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V.S. Lectures, No. 58

VIRGIL AND HIS CRITICS

Presidential Address, delivered to the Virgil Society on 16th February, 1963

by Sir John Lockwood, M.A., Ph.D., Ll.D.

Two years ago you listened with exemplary patience to my comments on some strange doctrines that had been propounded about Virgil. Incredulity was my motive. Who could be silent when the process of composition of the Aeneid was reduced to a deliberate mathematical exercise, the medium being the theoretical formula of the Golden Section? Why had we failed for so long to be outspoken about the strange rigmarole of the historico-anthropological extravaganza of Virgil's Mind at Work? I said my say, and hoped that we should escape further inanities and speculative hocus-pocus. In fact, it was my intention to devote my next address to a study of Turnus, and possibly some minor characters in the Aeneid. Had I not been carried away to a long duty-assignment in the tropical climes of South-East Asia last winter, that would have been my theme. But misfortunes never strike singly. Scarcely was I back in my study than a volume of Oxford Addresses on Poetry by the incumbent of the Oxford Chair of Poetry fell into my hands. The volume contained along with three other addresses three Oxford Chair of Poetry Lectures, The Dedicated Poet, The Anti-poetand The Personal Muse. I had no idea what an Anti-poet is. Newspapers, through their literary columns had introduced me to the phrases Anti-novel and Anti-play, but Anti-poet! No. Well, it was with no little surprise, not to say flabbergasted astonishment, that I found that Virgil was the Anti-poet. The lecture was approached with trepidation, suspicion, and fears that Robert Graves was 'at it again'. Now, he is himself a not inconsiderable literary figure. But he has a highly personal way of handling his material. I, Claudius and Claudius the God were entertaining works of fiction, supported by indiscriminate evidence, some reliable, some useless in any ordinary scholarly sense. His work on the classical myths was very much his own, arbitrary and inclined to be fanciful. As a poet, his standing is, I believe, deservedly good. It is as a poet, as much as a professor of poetry, that he ventured into his own particular quicksands of Virgilian criticism.

In passing, I cannot restrain a malicious desire to quote from one of his predecessors as Professor of Poetry, H.W. Garrod, who began a lecture at Harvard thus: "I think it was Seneca who first said, what Ben Jonson and many others have said after him, that the critic of poetry must be himself a poet. I wish I had the learning which would enable me to try out the dictum by a wide survey of the history of criticism. Such meagre half-learning as I have suggests to me that Seneca said either too much or too little. If from a review of the great critical names with which I am most familiar I were disposed to draw inference, really I think it would be that the critic of poetry must be a poet, but not a very good one. Aristotle, greatest of critics, wrote poetry, if a man be said to write poetry who writes an Ode to Virtue. If he was a good poet, he was an unlucky one, for only the critics know that he was a poet at all. The elder Scaliger once one of the authoritative names

in European criticism, was not only a poet, but a prolific one. Yet unless it was the younger Scaliger I do not know who ever thought his poetry good." And later Garrod writes: "The best criticism of other poets which a poet ever gives you is his own poetry." When you have heard a little of what Graves said about Virgil, you will wish that he had remained silent in rightful self-satisfaction over his own poetic productions. Yet the old Adam was still alive. The select biographical details on which he expands some pages are not designed to raise the credit of Virgil. Far from it. The inclusion of what the literary world nowadays chooses to call 'adult' topics is purposely discrediting. Others are just stupidities. What do you make of comments such as this: "Virgil's fear of destructive females explains Juno, Aeneas' persecutrix in the Aeneid; also the savage vilification of Cleopatra, Mark Antony's seductress; and Aeneas' scarcely controlled impulse to butcher Helen of Troy"? Strange conclusion from some words of Suetonius finding a different fault in Virgil.

He declares Virgil to have been completely without interest in the theme of the Georgics, guying him as "this patronizing city-man" and accusing him of "waiving ... factual truth". He even apparently believes that the length of time spent on its composition is adequate testimony to his disenchantment at his task, and has the audacity to say, after referring to Virgil's writing "at the average rate of one line a day" to say "I suspect that clever little Cebes drafted plenty of them". Critical of the whole tone of the Georgics, he goes on to say that "a more honest poet would have anticipated Goldsmith's Deserted Village, in distress that Augustus' victories had dealt another heavy blow to traditional Italian agriculture by further encouraging the growth of large estates run on slave labour". Of the Aeneid as a whole he says that Virgil "accepted the Aeneid commission (i.e., at Augustus' request), though plainly finding this a most uncongenial task". His critical comments on individual passages are petty and for the time being they shall pass unexamined. He swallows easily and joyously the whole Golden Section heresy ('Virgil never consulted the Muse; he only borrowed Apollo's slide rule'). Virgil's anxiety about the posthumous publication of the Aeneid comes out thus. "When Virgil died at the age of fifty-one, worth something like a quarter of a million pounds in modern money, the Aeneid was complete but not yet published. Conscious of its defects, and perhaps (let us be fair to him) repentant, he asked his executors to burn the manuscript." His summing-up of the poet - the Anti-poet - the Apollonian Anti-poet, is singular. "Publius Vergilius Maro, alias Virgil, has for two thousand years exercised an influence over Western culture out of all proportion to his merits either as a human being or as a poet. Virgil's pliability; his subservience; his narrowness; his denial of that stubborn imaginative freedom that the true poets who preceded him had valued; his perfect lack of originality, courage, honour, or even animal spirits - these were the negative qualities which first commended him to government circles, and have kept him in favour ever since." He was charged in The Times on 17th May 1962 as 'hoping with schoolboy zest to annoy the traditionalists by debunking Virgil'. With zest and self-righteous petulance he replied on 22nd May 1962: "The comments on Virgil in my second public lecture were based on biographical and textual data which had, it seems, convinced some of Virgil's contemporaries that, by the subordination of truth to expediency, he was betraying the best Graeco-Latin poetic

