25</sup> See Heraclid. fr. 109 Wehrli = Ps.-Plut., *de musica* 3,1132a (Pierus of Pieria, author of works on Muses); Paus. 9.29.3 (Pierus introduced the nine Muses to Boeotia); Serv. in Verg. *Ecl.* 7.21: "alii templum Libethridum musarum dicunt, quod a Piero, Apollinis filio, consecratum est"; *schol. Iuv. Sat.* 7.8: "Pieria locus sub radicibus Olympi montis, cui Pierus poeta nomen dedit, qui primus sacrificasse Musis dicitur; unde Pierides dictae".

illustration of a rationalizing interpretation of the Muses, however, is Varro's *passus* (Serv. in Verg. *ecl.* 7,21):

Varro tres tantum musas esse commemorat: unam, quae ex aquae nascitur motu; alteram, quam aeris icti efficit sonus; tertiam, quae mera tantum voce consistit.

Varro mentions only three Muses: one, born of the movement of water; second, who is the sound of the impact of air; and the third, who consists of the voice only.

These mythographic and musicological disputations continue a century and a half later in Plutarch's dialogue on the number of Muses in *Quaestiones convivales* (14).

Summing up, in the scene explaining the ancestry of Pierus' daughters, the meaning of the epithet *Pierides* and its genealogical and/or geographical connotations deserve prior scrutiny. Ovid's description redirects our attention to the existing discussion on the origin of the Muses, as well as the traditional epithets of the goddesses. In this line of thought, if *Pierides* can be explained as the daughters of Pierus, so can all the other terms – *Thespiades*, *Emathides* or *Aonides*. Thus, from the very beginning of the story, the poet draws our attention to the ambiguity of traditional metapoetic language (“virgineus Helicon”, “Mnemonides”, “doctae sorores”) and transports us to some primeval time when nothing is fully established yet.

At this point, let us divert our attention briefly to a certain detail related to the transmission of the story of the contest between the Muses and the “Pierides”. Antoninus Liberalis indicates that the story's antecedent was *Heteroeumena* by Nicander of Colophon. And for this reason, it is assumed that both authors used the work of this Hellenistic poet, altering it at their discretion and underscoring various motifs. The differences commonly pointed out between the works, include, for instance, the fact that in Antoninus Liberalis the “Pierides” are transformed into various birds, while in Ovid they are all collectively transformed into magpies (“picae”). Another difference is illustrated by the preservation of Helicon and the explanation of why the Hippocrene spring appears in Antoninus Liberalis' work.

There is still one more difference between these authors, more subtle, and probably overlooked so far for that very reason. In Antoninus Liberalis, the Muses were born in Pieria and Pierus' daughters at the same time in the area of Emathia (Macedonia). How does the same theme compare to Ovid? In Book V of the *Metamorphoses*, the Muses seem to be associated exclusively with Helicon, as if they had been born there – this tradition did, in fact, exist.<sup>26</sup> Pieria, on the other hand, is a land that can only be conquered by the goddesses through a musical contest with Pierus' daughters (cf. 5,311–314). The epithets (*Thespiades/Aonides* vs [*Pierides*]/*Emathides*) and other terms for the Muses (“*deae Heliconae colentes*”) also reinforce this belief.

<sup>26</sup> Plin. *NH* 4,25,5: “et Musis natalem in nemore Heliconis adsignant”.

The setting of the contest is, therefore, ostensibly the same (in both cases, the action takes place on Helicon),<sup>27</sup> but the circumstances differ completely and both authors realize Nicander's plot in different ways. Ovid convinces us further that we are dealing here with a deliberate construction of some primordial state, before the Muses' power and the foundations of metapoetic language were established.

Another term encountered in Ovid's story is *Thespiades* (v. 310). This extremely rare epithet for the Muses is unknown in the existing Greek literature or in any literary work except the *Metamorphoses*. It is known primarily from Varro's *De Lingua Latina* (7,21):<sup>28</sup>

ita enim ab terrestribus locis cognominatae Libethrides, Pipleides, Thespiades, Heliconides.

for they are called in the same way after other places on Earth - the Libethrids, the Pipleids, the Thespiads, the Heliconiads. [transl. R.G. Kent]

Where to look for the reasons for the relationship of the Muses with Thespieae? We know that probably from the 4th century, and certainly from the 3<sup>rd</sup>, the city of Boeotia nurtured the worship of the goddesses of inspiration in the Heliconian Valley of the Muses.<sup>29</sup> But the area itself had, of course, traditionally been associated with the Muses since the time of Hesiod (*Th.* 1). For that reason, it comes as no surprise when a little further on in the *Metamorphoses* (v. 666) the Muses are described as “*deae Heliconae colentes*”. Let us also remember that the mountain itself is the setting for the contest, and the judges of the agon are the local nymphs. *Thespiades* is thus another term for the Muses of Helicon (*Heliconiades*) that indicates the city's ties to the cult of the Muses.

