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The Death of Almo in Virgil's Latin War

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In *Aeneid* 7, the Trojan leader has at last arrived in Latium, and Latinus has pledged his daughter Lavinia to the hero. Juno of course has other plans. She beckons the fury Allecto, who stirs up rage in Latinus' wife Amata, in Turnus, Lavinia's Rutulian suitor, and in the hunting dogs of Ascanius. After Ascanius' arrow strikes the stag housed by the royal shepherd Tyrrhus (7.496–502), the Latin rustics respond with anger, and both sides line up for war (7.505–30). Virgil next describes the first human fatality of the Latin War, that of Tyrrhus' son, Almo (7.531–34):

> hic iuuenis primam ante aciem stridente sagitta,
> natorum Tyrrhi fuerat qui maximus, Almo,
> sternitur; haesit enim sub gutture uulnus et udae (533)
> uocis iter tenuemque inclusit sanguine uitam.

> At this point a young man at the front of the battle line by a whistling arrow—one who had been the eldest of the sons of Tyrrhus, Almo—is laid low. The wound, indeed, stuck down in his throat, and it closed with blood the pathway for his watery voice and his delicate life.[1]

In this essay I discuss how key themes of *Aeneid* 7–12, and of the poem as a whole, are highlighted in the above four verses.[2] I also consider the ways

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[1] The text of Virgil is that of Mynors (1969). Translations are my own, unless noted otherwise.

[2] The fullest modern treatments of Almo's death-scene are by Fordyce (1977) ad loc., Scarsi (1984), Heuzé (1985) 92, Horsfall (2000) ad loc., and Jones (2005) 33–34. Virgil's fourth-century commentator Servius remarked (ad 7.531) on the many ways in which the poet evokes pity in Almo's death-scene: *mouet . . . miserationem ab aetate cum dicit "iuuenis," a uirtute dicendo "primam ante aciem"; mouet a dignitate, ut "natorum Tyrrhi fuerat qui maximus Almo"; a uulneris etiam crudelitate cum dixit "haesit sub gutture uulnus."* "[Virgil] stirs up pity from [Almo's] age when he says 'young man'; from his courage by saying 'at the front of the battle line'; from his grandeur when he says 'who had been the oldest of the sons of Tyrrhus, Almo'; and also from the cruelty of the wound when he says 'the wound stuck down in his throat.'"

in which these verses are representative of Virgil's stylistic methods. In the course of this close reading, I venture two new interpretive suggestions: first, that Almo's four-line death-scene amounts to a rivalrous adaptation of a passage from *Iliad* 4; and, second, that Virgil includes in these lines a significant reference to a ritual in the cult of Cybele.

I begin with an examination of the action of the four lines, as a demonstration of how Virgil focuses the reader's attention on the battlefield, with its accompanying gore, and with its uncertainties that swiftly give way to the certainty of death. The immediate subject of the passage is the young man, *iuuenis*, fighting at the front of the lines. At the end of 531 Virgil suspends, with no marker of its shooter or destination, the ablative phrase *stridente sagitta* ("with a whistling arrow"). For a moment—in the brief pause at line-end —we are left unsure not only whether the unnamed young man is Trojan or Latin,[3] but also whether he is himself using the arrow, or about to by struck by it. It is not until the first word of line 533, the emphatically enjambed and isolated dactyl[4] *sternitur*, that we learn that the *iuuenis* will be the receiver of the verb's action, and of the whistling arrow's shot. In the line between the introduction of the arrow in 531 and the swiftly devastating *sternitur* in 533,[5] Virgil specifies who the young man is with a relative clause: he "had been (*fuerat*) the eldest of the sons of Tyrrhus, Almo." The pluperfect *fuerat* is arresting, revealing to the reader, in advance, that the youth is already a thing of the past, already a dead man; the arrow that was suspended at the end of line 531 is, to be sure, headed for him.

Virgil next brings out the immediacy of the arrow's effectiveness by making not the arrow itself, but a wound (*uulnus*) appear at once, as the thing that is stuck in Almo's throat (533). Then the poet captures the dying warrior's horrific experience in a progression of coordinated sonic effects: in the phrase *tenuemque inclusit sanguine uitam* (534), the elision of the first two words and the resulting consecutive spondees make the line torpid and sticky, providing the sound—and almost the taste—of the blood that is stuck in and filling up Almo's throat. At the same time, within the slowness of these spondees, the succession of the *qu-* and *k* recreate the pained, terrible, staccato sound of choking on that blood. With another emphatic enjambment (*udae* | *uocis*, 533-34), Almo's voice is lost first, and then, as the last word of the passage, his life, *uitam*.[6] And so, after generating a pregnant

[3] Virgil had described both sides lining up for war in the immediately preceding lines (7.519–30).