tradition. If this view is thought untenable, it should at least be responsibly refuted, not dismissed as mere school-boy naughtiness; especially at a time when attempts to impose political ideologies on poets have become a commonplace under dictatorships even more thorough than that of Virgil's patron Augustus." A good deal of his attack on Virgil derives from preconceived ideas of what is the nature of the true poet. (He takes Skelton as his example.) He distinguishes between Apollonian poetry and Muse poetry - the former being "composed in the forepart of the mind", i.e. - reasonably according to plan, not permitting personal emotions to break the smoothness of the verse, and affording a consciously aesthetic pleasure; the latter coming from the back of the mind; here I must quote his actual words: "An unaccountable product of a trance in which the emotions of love, fear, anger, or grief are profoundly engaged, though at the same time powerfully disciplined; in which intuitive thought reigns supralogically, and personal rhythm subdues metre to its purpose." But, it is fair to ask, does Virgil belong wholly to the disliked Apollonian type? That is the natural conclusion to be drawn from the remark "In my first address .... I spoke about the dedicated Muse poet, taking John Skelton as my example. Today .... I shall deal with the Apollonian anti-poet, his precise opposite."

For a moment or two we may take a closer look at the substance of his complaint against Virgil. Graves manifestly has a liking for the fragments of Naevius and for the rhythmic freedom of the native Saturnian metre. I do not understand why he declares that Naevius' successors and Virgil's predecessors "shamefacedly renounced their natural ballad inheritance and went all Greek". What justification is there for "shamefacedly"? In his view "shamefully" or even "shamelessly" might be right; but is there any good evidence that they felt shame about the direction in which they were taking Latin poetry?

And now I want to turn for a time from the nihilistic, condemnatory prejudices of Robert Graves, to the views expressed by another poet - not a less eminent performer - T.S. Eliot, in an address to the Society in 1944, if we are still to accept the prescriptive right of poets to be regarded as arbiters in the criticism of poets. How different was the more modest approach of Eliot to Virgil: no specialised knowledge or proficiency can confer the exclusive title to talk about Virgil. "Speakers of the most diverse capacities can bring his poetry to bear upon matters within their competence; can hope to contribute, from those studies to which they have given their minds, to the elucidation of his value; can try to offer, for the general use, the benefit of whatever wisdom Virgil may have helped them to acquire, in relation to their own experience of life." I have little doubt that Graves could query the estimate which Eliot makes of Virgil on the ground that Eliot was not discussing Virgil qua poet but rather qua classic. After all, Eliot's subject was "What is a Classic?" But, in the course of his exposition of his ideas of a Classic, which is only in part devoted to Virgil, Eliot has things to say about Virgil which are significant for our present purpose. He is silent about the qualities, the Muse aspects, of a poet to which Graves attaches supreme importance, not necessarily, or even probably, because he would deny them to Virgil, but because in any great poet, certainly in a poet like Virgil or Shakespeare,

such qualities are taken for granted. Graves has left us rather in the dark on the whole question of the poetic gift of Virgil, of his capacity for the lyrical and, in the modern idiom, the elegiac, which apparently represents the true form of poetry. Yet by implication, in his sharp attack on the extent to which Virgil, as it were by a deliberate and decisive act, based on a toadying attitude to the political and military powers of his time, distorted the true line of development of Roman poetry, he does not exclude the possibility that, but for alleged weaknesses of character, he could have been a genuine devotee of the Muse in the Gravesian sense. Graves, in spite of being a poet, must be a more insensitive reader than could have been thought possible, if he has read much of the Aeneid (and even, dare I say, of the Georgics?) without experiencing that frisson or grue which is the physical mark of the effect of Muse poetry. Where Graves seems to be in error is in his assumption that the sensation of the poet-creator in the moment of composition, the non-rational logically inexplicable disturbance of his consciousness, should be automatically recreated in the reader in its undisciplined form. Graves had spoken of the powerful disciplining of the emotions of the Muse poet. Virgil, better than most, succeeds through the majesty and elegance of his disciplined transmission of his own profound emotional experiences. Not for him happily the raw slices of life from the muddle and confusion of the sub-conscious which sometimes pass for the perfection of realism in the world of beatniks and "angry young men" (If the outpourings of these latter were a little more disciplined, they might be more convincing.)