According to Pausanias (Paus. 9.27.5), during his time, a small temple of the Muses was supposed to have been located near the theater and the agora in Thespieae, where a bronze statue of Hesiod also stands. But for one small exception, the city does not appear in Greek literature in a metapoetic context at all. This exception is a fragment of Corinna (fr. 674 PMG): Θέσπια καλλιγένεθλε φιλόξενε μωσοφίλειτε (“Thespiea of the beautiful offspring, lover of strangers, loved by the Muses”).<sup>30</sup>

In Roman sources – in Cicero (*Verr.* 2,4,4) and Pliny (HN 36,33–35) – we find further information about statues of *Thespiades* that were brought to

<sup>27</sup> Why is the musical agon held at Helicon? While other reasons can be identified, the simplest answer is that in the time of Nicander (and also still in Roman times) the most respectable musical competition in the Greek world took place in the Valley of the Muses at the foot of Helicon (see Manieri 2009; Robinson 2012).

<sup>28</sup> See Fulg. *Mytholog.* 1,11, p. 7,5–8 Helm.

<sup>29</sup> See Mojsik 2019.

<sup>30</sup> See also Cat. 61.27–30: “perge linquere Thespieae / rupis Aonios specus / nympa quos super inrigat / frigiferans Aganippe”.

Rome from Boeotia. The statues were taken from Thespieae or the surrounding area by the Roman commander, Lucius Mummius, and placed at the Aedes Felicitatis. Other *Thespiades*, by the sculptor Cleomenes, became part of the collection of Asinius Pollio (Plin. *HN* 36.33).<sup>31</sup> In both cases, the scant information leaves ambiguity as to whether the referent is the Muses of Thespieae or the daughters of Thespius – the term *Thespiades* may also refer us to the daughters of Thespius, the king and the city eponym. The girls are remembered in mythical tradition by the fact that they slept with Heracles and bore him sons.<sup>32</sup>

Art historians, in particular, advocate identifying the *Thespiades* statues with the Muses.<sup>33</sup> Still, it must be admitted that the state of our testimony does not entitle us to draw such far-reaching conclusions.<sup>34</sup> The statues of *Thespiades* in Rome, especially those by Asinius Polion, may be identified with the Muses, but not necessarily. We may also be dealing with a situation where Thespius' daughters were identified as the Muses, especially that the number of these daughters did not always have to be estimated at 50, and female figures were often depicted similarly and equipped with instruments.<sup>35</sup>

But why would *Thespiades*, problematic and uncorroborated in metapoetic language outside Ovid, be better than the traditional *Pierides*? Why does Ovid define the true Muses in Book V of the *Metamorphoses* exactly in this way? The matter seems impenetrable, but let us point out two possible explanations. First, and this has not received sufficient attention so far, the term *Thespiades* is used in the *Metamorphoses* by Pierus' daughters (an interesting case of "internal focalization"), and may have been intended by the poet as ironic – the term can also be understood as "daughters of Thespius", which would put *Thespiades* in the same line as Pierus' mortal daughters. Secondly, if Ovid's story has its origin in Nicander's work, then the source of identifying *Thespiades* as Thespius' daughters can be found in Pergamon, the Attalid city which had an overwhelming impact on Roman art and literature.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> I bypass here the third case (Plin. *HN* 34.66), statues by Euthycrates, Lysippos' son, for the reason that its interpretation is unreliable, based on a lesson that appears only in part of the manuscripts and referred to only in editions of Pliny – see *LIMC* s.v. *Thespiades* (3).

<sup>32</sup> See Herodorus F 17 and 20 Fowler; Diod. 4,29; Hyg. *Fab.* 162; Apd. 2,65: a varied number of daughters, sons and nights in sources constitutes the norm in mythical tradition.

<sup>33</sup> See Stewart 2000: 42–43; Ridgway 2001: 254.

<sup>34</sup> Schachter 1986: 159; Taback 2002: 53.

<sup>35</sup> The case of multifunctionality of women statues (nymphs-Muses-women): Cic. *ad famil.* 7.23.2; Taback 2002: 220; the "dancing Muse" turned into a fountain nymph: Gruenhagen *MM* 18, 1977: 272–283.