[4] On Virgil's use of such isolated dactyls for effect, see Anderson (1969) 105, discussing 12.951.

[5] Horsfall (2000) ad loc. regards *sterno* as a "euphemising synonym for 'kill.'" But this verb, whose primary meaning is "to lay out on the ground" (*OLD* 1), surely provides a vivid and stark image of one being leveled quickly to the ground.

[6] Heuzé (1985) 92 makes a complementary point about the painful paradox captured in the passage's final two words, *sanguine uitam*: it is Almo's blood, his source of life, that takes his life.

suspense about the opening arrow-shot in 531, Virgil then swiftly points us to the young man's identity and his doom with the eerily proleptic *fuerat* in 532. Our attention seized, he now—with a combination of startling speed (the rapidity of *sternitur*, the immediate arrival of the wound, and the four quickly emitted dactyls in 533) and suffocating torpor (the elision and slow, spondaic feel of *tenuemque inclusit*)—makes us endure ourselves Almo's final, painful moments.

To Virgil's description in 533–34 of Almo's "watery voice" and his "delicate life" I will return. But I want to discuss now the detail that Virgil demands we note first: Almo's youth. Now, old and young alike will die in this war, and Virgil makes the second named fatality of the war, in the following lines (7.535–39), that of the "rather old" (*senior*, 7.535) and wealthy landowner Galaesus.[7] But the Latin War is, unmistakably, about the death of the young. Frequently in his war-narrative Virgil refers to the unnamed Trojan and Italian combatants as, simply, *iuuenes* or collectively as *iuuentus*.[8] And the great deaths in the Latin War are, in large measure, of the young—a characteristic that the poet poignantly underscores in each instance. So, there are Euryalus in Book 9, Pallas in Book 10, each of whom Virgil compares to a dying flower[9]; Lausus in Book 10, whom the poet apostrophizes at death as *iuuenis memorande* ("young man to be remembered," 10.793); and in Book 11 the virginal Camilla, whose death is also figured as a deflowering.[10] A notable exception is Mezentius at the end of Book 10, but his death-scene gains much of its power from the perspective that Virgil gives to the exiled Etruscan king, who voices regret that his own crimes led to his son Lausus' undeserved death (10.843–56).[11] Turnus too is young, as Virgil reminds us over and over again, and with great emphasis when we meet the Rutulian chief, in the passage in Book 7 immediately preceding the outbreak of war, Allecto's assault on him (7.406–76). In this passage Turnus is marked as *iuuenis* four times within thirty-seven lines (7.420, 7.435, 7.446, 7.456). Virgil seems to announce this focus

[7] After noting the detail placed between Almo's and Galaesus' deaths (*corpora multa uirum circa*), Horsfall (2000) ad 7.535 remarks: "V. balances age and youth about an innominate mass in the centre." On Galaesus' death and what it may represent in this war, see Thomas (1992) 67–70 and Jones (2005) 33–34.

[8] See *iuuenes* of those on the Latin side at 7.468, 9.28 (of Almo's brothers), 9.51, 9.163, 10.518, 10.837, and 12.238; of the Trojans at 9.173, 9.674, and 9.785; of the Etruscans at 10.167 and 10.173; and of the warriors collectively at 11.838, 12.399, and 12.410. *iuuentus* is used of the Latins at 7.340 and 7.672; of the Trojans at 9.226 and 10.605; and of the Etruscans at 8.499 and 8.606.

[9] Euryalus at 9.433–37, Pallas at 11.68–71. On these youthful deaths see, for Euryalus, Reed (2007) 17–19; and, for Pallas, Lyne (1989) 149–59, Putnam (1995) 37–39, and Reed (2007) 20–22.

[10] See 11.801–19, with the discussions by Alessio (1993) 142–43, Oliensis (1997) 308, and Reed (2007) 19–20.