But, to return to Eliot. When I first read his lecture on its publication, I was inclined to think it rather thin and insubstantial. But the passage of time, which, I hope, has not weakened my judgment more than is to be naturally expected, and opportunities for wider reading and for increasingly detached contemplation have reformed the first impressions of nearly 20 years ago. To read the lectures of Graves and Eliot together is in itself a salutary exercise, even when discounting the different objectives of their discourses. Graves seems petty, cheap, almost adolescent; Eliot balanced, experienced, fair, and unprejudiced. The first, and in many ways an especially important point which Eliot makes is that Virgil possesses all the qualities which go to make a true classic. This, as Eliot rightly says, does not entitle us to believe Virgil to have been the greatest poet of all time. It is not part of this present address to establish priorities among poets or even to pick a world Eleven or Fifteen, and Virgil will for the nonce be as Eliot sees him. Of the classical qualities which he has in mind that which he calls maturity is not only essential; it also, in a sense, comprehends all others. Put negatively, the principle can be stated that no classic is possible before a civilization has achieved full maturity. Such maturity, for a poet, means that the language and literature of his country are mature, that they have grown to full stature through the work of a succession of writers, who have brought them to the point where the hand of the master-poet alone is awaited. The master poet will not only have in his grasp a mature language, but maturity of mind and manners. One simple comment of Eliot here is of some force. "We may expect the language to approach maturity at the moment when it has a critical sense of the past, a confidence in the present, and no conscious doubt of the future"! This might sound like the advocacy of a kind of deliberate conformity to a clearly visible line of tradition. But the backward-

looking writer, the true conformist, is never a classic. One part of Virgil's greatness rests in the way in which, without any obvious conscious act or decision he is able to keep a happily poised balance between the whole of Rome's literary tradition and the living creativeness of his own day.

Now we have reached the point where Graves and Eliot are farthest apart. Eliot, having said that maturity of mind demands history and a real consciousness of history, goes on to say that "Consciousness of history cannot be fully awake, except where there is other history than the history of the poet's own people; we need this in order to see our own place in history. There must be the knowledge of the history of at least one highly civilised people, and of a people whose civilisation is sufficiently cognate to have influenced and entered into our own .... Virgil, like his contemporaries and predecessors, was constantly adapting and using the discoveries, traditions, and inventions of Greek poetry; ... we can say that no poet has ever shown a finer sense of proportion that Virgil, in the uses he made of Greek and of earlier Latin poetry". Eliot can see virtue in Virgil's borrowing from his predecessors. Graves finds them merely plagiarisms; "Nor did he ever invent where he could borrow" - an extraordinarily wild assertion based on no solid ground. The search for sources and influences in the case of most poets is an old game. In Virgil's own case it goes back to the anthology of his 'thefts' made by Perellius Faustus and the eight volumes of Ὁμοιότητες compiled by Quintus Octavius Avitus. If you want to see the relics of these early exercises, they can be found in Servius' commentary and the Sixth book of the Saturnalia of Macrobius. Eliot can see as a subject for admiration Virgil's "command of the complex structure, both of sense and sound", which he developed without any loss of the "resource of direct, brief and startling simplicity when the occasion required it". Graves seems to see in Virgil's way of employing language and diversifying the form of expression too much crude rhetoric and artificiality, too much distortion of the natural genius of Latin and Latin poetry, too much obedience to a bad tradition. You must be tired of quotations. But it is better to convict him out of his own mouth. The quotations will be a little disjointed but, I hope, fairly selected. Ennius is the first villain of his piece. "Ennius, the first Roman (so far as I know) to experiment with a quantitative hexameter, became the step-father of Latin poetry; educating it by sternly suppressing its natural inclinations ... In establishing his new metre, Ennius had to create a special poetic vocabulary of dialect or obsolete forms to assist versification." And so we get the revival of the old hardy criticisms of the devices for finding substitutes for names like "*Domitius Ahenobarbus* " or words like "*audiunt*" which will not fit into hexameters. "Virgil employed numerous other tricks and evasions for supplying manageable words. Also ... he further divorced poetry from common sense by the exploitation of "poetic licence". (Since when has common sense been the right criterion for poetry of any kind?)

"An 'olde worlde' vocabulary, unnatural grammatical inversions, and poetic licence were among the many curses bequeathed to English Apollonian poetry by the Virgil cult. Nevertheless Latin accentual verse remained fixed in popular song - the Legions used it - and eventually triumphed in such sacred chants as Dies irae Dies illa and in drinking songs like Mihi est propositum in taberna mori."