<sup>36</sup> See Kuttner 1995; Stewart 2000: 42: "In the Muses' sanctuary at Mount Helikon, near Thespiai, they were conflated with the *Thespiades*, the fifty daughters of Thespius. He in turn was the son of the Attic hero Teithras. At Pergamon, however, a local mythology emerged that annexed these Muses-*Thespiades* to the city and its dynasty".

The figure of Heracles may also be considered as a link between the Muses and *Thespiades*. Leaving the question of Pergamon aside, let us note that Rome was home to the famous ancient Heracles' cult, *Hercules Musarum*, the leader and protector of the Muses. Thus, King Thespius' daughters from the story of Heracles and the Kithairon lion may have been connected with the Muses as Heracles' companions. Myth, as we know well, does not follow the logic of historical genealogies and makes it possible to intertwine characters and plot threads on the basis of even phonetic resemblance. A similar case in point can be illustrated by Tereus and Teres (Th. 2,29), as well as the Mysian Teuthras and Athenian Teithras.<sup>37</sup>

The two other terms for the Muses that we encounter in the *Metamorphoses* are *Emathides* and *Aonides*. Let us begin with the latter phrase, which appears in Ovid's text first in 5,333 (an account of one of the Muses) and then in 6,2 (a statement by Minerva). The Aones are one of the fantastic peoples who supposedly inhabited Boeotia before the arrival of Cadmus, and their name already appears in Ephorus.<sup>38</sup> The adjective 'Aonian', however, is a term with a geographical meaning above all, e.g. 'Aonian Plain'.<sup>39</sup> For example, this spatial reference is used in connection with the Muses, although without the epithet *Aonides* itself, by Virgil (*ecl.* 6,65; 10,12).

In Roman times, Boeotia was generally identified with the land of the Aones. As Servius will explain in his commentary to Virgil's *Eclogues* (in *ecl.* 6,64): "Helicon mons est Boeotiae, quae et Aonia dicitur". Hence, the adjective "Aonian" indicates, first of all, a connection with Boeotia as a land, and, importantly in our context, prehistory.

In the existing literature, Ovid is the first to use this epithet in reference to the Muses.<sup>40</sup> Its basic meaning here can be rendered as "Boeotian Muses". Such a choice is not accidental, and the term carries two important meanings. First, it points to the primordial moment in the history of the Muses and the world. At this point, Boeotia is not yet populated by the descendants of Cadmus, and the Muses are connected only with Helicon and do not rule Pieria. Secondly, this particular meaning of the epithet underscores the difference between *Aonides* and the daughters of Pierus. The latter will be called *Emathides* later in the text (l. 669: this is how the Muses will call (contemptuously?) the losing

<sup>37</sup> See Apd. 3,103–104; 2,147; schol. Aristoph. *Ran.* 477; Steph. Byz. s.v. *Thespeia*: "a city of Boiotia. (...) The home of Thespiades, son of Teuthras son of Pandion".

<sup>38</sup> Ephor BNJ 70 F 119 = Strabo 9,2,3: "Non-Greeks once dwelt in Boeotia, the Aones and the Temmikes, who immigrated from Sunium, and the Leleges and the Hyantes. Later on the Phoenicians who came with Cadmus held it".

<sup>39</sup> See Berman 2015 and Appendix 1.

<sup>40</sup> The examples of the epithet after Ovid: Stat. *Silv.* 5,3,121–122: "Sorores Aonides"; Ausonius *epigram* 51: "Sappho (...) 'Αωνίδων δεκάτη"; Silv. Ital. *Pun.* 11,463: "Aonidum turba"; 12,409–410: "sororum Aonidum".

“Pierides”), which in turn makes them “(False) Muses of Macedonia”.<sup>41</sup> The term *Emathides* also appears in Antoninus Liberalis (*Met.* 9) as an epithet for the daughters of Pierus, an autochthon and king of Emathia. The question arises as to whether such an epithet had appeared in literature earlier. It is quite possible that Antoninus Liberalis may have borrowed it from the story by Nicander of Colophon, and Emathos himself (alternant: Amathos) as a mythical figure and eponym is corroborated as early as in Marsyas of Pella.

The terms *Aonides* and *Emathides*, used here for the first time by Ovid, must play a significant role in the whole scene. Both evoke once again the prehistory of the areas, pointing to a primordial moment in the history of the Muses. At the same time, instead of the confrontation *Thespiades* vs *Pierides*, the epithets lead us to the rivalry between the Macedonian and Beotian Muses, suggesting the additional significance of these spatial terms in the tradition.