[11] On Mezentius' words of regret, see Thome (1979) 117–39 and Kronenberg (2005) 411–16.

on the death of the young in war—and to stretch it back into the Trojan War and thus expand it as a timeless theme—when he features the gruesome death of the *infelix puer* (1.475) Troilus at the hands of Achilles on the frieze on Juno's temple in Book 1 (1.474–78).[12]

It is fitting that the first death of the Latin War, marked with the emphatic opening *hic iuuenis* in 7.531, is of a youth.[13] Furthermore, the deaths of youths have immediate and destructive consequences for families. In 532 Virgil writes that Almo "had been the oldest of the sons of Tyrrhus" (*natorum Tyrrhi fuerat qui maximus, Almo*). Servius regarded this detail as an appeal to the *dignitas* or grandeur of Almo. A greater significance of this detail is, I think, its indication that the Latin War will feature the splitting apart of sons and fathers, of children from their parents, of homes in general. When Juno beckons Allecto to ignite the war earlier in Book 7, her charge to the Fury is*: tu potes unanimos armare in proelia fratres | atque odiis uersare domos* (7.335–36: "You have the power to arm brothers of one spirit for battle, and to overturn homes with hatred").[14] Allecto stirs up Amata to leave her home and head to the woods, taking Lavinia with her, after which the poet declares that "[Allecto] seemed to have overturned the plan and the whole house of Latinus" (7.406–7: *uisa . . . | consiliumque omnemque domum uertisse Latini*).[15]

In time, Allecto infuriates Ascanius' hounds and directs the young Trojan to kill the stag that had been domesticated by Tyrrhus' family and, as Virgil explains in detail, lived as a sort of member of the family (7.483–92). In this regard Almo's death, while it is the first human death of the Latin

[12] On Virgil's use of the ekphrasis of the frieze on Juno's temple to highlight key themes of the poem, see Putnam (1998) 23–54. At 31 he writes of Troilus: "One *infelix puer* and his tragedy, depicted in the presentness of art, anticipate, as paradigm, the several ill-fated youths, from Marcellus to Turnus, whose misfortunes mark the epic's course." See Tracy (1975) on Virgil's inclusion of the young and doomed Marcellus at 6.860–86 (at the end of Book 6, just before the poem's turn to the Latin War) for similar purposes of foreshadowing this theme. Another death that may serve to underline this theme early on is that of Priam's son Polites, recounted by Aeneas in Book 2 (2.526–32) as the last thing that the Trojan king witnesses before his own murder.

[13] When Virgil describes the recovery of Almo's corpse some forty lines later (the only other appearance of his name), his youthfulness is still emphasized; he is "the boy Almo." 7.574–75 read: *caesosque reportant | Almonem puerum foedatique ora Galaesi*. Almo and his brothers had also been introduced as *Tyrrhidae pueri* at 7.484.

[14] On the thematic significance of these lines, and an allusion to Catullus 9, see Joseph (2009). And on the organization and movement of the Allecto passage in Book 7, see Fraenkel (1945) 3–8, and now Fratantuono (2011) 522–24, with further bibliography.

[15] Virgil also emphasizes Allecto's special status as the "home-wrecker from Hell" in 7.348, where she hurls at Amata a snake, "with which monster she, in her frenzy, could mix up the whole house" (*quo furibunda domum monstro permisceat omnem*). Soon after this attack the maddened queen convinces the Latin women to abandon their homes (*deseruere domos*, 7.394) for the woods.

War, is the second death to the young shepherd's family.[16] The doubly felt dissolution of Tyrrhus' family is perfectly representative of a narrative that will so often zoom in on families torn asunder. To note just a few prominent examples from later in the war, in Book 9 we see and hear Euryalus' mother weep uncontrollably for her dead son (9.473–502); in Book 10, as I noted above, Mezentius poignantly mourns the loss of his son Lausus (10.843–56), as does Evander at great length for Pallas in Book 11 (11.139–81).[17]

In his introduction to Stanley Lombardo's translation of the *Aeneid*, Ralph Johnson discusses the ways in which Virgil offers a more concentrated exploration of this theme of "doomed youth" than Homer does in the *Iliad*.[18] This is surely true. But it is rare in the *Aeneid* that Homer is fully out of the picture, and in Almo's death-scene Virgil may in fact be adapting and responding to *Iliad* 4.473-489. Here just as war is breaking out for the first time in Homer's narrative, the bard describes, as the third battlefield death in the poem, the slaying of a Trojan named Simoeisius:

> ἔνθ᾽ ἔβαλ᾽ Ἀνθεμίωνος υἱὸν Τελαμώνιος Αἴας
> ἠΐθεον θαλερὸν Σιμοείσιον, ὅν ποτε μήτηρ
> Ἴδηθεν κατιοῦσα παρ᾽ ὄχθῃσιν Σιμόεντος 475
> γείνατ᾽, ἐπεί ῥα τοκεῦσιν ἅμ᾽ ἕσπετο μῆλα ἰδέσθαι·
> τοὔνεκά μιν κάλεον Σιμοείσιον· οὐδὲ τοκεῦσι
> θρέπτρα φίλοις ἀπέδωκε, μινυνθάδιος δέ οἱ αἰὼν
> ἔπλεθ᾽ ὑπ᾽ Αἴαντος μεγαθύμου δουρὶ δαμέντι.
> πρῶτον γάρ μιν ἰόντα βάλε στῆθος παρὰ μαζὸν 480
> δεξιόν: ἀντικρὺ δὲ δι᾽ ὤμου χάλκεον ἔγχος
> ἦλθεν· ὃ δ᾽ ἐν κονίῃσι χαμαὶ πέσεν αἴγειρος ὣς
> ἥ ῥά τ᾽ ἐν εἱαμενῇ ἕλεος μεγάλοιο πεφύκει
> λείη, ἀτάρ τέ οἱ ὄζοι ἐπ᾽ ἀκροτάτῃ πεφύασι·
> τὴν μέν θ᾽ ἁρματοπηγὸς ἀνὴρ αἴθωνι σιδήρῳ 485
> ἐξέταμ᾽, ὄφρα ἴτυν κάμψῃ περικαλλέϊ δίφρῳ·
> ἣ μέν τ᾽ ἀζομένη κεῖται ποταμοῖο παρ᾽ ὄχθας.
> τοῖον ἄρ᾽ Ἀνθεμίδην Σιμοείσιον ἐξενάριξεν
> Αἴας διογενής·
>
> Then Telamonian Ajax struck Anthemion's son, the vigorous youth Simoeisius, whom his mother had borne beside the banks of Simois, as she came down from Ida, where she had followed her parents to

[16] On the stag raised and held dear by Tyrrhus' daughter Silvia, see Starr (1992), a cultural contextualization of the passage, and Putnam (1998) 97–118.

[17] On Virgil's concentration on the reactions of parents to their children's deaths in Books 7–12, see Nugent (1999) 254–60 and O'Sullivan (2009) 472–77.

[18] Johnson (2005) lii–liii: "[The *Iliad*'s] glimpses at the lost lives of the young are scattered over twenty-four books, whereas the *Aeneid* telescopes most of such carnage into six, and that condensation provides the theme of doomed youth in his poem with its powerful, angry emphasis." Johnson's entire discussion, which he titles "Anthems for Doomed Youth," runs from lii to lxi.

> see their flocks. For this reason they called him Simoeisius; yet he paid not back to his parents the recompense of his upbringing, and but brief was the span of his life, as he was laid low by the spear of great-hearted Ajax. For as he strode among the foremost he was struck on the right of his chest beside the nipple, and clean through his shoulder went the spear of bronze, and he fell to the ground in the dust like a poplar tree that has grown up in the bottom land of a great marsh, smooth, but from its top grow branches: this a chariot-maker has felled with the gleaming iron so that he may bend a wheel rim for a beautiful chariot, and it lies drying by a river's banks. In this way did Zeus-born Ajax slay Simoeisius, son of Anthemion.
>
> (trans. by A.T. Murray, revised by W. F. Wyatt)

At their deaths Simoeisius and Almo have much in common. Each is introduced in the first line of his death-scene as young (compare ἠΐθεον θαλερὸν, "the vigorous youth," at *Il*. 4.474 and *iuuenis* at *Aen*. 7.531). Both die while fighting at the front of the battle lines (πρῶτον . . . μιν ἰόντα, "among the foremost," at *Il*. 4.480 and *primam ante aciem*, "in front of the battle line" at *Aen*. 7.531). The loss to their parents is also emphasized in each passage (at *Il*. 4.477–78 and *Aen*. 7.532). A final point of comparison is that each warrior takes his name from a river.[19] In the Iliadic passage the story of the hero's birth beside Troy's Simois River, and the consequent naming, is told quite clearly (*Il*. 4.474–77). While Virgil is not so explicit here, he has taken the name "Almo," as Servius notes,[20] from the name of a tributary of the Tiber in Rome. He develops this association with the river by describing Almo's voice canal as the "path of his watery voice," rather than the more anatomically appropriate "watery path for his voice."[21] The

[19] Jones (2005) 33 n. 43 notes, without further discussion, that "by naming the war's first victims after rivers," Virgil alludes to Simoeisius' death.