"Virgil's four principal predecessors, the poets Naevius, Ennius, Lucretius and Catullus, were men of determination, and had something urgent to say." "His (i.e., Ennius') surviving verse fragments show a tough spirit and imaginative magnificence." "Lucretius faced linguistic problems that had not troubled Ennius, but his passion often broke through the philosophic argument in lines of unmistakable beauty." "Catullus had learned from the Alexandrian critics that all long poems have their boring passages, and that to bore is the worst crime that a poet can commit. He therefore wrote no epics, constantly varied his metres, and did not let metrical difficulties thwart the plain sense of a poem by driving him to clever periphrasis .... Catullus .... expressed his loves, hates, etc. with absolute freedom." "The timorous, inoffensive Virgil, in contrast, found so little to say of personal value that the themes of both his best-known poems, The Georgics and The Aeneid, were forced on him by patrons. He never lampooned those in power, and never got into scrapes. He bartered his talent for social security; and wrote only hexameters - to which, for the sake of elegance, he applied new constrictive rules." When Graves says in the preface to the Addresses that "my strictures on Virgil were received without audible protest", he can surely not be justified in the unspoken but clearly intended conclusion that his audience was so naive, so unsophisticated, or so ignorant as to accept their sense or their truth. Silent audiences are not necessarily assenting audiences - I can draw no safe inferences from your silence so far today.

What I have said about Graves has perhaps created an impression that Eliot's Lecture by contrast is wholly right about Virgil. It is urgent that I recall my earlier comment that Eliot was discussing the nature of a classic and demonstrating within a very limited compass of time and description the major elements in Virgil which supported his title to be respected as a universal classic. He was not talking about Virgil's poetry in any wider or more detailed way. He was not, in essence, attempting a penetrative assessment of Virgil as a poet. We may wish that he had done the latter so that a more complete comparison of the critical attitudes to Virgil of two of our contemporary poets might have been possible, in the hope of exploring the validity of the assumption that a poet is self-evidently the only truly qualified judge of poetry. It would also have been valuable to have the views of A.E. Housman, but he unfortunately never wrote them down and cautiously refrained from expressing them publicly; it is fair to conjecture that he would have been nearer to Eliot than to the destructive Graves.

Virgil has not been short of commentators and admirers. Under the shock of the Oxford Lecture, it was a reassuring delight to pick up the Oxford text and read again the real poet and to thrust out of mind this sawdust travesty which the Lecture had conjured up from a modern poet's jaundiced judgment. It was a pleasure to turn back through the classical periodicals to read what the wise and learned scholar-analysts have written about him. Even in such matters as the use of rhetorical devices, scholars who are often pretty good judges, have fairly estimated their poetic value in the Aeneid. I was glad to be taken back to Professor Austin's article in the Classical Quarterly of some thirty-four years ago on 'Virgilian Assonance'. He describes Virgil as "in reality the most rhetorical of all the classical Latin poets". Nobody who is familiar (as this Society is) with Professor Austin's sensitive understanding of Virgilian verse would feel this description as denunciatory. There is one of his comments which I must give you. "It is a little odd that it should have

been left to Virgil, the recluse who shrank from the artificiality and loudness of the life of *causidicus*, to realise the possibilities of one of the tricks of rhetoric, to call it nothing better, which had long been proved in prose. One has only to compare the prose of Cicero, on the one hand, with that of writers such as Apuleius or Fronto or Tertullian on the other, to see how, when freed from the control of a master-hand it could so easily degenerate into a semblance of Swinburnian narcotic, rich but ranting."

It was a joy, too, to return again to the two chapters in Bowra's From Virgil to Milton - 'Some Characteristics of Literary Epic' and 'Virgil and the Ideal of Rome' with their subtly attractive examination of the many facets of the Aeneid and of the poet's vision of life that combine to give the poem its appeal alike to the intelligence and to the feelings, alike to the moral sense and to the social instinct. Reading Bowra again after eighteen years has (surprisingly to me) somehow transformed my attitude to his chapters. On first reading, they seemed to contain little, if anything, that was new or particularly striking. Yet now their lack of novelty of criticism counts for nothing, because the truth of much of his appreciation of Virgil's personal philosophy and of the shape that it takes in the poem is compensation enough.

And what of Mackail's edition? The most readable that there is, not overcomplicated with notes, introduced with the affectionate feeling of a poetic mind, disciplined but free. Taking it from my shelves and opening it once more after a too long interval, I was able to recapture the delighted excitement of the day when I acquired it years ago, and the regard for Mackail's tact and sensibility which then possessed me. It brought back, too, the remembrance of the year when we celebrated the Bimillenary of Virgil's birth, when here in London John Sparrow read a fascinating paper on the Dido episode, in which he sought to show that what fault there was in the relations between Dido and Aeneas was Dido's and Mackail, who was in the chair, spent almost as long in demolishing with perfect critical discretion and literary power this unorthodoxy.