What picture emerges from such a meticulous reading of the Muses’ epithets? We have grown accustomed to thinking of the Muses within the framework of selected and static terms, such as *Pierides*, “daughters of Zeus”, and spatial association like Helicon, Parnassus, Aganippe, Castalia. In addition, we intuitively assume that the terms for the Muses known from literature had only poetic value. And yet, the ancient way of depicting goddesses was much more intricate. The descriptive elements may have a local, intertextual value, serve as a reference to the image of a girl chorus or learned sisters, and may also result from or comment on a cult practice. What is particularly extensive and interesting is the range of spatial terms, which also constitute the most enduring element of the image of the Muses: they bind memory and inspiration to places in the natural landscape.

In Ovid’s story in Book V of the *Metamorphoses*, the epithets for the Muses are not placed in one position in the text, for instance, when we first see them, during Minerva’s visit to Helicon. They are scattered throughout the story, over the course of several hundred lines, with some of them reoccurring (*Aonides*, *Mnemonides*), while others appear only once. In addition, some emerge only in the protagonists’ utterances (*Thespiades*, *Emathides*), as if the narrator shifted the responsibility for the particular epithet onto the participants.

The broad phraseological connotations, as well as the origins of the epithets, imply that the entire scene of Minerva’s meeting with the Muses was intended as a scholarly display of the poet’s erudition. Even the most innovative epithets (*Emathides*, *Aonides*) stem from a long tradition, which they comment on and transform. Yet this scholarliness does not verge on antiquarianism, for the poet constantly transgresses the boundaries of metapoetic language, challenging the traditional readings and highlighting their ambiguity. Thus, the *Pierides*, so

<sup>41</sup> See Solinus 9,10–11; cf. Marsyas BNJ 135–136 F13; Iust. 7.1; schol. in Hom. Il. 14.226c.1 ex.: (...) Ἡμαθία δὲ πρῶην ἢ Μακεδονία.

common in Virgil, turn out to be the mortal daughters of Pierus, and the divine *Heliconiades* are called *Thespiades*, which might just as easily mean “daughters of Thespius”, as the goddesses worshipped in Thespieae. In this scene, the poet skillfully develops the connotative spatial and genealogical potential of the -id/-ad suffixes. The *Mnemonides*, on the other hand, are not only the daughters of Mnemosyne, but also goddesses who have the capacity to remember and control the storytelling process.

The analysis of the entire range of terms and epithets brings to the forefront of the discussion the early history of the Muses and metapoetic geography. This is indicated by “virgineus Helicon” or the terms *Emathides* and *Aonides*, which evoke the memory of the original inhabitants of Macedonia and Boeotia. The information that the winner of the musical agon will take possession of Pieria, Helicon and the metapoetic springs of Aganippe and Hippocrene is essential. All this allows an understanding of how the local and primordial Muses of Helicon became the Muses of Pieria. As with the Homeric hymns, we are dealing here with the events leading to establishing the goddesses’ domain and consolidating the spatial connotations of their image.

Ovid’s story proves that ancient literature abounded in tales that explained the origin of goddesses and music/songs. Pausanias’ remark about the so-called sons of the Muses as descendants of Pierus’ daughters implies that that discussion was not limited to mythographic works. Furthermore, the rationalization of the stories about the origin of the first musicians (Orpheus, Linos, Musaios) played an important role in establishing and describing the origins of literature and music in human culture. All these questions concerning these origins receive a unique answer from the author of the *Metamorphoses*. And the whole story of the Muses, enchanted with epithets, can be read as a hymn in honor of the goddesses, albeit à rebours, as Ovid would have it.

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OVID, *METAMORPHOSES* 5,254–6,2, AND THE TERMS FOR THE MUSES IN GREEK AND ROMAN CULTURE

Summary

Epithets used to describe the Muses are an essential component of metapoetic language, starting as early as the time of Homer and Hesiod. However, it has never been a static phenomenon, as the cultural transformations entailed the changes in the language describing the Muses. Its scope included physical appearance, ancestry, voice/sound, relations with the poet/musician and – a rather important aspect – geographical associations. Revealing traces of this imagery is not an easy task: we lack cult hymns, and in most literary works, we encounter merely 2–3 epithets at the most. In this respect, Ovid is exceptional. In his *Metamorphoses* (5,254–6,2), in the story of the contest between the Muses of Helicon and the false Pierides, the poet deploys a uniquely rich descriptive terminology concerning the Muses (*Mnemonides*, *Thespiades*, *Aonides*, *Emathides*, [*Pierides*], *doctae sorores*, etc.). In this article, I look at the poet's choices in this story and analyze the origins, functions and connotations of the epithets and terms he uses.