[20] Ad 7.532 he writes: *ALMO – bene rustici nomen usurpauit a fluuio*. See also his comment ad 10.166, which I supply in note 24 below. Scarsi (1984) notes that the modern name of this tributary is the Acquataccio.

[21] Servius (followed by many commentators and translators) would prefer to read the line in this way, to the detriment of Virgil's poetry. Ad 7.533 he writes: *UDAE VOCIS ITER – hoc est 'udum iter uocis'; non enim uox uda est, sed per udam arteriarum labitur uitam*. But Heuzé (1985) 92 discusses how the phrase gives substance to Almo's voice, and may evoke the sensation of breathing. Jones (2005) 33 aptly writes that "the detail *udae* could apply to man or river." On the inadequacy of regarding unexpected collocations in Virgil's writing such as this one as merely "transferred epithets," see the chapter titled "Anatomy of a Style: *Enallage* and the New Sublime," pp. 58–122 in Conte (2007). Fratantuono (2007) 219 reads the image of the *udae | uocis iter* as "a moist extension of the water imagery that describes the war's first encounters," that is, the simile in the preceding lines (7.528–30) that compares the two sides that are lining up for war to the billowing sea.

name "Almo" also brings to mind the adjective *almus*, derived from *alo*, "to nourish," which is of course what rivers do to the earth.[22]

So we see that both Homer and Virgil feature, at or near the outset of their battle-narratives, the death of a young warrior who takes his name from a river. But there are some significant differences in the Virgilian passage—and if Virgil's Almo is indeed a response to Homer's Simoeisius, then these lines are representative of another aspect of Virgil's method, namely his manner of creative, rivalrous adaptation of the Homeric poems. Whereas Homer makes the death of the youthful Simoeisius the third death in his battle-narrative (a narrative that takes place, let us recall, during the tenth year of the Trojan War), Virgil makes the young Almo the very first to fall in the entire Latin War. Here, perhaps, the Roman poet's *greater* emphasis on the doom of youth in war is announced. A second difference is that the Virgilian passage is tauter, more compressed, and in a sense more demanding of the reader. Simoeisius' death occupies seventeen lines, while Almo's takes up four. And Homer provides a detailed, three-line explanation of Simoeisius' affiliation with the Simois River, while, for his "river-warrior," Virgil gives just the name "Almo," along with the embedded "clue" in the reference to his "watery voice."[23] Such compression of his Homeric model is of course what Virgil does on a grand scale with this poem: the *Aeneid* contains *arma uirumque* (1.1), an *Iliad* and an *Odyssey*—their forty-eight books subsumed into its twelve.

In the emulative variation on Homer's Simoeisius that we may observe in Almo's death-scene, Virgil may also direct our attention to another major theme of the upcoming books. For, while Simoeisius' name means "from the Simois," or "born beside the Simois," "Almo" *is* the name of the river. Virgil employs this type of nomenclature elsewhere in his Latin War. Four other Italian warriors, all doomed as Almo is, have the names of Italian rivers: Galaesus, introduced and felled in the very next lines (7.535–39); Ufens, introduced at 7.744–49, killed at 12.460; Umbro, introduced at 7.750–60, faced by Aeneas in battle at 10.544; and the Etruscan Liris, killed by Camilla at 11.670.[24] By using these names for characters, Virgil in a

[22] And also what shepherds do, as Paschalis (1997) 264 discusses, with reference to 7.484–85, where Virgil describes how Tyrrhus and his sons nourished the stag (*Tyrrhidae pueri . . . | nutribant Tyrrhusque pater*).

[23] On embedded learning as a hallmark of Virgil's Callimachean style, see Thomas (1993) 207–8.