And having thought again of the enthusiasms of that year, I picked up again a slim forgotten volume of three addresses by American scholars in that year of celebration. Mr. C.G. Osgood began his address on 'Virgil and the English Mind' by saying, "We are met to wish Publius Virgilius Maro many happy returns of the day. Not that he is greatly in need of our encouragement. To be hale and hearty and still going strong ... renders our wishes, however cordial, a bit superfluous." (O Graves, where is thy sting?) But I did not mention Osgood only for his exordium. He has a passage when, though disfigured by a pair of unnecessarily odd similes, expresses something of what creates Virgil's universality and continuing modernity. Eliot did not quite come down to the discrimination of these universal elements, but they are, I believe, implicit in his concept of 'comprehensiveness'. Eliot in the place where he deals with 'comprehensiveness' is almost propounding a philosophy of the history of literature. Osgood is moving in the more pedestrian sphere of literary history and literary relevance to the old world and the new. "For when all is said - and a good deal has been said in the course of these two thousand years - it is Virgil's peculiar distinction to stand pre-eminent as a towering mountain isthmus between the Ancient and the Modern world. Other thoroughfares there are, but Virgil's is the high road, the beaten path, by which the subtlest and the most precious influences have passed from the old

civilization to the making of the new. As a poet he chose such themes as enabled him to gather an immense store of heroic legend, mythology, ritual, ideas, and tradition out of the dim past, already antique to him. He grows out of the old heroic poetry as a flourishing oak out of the stump of a primeval forest monarch. But with all these matters he mingles interests, and motives, and passions, which speak to the modern mind in its own idiom. His keen interest in physical science and natural causes is modern; his mastery of the grand passion and its subtleties is modern; his sense of the mystery and beauty of Nature and his love of lowly and homely life, his warm humanity, his eye for the picturesque, his sentimentality at times - all these are modern." These are sensible remarks. They are not the product of *parti-pris*, of prejudice or uncontrolled favour.

As I glance over what I have written and what I have quoted, the realisation occurs to me that I have neglected to define, except by the vaguest implication, what the good critic should be and do. Graves showed what he should not be, because, so far as he did anything positive at all, he applied to Virgil a fixed critical standard which is inappropriate and irrelevant. Criticism does not rely on a single unvarying yardstick. To test what is often called literary poetry by the criterion applicable to so-called authentic poetry invalidates the whole critical operation. Now, too late, I see that I ought to have followed a different line in this address. My theme should have been: What constitutes a good Virgilian critic? Perhaps you will invite someone to answer that question one day.

We have all read and heard a wide range of commentary on every side of Virgil's poetry and purpose. We all form our own judgments. We are affected by our literary taste and by the arbitrary limitations of our experiences among books and authors. Each is his own best critic, since it is the degree and depth of personal satisfaction which determines the reality and honesty of one's critical estimates. Nothing, from however authoritative a source it may originate, should persuade us against our own inner feelings and convictions.

I.A. Richards, a formidable writer on criticism, succinctly said "The qualifications of a good critic are three. He must be an adept at experiencing, without eccentricities, the state of mind relevant to the work of art he is judging. Secondly, he must be able to distinguish experiences from one another as regards their less superficial features. Thirdly, he must be a sound judge of values." Whether these three qualifications fall short of what a critic should possess, you will best be able to judge. They need, of course, a good deal of explanation, and I have never been quite sure that I understood Richards' effort to do so.

Of Virgil himself, we will all make our individual appraisals of his achievement in the several parts of his works. But I have no doubt that there will be unanimity among us here today in agreeing with Mr. Patric Dickinson, who in introducing his translation of the Aeneid says: "My own starting-point is that the Aeneid is a poem to be enjoyed." We have enjoyed it and will go on enjoying it, and no Philistines or iconoclasts from Mallorca and Oxford will stop us.

V.S. Lectures, No. 59

VIRGILIAN PARODIES AND IMITATIONS

The substance of a lecture delivered to the Virgil Society on 20th October 1962

by H.H. Huxley, M.A.

The privilege of reading a second paper to a learned audience is fraught with hazards. Is one destined to overhear an echo of the question put to Francisco and Bernardo on the chilly ramparts of Elsinore - "What, has this thing appear'd again tonight?" Or is one to be involved in the Scylla-Charybdis dilemma where Scylla represents the virtual certainty that no-one remembers or would wish to be reminded of the previous occasion, and Charybdis the horrifying possibility that someone does.

If I were to be so old-fashioned as to append a classical motto to the *farrago Vergiliana* which I am setting before you, I should plump for *dulce est desipere in loco*, though aware of the presumptuousness of the predicate *dulce* and conscious that scholars with a proper sense of *gravitas* - not to speak of those 'learned philologists who chase / A panting syllable through time and space' - would object that the Institute of Classical Studies is hardly an appropriate venue for a display of *desipientia*!

Only the flimsiest of partitions separates the gravity of sublime utterance from the wicked and wounding parody. The practice of quoting and misquoting Virgil began in the poet's own lifetime, and recognition of this fact both enriches and enlivens our study of Imperial Latin. The ability to produce a convincing specimen of another man's style has been admired in all ages - from Aristophanes' "Frogs" to Eliot's "Practical Cats". For the sources of my illustrations I have gone, as Falstaff for his ragged army, to the highways and byways of our literature. If I should mention authors or episodes outside your ken, it may be matter for congratulation - if you recall that 'not to know some trifles is a praise'.

One of the less publicised benefits of a classical education is that - especially if you are old enough not to find a pun too excruciating - you may enliven your correspondence by a deliberate mistranslation of a piece of Latin familiar to your friend.

