PARNASSUS
Undergraduate Classical Journal

College of the Holy Cross | Volume III • MMXV
METAMORPHOSIS
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Editor’s Note

My two predecessors have both used their short but precious space at the beginning of this journal in part to offer a brief apologia for the title “Parnassus.” As they have eloquently explained, Parnassus (or Helicon) is a mountain in central Greece that was once considered the dwelling place of the Muses, nine goddesses who each held dominion over a form of art and inspired the practitioners of their craft. This mountain is of special interest to students of the Classics at Holy Cross for (as anyone who has had to run from Kimball to an ill-timed meeting in Hogan knows) the denizens of the College also inhabit an impressive hill – that is, Mount St. James. As such, the reasoning behind the appellation of this journal is obvious: our contributors are none other than contemporary types of the ancient Muses, whose love for knowledge and mastery over the written word animate this hill with their passion for the classical world.

Prior to this issue, however, it seems that only a few of the nine had graced the pages of this publication. Melpomene has been with us since the start in the various discussions of Euripides, Aeschylus, and whenever the issue of tragedy was addressed. Clio has been popular in depth if not in breadth, for she has inspired song on the historian Tacitus no less than three times, though Suetonius and Plutarch have earned a note or two in her performance. This journal could never have earned the title of “classical” had Calliope failed to sing of the warring man Aeneas, though I hope that she shall one day ring out the wrath of Achilles or the many twists and turns of Odysseus. Euterpe has contributed a single, solitary (and dare I say ignominious) line of Propertian elegy to the kalophony of her sisters.

In short, not a bad run thus far. But you may have noticed, dear reader, that a certain Muse has been conspicuously absent from the choir of Parnassus. Erato sung for us but one lyric poem, in the first year of this journal’s existence, and then fled to the seclusion of her chill grove to pluck her lyre in solitude, leaving a handful of her sisters behind to charm us without her. And although their efforts have certainly not been wasted (with the possible exception of Euterpe’s, that is), we have felt Erato’s absence keenly.
But no more talk of this sadness! For Erato has returned to the mountaintop to sing out her lyric once again. And she has provided us with no less than five poems for our edification and delight. She has cultivated a great harvest of fruits, from meditations on Orpheus and Tantalus to descriptions of Homeric heroes and a geographic walk around the Ancient World. Meanwhile, Polyhymnia chimes in with an ode to Excellence, Melpomene returns once more to sing of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, Clio to tell of the Jewish historian Josephus, and Thalia to buzz in the ear of Plato in the form of Aristophanes’ *Clouds*.

Of particular interest in this issue, however, are the three works that fall under the theme of “Metamorphosis.” Inspired by Prof. Nancy Andrews’s Ovid seminar, we have obtained three pieces that draw from myths from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, a sprawling series of stories of change. You will immediately notice Maggie MacMullin’s fine drawing of Icarus on the front cover. In it we see how the ill-fated feathers fall from their wooden apparatus onto the surface of the sea and how Icarus stares, struck with shock and fear, suspended for a moment while the last tiny drop of wax melts away in the glare of the sun. In a few pages you will read Corey Scannell’s sublime translation of the death of Thisbe, whose grief consumed her when she saw the body of her lover Pyramus, who himself had taken his life when he mistakenly thought his beloved had died. Finally, Kelsey Littlefield offers us a reflection on the relation between art and nature in the story of Pygmalion, who fell in love with a statue he carved from ivory. Each in their own way mediate on the power and nature of change and show how even several millennia later these ancient myths can speak to the reality in which we all participate.

The Muses, then, sing more powerfully now than ever before. I am curious to see if Terpsichore shall ever find a way to come lightly prancing through these delicate leaves of paper, or Urania a window through which she can direct our eyes to the cold light of stars. For the moment, though, seven Muses are enough, and now I leave you to listen to the songs that they have inspired.

– Steven Merola