[24] Fordyce (1977) ad 7.532 and Scarsi (1984) list these names. Servius ad 10.166 notes this habit of Virgil's (*sane sciendum amare Vergilium Italis ducibus dare nomina uel fluuiorum uel montium*), and cites Almo as an example. Fordyce comments on the randomness of the geographical affiliations of some of Virgil's "river-warriors." The Almo, however, did in fact run through ancient Latium. Fordyce also notes that the Trojans Caicus (1.183), Hypanis (2.340), and Thymbris (10.124) have the names of rivers. Caicus is one of the shipwrecked companions for whom Aeneas searches in vain from the African shore, and Hypanis dies in battle at 2.428. The fate of Thymbris is not revealed. As a whole, river-warriors do not fare well in this poem. River-warriors are less common in the *Iliad*. Two names are shared by a warrior

sense makes rivers themselves suffer in the war. And so Almo's opening death is reflective of yet another major theme of the *Aeneid*'s Latin War: the involvement and at times victimization of the landscape of Italy in this war, an issue surely familiar to Virgil's Roman readers, beset as they had been for so long by civil war in Italy.[25] Several times here in Book 7 Virgil pictures distinctive features of the landscape responding to the war that has come to it. At 7.511–17 every grove, the depths of the woods, and three bodies of water react to the war-horn of Allecto. And at 7.759–60, we hear the lamentation, told proleptically, of Angitia's grove, the Fucine Lake, and the clear pools of the Marsian lands for the death of the river-warrior Umbro.[26] The landscape and terrain of Italy will be involved in this fight and subjected to aggression in this fight. During Aeneas' final fight with Turnus in Book 12, Virgil, as though to put a final point of emphasis on this theme, describes the Trojans' razing of an olive grove sacred to the Italic god Faunus (12.766–71).[27]

I suggest that there may be another, more specific resonance in the death of the river-warrior Almo, in light of the ritualistic function that the Almo River had at Rome. In 204 B.C.E, the Great Mother of the Gods, Cybele, was brought over to Rome from Mount Ida near Troy (Livy 29.14.5–14, Ovid, *Fasti* 4.247–348).[28] At the end of the goddess' journey, she was washed in the Almo River. In Book 4 of the *Fasti*, Ovid provides the lengthiest account of Cybele's arrival at Rome, including 337–40:

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and a river: Aesepus, a Trojan killed at 6.21 and an Idaean river introduced at 2.825; and Rhesus, the Thracian king (10.432–502) and a river in the Troad (12.20). Homer also includes two other characters with names that, like Simoeisius', are based on rivers in the Troad: Satnius (14.442), named after the Satnioeis; and Scamandrius (5.49), named after the Scamander. Scamandrius is also the name Hector used for his son Astyanax (6.402–3). There is, furthermore, Homer's personified and deified Scamander, who ultimately prevails over Achilles after their great battle in *Iliad* 21—a triumphant outcome far different from that of Virgil's river-warriors.

[25] Putnam (1998) 111 remarks: "By giving these names [Almo and Galaesus] to the fatalities, Virgil suggests the death of the landscape and of what nourishes it that comes through war." So too Jones (2005) 34: "Almo and Galaesus, then, blur the lines between characters and landscape. They are, in a sense, rivers that suffer the effects of war in human terms." On the theme of the victimization of the Italian landscape in the *Aeneid*, see also the classic article by Parry (1963); as well as Lyne (1989) 141–43 and 149–59 and Thomas (1992) 67–68 on the perversion of pastoral and agricultural imagery in the poem.

[26] A scene on which Parry (1963) concentrates.

[27] On the violation of groves in Virgil, see Thomas (1988b), with a treatment of this passage at 269–70; and Dyson (2001), who concentrates on this passage at 117–19 and 221–26.

[28] On Cybele's journey, see Fantham's (1998) commentary on *Fasti* 4, esp. ad 4.255–349. For a general treatment of the Great Mother's worship at Rome, see Beard (1994), with further bibliography. In a separate tale in the *Fasti*, Ovid (like no other author that I have found) personifies Almo as a river-god, and makes him the father of the water nymph Lara (*Fasti* 2.601–2). At *De Natura Deorum* 3.20.52 Cicero has the interlocutor Cotta include the Almo in a list of Roman rivers invoked by the augurs.

est locus, in Tiberim qua lubricus influit Almo
et nomen magno perdit in amne minor.
illic purpurea canus cum veste sacerdos
Almonis dominam sacraque lavit aquis.