> *sic canibus catulos similis, sic matribus haedos*
> *noram, sic parvis componere magna solebam.*

Sir Henry Wotton, writing in 1589 to his brother Edward, happily perpetrated a species of *paronomasia* which - *expertus loquor*! - the young find particularly nauseating. "All these great matters," he wrote, "did Mr. Parvis compose - *sic Parvis componere magna solebat* - in another sense." This sheds an interesting light on a Provost of Eton who could give to the world such gems as "You meaner beauties of the night" and "How happy is he born and taught".

My appreciation of the second Eclogue has suffered from my addiction to the works of Byron, not least to his great epic-satire. Stanzas 40 to 45 of the first canto are devoted to Don Juan's classical education and in them are embedded such pearls of criticism as the following -

> "And then what proper person can be partial
> To all those nauseous epigrams of Martial?"

Virgil almost scores full marks for his freedom from what the Don finds morally reprehensible -

> "But Virgil's songs are pure, except that horrid one
> Beginning with 'Formosum pastor Corydon'."

The same Eclogue provides a motto for Byron's "Literary Eclogue", "The Blues". I refer to the injunction *nimium ne crede colori* , which Arthur Platt has said is the equivalent of 'Beauty is but skin deep'. The first scene is laid outside a college lecture-room in London I hope I may be forgiven a short quotation from it -

> Inkel. You wed with Miss Lilac! It would be your perdition:
> She's a poet, a chymist, a mathematician.
> Tracy. I say she's an angel.
> Inkel. Say rather an angle.
> If you and she marry, you'll certainly wrangle.

With this awareness of the context we are prepared for Byron's expansion of Virgil's words -

> O trust not, ye beautiful creatures, to hue,
> Though your hair were as red as your stockings are blue.

We have mentioned a numerate female and are reminded of an occasion when the formidable W.E. Heitland unbent sufficiently to celebrate Miss Fawcett, who in 1890 was placed "above the Senior Wrangler". Remembering his Aeneid V (*notumque furens quid femina possit*) he gave his doggerel the title "Sapiens quid femina possit". Incidentally when C.S. Calverley translated Cowper's Boadicea into Alcaics he called his version "Furens quid femina possit".

C.S.C.'s Carmen Saeculare (which I annotated for the Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical Society: Literary and Historical Section, Vol.VI 1950, pp. 472-481) and which drew from J.K Stephen these words -

> *"Ripe scholar! Virgil's self would not be chary*
> *Of praises for thy Carmen Seculare."* (Lapsus Calami, 1891)

- blended Ecl.II, 17 (*o formose puer, nimium ne crede colori* !) with Aen.IV, 172 (*coniugium vocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam*) to produce the following delicious couplet -

> *O fumose puer, nimium ne crede Baconi:*
> *Manillas vocat, hoc praetexit nomine caules.*

Here the unscrupulous Cambridge tobacconist, Bacon, immortalised in C.S.C's "Ode to Tobacco", is said to be selling cabbage-leaves as genuine Manilla

cigars. Though numerous phrases from the Eclogues (e.g. *nobis deus otia fecit, paulo maiora canamus*, etc.) serve as the mottoes or even the titles of works by poets as varied as Byron, Clough, Cowper, Crabbe, Cowley, Flatman, Gay, Hughes, Milton Pope and Prior, humorous applications are rare and we must go rather to the *pingue solum* of the Georgics.

Sometimes an adapter or parodist incorporating into his poem a *locus Vergilianus* seems to go out of his way to ensure that the map-reference, as it were, is identical in both cases. This is certainly true of the numerous Georgics which created a glut on the British book-market in the 18th century. No less intriguing to the poetasters who all too frequently *crassa Minerva* churned out their too-faithful copies of Virgil's masterpiece was the periodic structure of familiar passages. Compare, for example, Georgics I, 1-5 with the poem of "The Hop-Garden", a Georgic by Christopher Smart (1722-91) -

"The land that answers best the farmer's care,
And silvers to maturity the hop;
When to inhume the plants; to turn the glebe;
And wed the tendrils to th' aspiring poles;
Under what sign to pluck the crop, and how
To cure and in capacious sacks infold,
I teach in verse Miltonian."

Smart's debt to Virgilian syntax and language is obvious, but notice too the claim to follow Milton. Imitation of Miltonian style is a prominent feature of much 18th century versification in the didactic tradition, for "Paradise Lost" was deemed to teach the noblest lessons in the noblest words. One of the best and one of the most truly Virgilian of these writers was John Philips whose poem "Cyder" (1708) has been described as 'the first blank verse poem of importance since Milton'

James Grainger's West Indian Georgic, "The Sugar Cane" (1763) has attained the unwelcome distinction of extensive quotation in "The Stuffed Owl". On the fringe of the Johnsonian circle he read aloud at Reynold's house to the vast amusement of Johnson and Boswell an exordium which went thus - "Now, Muse, let's sing of rats." The preface of "The Sugar Cane" is a fair sample of the whole work -

"What soil the cane affects; what care demands;
Beneath what soil to plant; what ills await;
How the hot nectar best to crystallize;
And Afric's sable progeny to treat:
A Muse, that long hath wandered in the grove
Of myrtle-indolence attempts to sing."

The negro slaves, "Afric's sable progeny", are treated in a manner reminiscent rather of Cato and Columella than of Seneca, but even if we are able to put out of mind economic and social questions, our mind finds relief from dullness only in the frequent alarming lapses from good taste.

A short and jolly Georgic, light of touch and free from the tedium of over-elaboration, is John Gay's "Trivia; or the Art of Walking the Streets of London" (1715). Again the opening leans heavily on *Quid faciat laetas segetes* -

"Through winter streets to steer your course aright,
How to walk clean by day, and safe by night,
How jostling crowds with prudence to decline,
When to assert the wall, and when resign,
I sing: thou, Trivia, goddess, aid my song,
Through spacious streets conduct thy bard along."

Sometimes an appropriate Virgilian quotation successfully decorates an elegant prose passage. If the fine writing is deliberately exaggerated, the intended comic effect is heightened. We must all have our favourite instances. Mine is chosen from a wish to introduce to a wider circle that brilliant classical parodist 'Father Prout' (the Rev. Francis Mahony of Cork, 1804-66), 'an Irish potato seasoned with Attic salt'. In one *jeu d'esprit* he reflects on the miasmal gloom of November and the hideous situation of mankind if in that murky month no article from his cheerful pen were to lift the heavy pall of darkness. "Sorrowful indeed," he writes, "would be the condition of mankind, and very deplorable the November chapter of accidents, if in addition to sources of sublunary desolation over which we have no control, Father Prout were, like the sun, to obnubilate his disk, veil his splendour, and withdraw the light of his countenance from a gloomy and disconsolate world;

caput obscura nitidum ferrugine texit,
impiaque aeternum timuerunt saecula noctem.

Then indeed would unmitigated darkness thicken the already palpable obscure; dullness would place another padlock on the human understanding, and knowledge be at one grand entrance fairly shut out. But no! such a calamity, such a 'disastrous twilight' shall not befall our planet, as long as there is MS in 'the chest' or shot in the locker. Generations yet unborn shall walk in the blaze of Prout's wisdom, and the learned of our own day shall continue to light the pipe of knowledge at the *focus* of this intense luminary."

A brief glimpse at Pope's technique in fusing Virgilian passages will be seen if we recall Geo. I, 481-3 -

Proluit insano contorquens uertice siluas
fluuiorum rex Eridanus camposque per omnis
cum stabulis armenta tulit.

and ibid., IV, 372-3 -

Eridanus, quo non alius per pinguia culta
in mare purpureum uiolentior effluit amnis.

In Book II of the Dunciad Pope intended us to call to mind the funeral games of Aeneid V when he described the contests for fustian poets, disputants and party hacks, in which the appropriately-chosen prizes will be won by those whose belly-flop into the foetid slime of the Fleet Dike disturb the most mud -

"This labour passed, by Bridewell all descend,
(As morning pray'r and flagellation end)
To where Fleet Ditch with disemboguing streams
Rolls the large tribute of dead dogs to Thames,
The king of dykes! than whom no sluice of mud
With deeper sable blots the silver flood."

The second Georgic begins thus -

Hacterus aruorum cultus et sidera caeli;
nunc te, Bacche, canam.

This opening is unmistakeably imitated in Claudian, XXII, I - *Hacterus armatæ laudes*, followed in line 6 by *principio* and line 9 by *nam*, as in Geo.II we find *principio* (line 9) and *namque* (line 10). But *hacterus* cast its spell over the British didactic poets. The second book of John Armstrong's "Art of Preserving Health" begins -

"Enough of air. A desert subject now
Rougher and wilder rises to my sight."

Except when the learned doctor almost bursts a blood-vessel in expressing his detestation of the athletic fool or fulminates against those who sap their strength by over-indulgence and "in the wanton arms / Of twining Lais melt their manhood down", he offers little that is not soporific. The West Indian Muse begs again to be quoted. Virgil, I need not remind you, knew that every farm must have a muck-heap, but - to quote Addison - "he tossed about his dung with an air of majesty". He does not make poor Grainger's mistake of thrusting it under the divine nostrils of the Pierides -

"Enough of composts, Muse, of soils enough."

Perhaps the bard thought that so magnificent a chiasmus would disarm criticism! Grainger's second book opens even more startlingly with the ambiguous phrase - "Enough of culture."

Virgil's well-known passage on how to choose a horse begins at line 72 of Georgics III. It is more than a coincidence that the doctor's advice on the selection of a negro slave begins also at line 72 -

"Must thou from Afric reinforce thy gang?
Let health and youth their every sinew firm;
Clear roll their ample eyes; their tongue be red;
Broad swell their chest; their shoulders wide expand;
Not prominent their belly; clean and strong
Their thighs and legs, in just proportion rise.
Such soon will brave the fervours of the clime;
And free from ails that kill the negro train,
An useful servitude will long support."

Geo.IV, 6-7 is rendered thus in Dryden's translation of 1697 -

"Slight is the subject, but the praise not small,
If heaven assist, and Phoebus hear my call."