There is a place, where the gliding Almo flows into the Tiber, and the lesser river loses its name in the great river. There a white-haired priest in a purple robe washed the Mistress and the things sacred to her in the waters of the Almo.

Each year on March 27, Cybele's arrival at Rome was celebrated, and an image of her was washed again in the Almo River, in a *lavatio*, a ritual bathing. Statius refers to the ritual at *Silvae* 5.1.222–24:

est locus ante urbem qua primum nascitur ingens
Appia, quaque Italo gemitus Almone Cybebe
ponit et Idaeos iam non reminiscitur amnis.

There is a place in front of the city, where the great Appian Way first is born, and where Cybebe releases her laments in the Italian Almo, and so no longer reminisces about Idaean rivers.

Statius viewed this rite as speaking to the integration of the Trojan goddess Cybele into Roman cult: with the bathing in the Almo River, the goddess was able to pour out her tears of longing for home,[29] forget the Idaean streams of her past, and be washed anew as a Roman deity.

[29] She laments in particular for her bygone beloved Attis, whose departure from Cybele and subsequent maddening Ovid narrates at *Fasti* 4.223–44; on Cybele and Attis, see too Catullus 63, a text on which Ovid builds. Lucan (*BC* 1.600), Valerius Flaccus (*Arg*. 8.239–40), Silius Italicus (8.363), Martial (3.47.2), and Ammianus (23.3.7) also mention the *lavatio* of the Magna Mater in the Almo. See further the discussions by Baker and Pitcher (1993) ad Martial 3.47, Fantham (1998) ad 4.337–40, Gibson (2003) ad 5.1.222–24, and Weddle (2010) 129–30. Cassius Dio (48.43.5) reports the bathing of the image of the goddess out in the depths of the sea, in the year 38 B.C.E. There is no scholarly consensus on the purpose of the *lavatio* in the Almo. Gibson's ("Cybele's forgetting of the streams of Ida represents an acceptance of her new abode in Latium") and Weddle's (she lists it as an example of "a ritual re-enactment of the initial arrival of the image") readings are in line with my suggestion here. Latte (1960) 261 n. 1 (noted by Scarsi [1984]) suggests that a similar *lavatio* of Cybele was performed in the Gallus River in Phrygia, and that the ritual in the Almo was modeled on the older one. Fantham's interpretive suggestion is different still: "its association with the approach of spring brings it into line with other Roman ritual cleansings (e.g. of Vesta) whether the purpose was purificatory or to foster fertility." On the ritual bathing of the cult objects of other deities, see Weddle (2010) 45–73, as well as O'Brien (1993) 54–62 on the bathing of Hera's statue on Samos.

I suggest, then, that, in his description at 7.531–34 of the death of the shepherd named after the river, Virgil is evoking the river's ritualistic associations.[30] Such an evocation is not without relevance here in *Aeneid* 7. The ritual bathing of Cybele's image in the Almo River stood—or so Statius indicates—as a gesture that celebrated religious integration and harmony between Troy and Rome, East and West.[31] Here in *Aeneid* 7 the Trojans arrive in Italy, and their first act of war is to attack and *kill* Almo, who is of course part of an Italian contingent that is *resisting* the arrival of the Trojans. Does the felling of Almo / the Almo by the Trojan huntsmen represent a sort of violent perversion of the Roman ritual? Perhaps by making this death the opening shot in the war, Virgil is indicating that the process of Roman acculturation—of the melding of Trojan and Italian elements that must occur for Rome's rise—is going to be a hard and bloody one.[32] Put another way, as the battle breaks out in *Aeneid* 7, Rome is a long way from the unifying *lavatio* celebrated in the Almo each year. To extend this suggestion further, the perversion of Cybele's ritual and the failure of Trojan-Italian integration that it may represent also evoke another theme that Virgil develops throughout his Latin War: this conflict was, like the political struggles of the poet's own time, a civil war, fought among brothers. For, not only do the two sides share a future as Romans, but Virgil also makes them share a past, by giving both the Latins and the Trojans Italian ancestors.[33] And in the present—the Latin War that commences here with the Trojan attack on Almo / the Almo—there is only bloody, sacrilegious strife between the kindred sides.[34]

We have seen that Virgil packs into Almo's four-line death-scene several big themes: the gory horror of war; the particular doom of youth in war, and the attendant splitting up of families; the victimization of the Italian landscape; and, perhaps, the difficulty of Trojan and Italian acculturation, and of the cohesion of the Roman people. I have also argued that this passage stands as an example of Virgil's method of emulative, compressive

[30] Horsfall (2000) ad loc. notes the ritual in the Almo River but makes no interpretive suggestions.

[31] And indeed, as Beard (1994) discusses, Rome's legendary roots in Troy may have made the adoption in 204 B.C.E. of the exotic cult of Cybele more palatable. Wiseman (1984) surveys all of the appearances of Cybele in the *Aeneid* (including Aeneas' prayer of gratitude to her earlier in Book 7, at 7.139), and suggests that "the details of her Augustan rehabilitation are what we see in Virgil" (127). For a general discussion of the issue of the adoption of new gods into Roman religious practice, see North (1976).

[32] Which the poet himself laments amid the climactic fighting in Book 12, at 12.503–4: *tanton placuit concurrere motu, | Iuppiter, aeterna gentis in pace futuras?*

[33] We read of Dardanus', and thus his Trojan descendents, Italian origins at 3.163–68, 7.205–11, and 7.240–42. On Virgil's novel adaptation and treatment of the Dardanus myth, see Buchheit (1963) 163–72.

[34] For more on the theme of civil war in the *Aeneid*, see e.g. Cairns (1989) 85–108, Horsfall (1995) 155–61, and Rossi (2010).

response to Homer. I want to conclude by suggesting that the diction in the final line of Almo's death-scene is itself reflective of Virgil's poetics and his aims.

In these lines, as we observed, Almo literally loses his voice, as the "path of his watery voice" is clogged with blood, and he dies from choking. The image gains greater potency when we recall that Almo is a shepherd, that stock of men who in literature such as Virgil's own *Eclogues* pass their time by singing songs. But Virgil sees to it that Almo—and all that he represents—will survive. The young warrior's voice, *uocis*, the pointedly enjambed first word of line 534, may be silenced; but his life, *uitam*, the last word of 534 and of the passage, will live on, thanks to the singer who tells his tale. In this line Almo's life is described as *tenuem*, "slender" or "delicate"; and commentators have remarked that the expression *tenuem . . . uitam* refers to "the insubstantial vital spirit"[35] that is lost at death. But there is also a clear metapoetic resonance in this phrase. Readers of the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* know that Virgil uses the adjective *tenuis* metapoetically, of his own refined and learned style.[36] So, for example, during his poetic manifesto at the opening of *Eclogues* 6, the poet refers to the "slender reed" (*tenui . . . harundine*, *Ecl*. 6.8) on which he plays, an approach to be contrasted with that of the writers of "grim wars" (6.6–7). In the opening lines of the collection, and of Virgil's entire corpus, Tityrus is also playing on, significantly, a "slender reed-pipe" (*tenui . . . auena*, *Ecl*. 1.2). And in the introduction to his miniature epic about bees in *Georgics* 4, Virgil writes of the slender scale but hardly slender glory of the bees' work (*in tenui labor*; *at tenuis non gloria*, *Geo*. 4.6). He is also writing programmatically of his own work, which, although it too treats smaller things, with an emphasis on artistic refinement, will nevertheless earn him *gloria*.[37]

Virgil maintained the delicacy of this stylistic approach when writing his own "big" epic about war. The stylistic refinement is seen here in Almo's death-scene in the rich, far-reaching associations that the poet attaches to so many of the passage's words, in the artful compression of Virgil's textual model, Simoeisius' death-scene from *Iliad* 4, and in the subtly crafted—and ominous—reference to Cybele's *lavatio*. In short, the *tenuitas* of the *Aeneid* is apparent in the careful, concentrated attention to even the most fleeting of moments and characters, even the *tenuis uita* of Almo.

[35] So Fordyce (1977) ad loc., echoed by Horsfall (2000) ad loc., who observes "an almost tactile contrast to the choking gush of blood."

[36] On Virgil's programmatic use of *tenuis* (a translation of Callimachus' stylistically significant λεπτός), see Clausen (1964) 192–96 and (1987) 1–3, amid his discussion (1–14) that places all of Virgil's writing in the tradition of elegant, terse, Callimachean poetry; and Thomas (1988a) vol. 1, 1–3.

[37] See Thomas (1988a) ad 4.6 on the metapoetic significance of this passage.

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