Lines 5-6 (almost a numerical parallel) of Pope's Rape of the Lock (1712) run as follows -

"Slight is the subject, but not so the praise,
If she inspire, and he approve my lays."

Incidentally the same preface contains clear references to Geo.IV, 86 (cf. "What mighty contests rise from trivial things" and *hi motus animorum atque haec certamina tanta*) and Aen.I, 11 (cf. "And in soft bosoms dwells such mighty

rage" and *tantaene animis caelestibus irae*). Some seventy years later a lady fond of blank verse asked a poet to compose a poem in it on the subject of "The Sofa". Lines 6 and 7 of his seven line invocation (the same length as in Geo.IV) are -

> "The theme though humble, yet august and proud
> Th' occasion - for the Fair commands the song."

The Fair was Lady Austen, whom he met in 1781 at the age of 50. The muse visited Cowper more assiduously than she visited the Mantuan, for 773 verses (including the famous 'God made the country and man made the town') were speedily produced; five books on related themes followed within fourteen months, the whole receiving the not unsuitable title of "The Task". Before we bid it farewell let us remember that Cowper's homage to the author of the *laudes Italiae* (Geo.II, 136-76) is the celebrated passage ("The Task", II, 206-254) which begins "England, with all thy faults, I love thee still - ".

Of the so-called digressions in the Georgics it is doubtful if any is more admired than the loving description of the *Corycius senex* in Book Four. In the affections of the eighteenth century he had a rival, a rival who followed him *non passibus aequis*, in the person of Claudian's *senex Veronensis*, and with him he is sometimes compared. In a letter to Wm. Johnson Temple, Boswell refers to Sir Alexander Dick as "a *Corycius senex*, quite a classical man and much of an Italian in pleasantness of disposition", adding that he possessed a fine seat just a mile from town - a striking contrast to the *pauca relicti iugera ruris* of the Tarentine beekeeper! In the "Letter to the People of Scotland against the Attempt to diminish the Number of the Lords of Session" Boswell wrote "As long as British literature and British politics shall endure, it will be said of Edmund Burke *Regum aequabat opes animis*". In his seventies the same author returned to this Virgilian tag. "Let them look inwards and be satisfied," he said, "recollecting with conscious pride what Virgil finely says of the *Corycius senex*, and which I have in another place with truth and sincerity applied to Mr. Burke - *Regum aequabat opes animis.*" The quotability of Virgil's thought had of course been seen by Seneca, who wrote (De Beneficiis, I, vii) *non numquam enim magis nos obligat, qui dedit parua magnifice, qui "regum aequauit opes animo", qui exiguum tribuit sed libenter, qui paupertatis suae oblitus est, dum meam respicit.*

Praise of the Tarentine veteran may take the form of 'left-handed compliment' when it is indirectly employed to stress the alleged deficiencies of the Aeneid. Let us hear again Father Prout, the erudite Jesuit from Cork. "*Ille ego qui quondam* is an old Latin formula, first used in the reign of Augustus, to connect the epic cantos of the warlike Aeneid with a far more polished and irreproachable poem, its agricultural predecessor. Virgil (something like Lord Althorp when he indulges in a day-dream and thinks posterity will forgive his political blunders in consideration of his excellent breed of cattle) sought thus to bolster up the manifest imperfections of his heroic and epic characters by a wrong reference to the unexceptionable Meliboeus and to that excellent old Calabrian farmer whose bees hummed so tunefully under the lofty towers of Oebalia. This is an old trick: it is part of the tactics of literature, well understood by that awfully numerous fraternity, the novel writers, who never fail on the title-page of each successive production to mention some

previous performance of glorious memory."

Dryden's reasons for omitting from his Aeneid the disputed verses Ia - Ie of the first book are set out in his dedication to the Lord Marquis of Normanby, where after being obliged to display the commodity he is so reluctant to pronounce saleable he damns what he describes as 'these notorious botches' in the following words - "If there be not a tolerable line in all these six (sc. the three couplets of his translation) the prefacer gave me no occasion to write better."

But *ille ego qui quondam* and its fellow-culprits were accepted as genuine by many of Virgil's admirers. The first four words of the preface of Paradise Regain'd translate literally these Latin words -

"I who ere while the happy garden sung,
By one mans disobedience lost, now sing
Recover'd Paradise to all mankind."

That was in 1671. A century later Cowper in the first book of The Task imitated the rejected preface of the Aeneid; though, if the words are carefully examined, it will be clear that he had also in mind the 'sphragis-poem' (Geo. IV,559-566) with its miniature autobiography -

"I sing the Sofa, I who lately sang
Truth, Hope and Charity, and touched with awe
The solemn chords, and with a trembling hand,
Escap'd with pain from that adventrous flight,
Now seek repose upon an humbler theme."

A little annotation may be helpful here. Truth, Hope and Charity were composed between Jan., 1781 and July of that year; The Sofa was begun in July, 1783. The phrase 'adventrous flight' is a conscious borrowing from the prologue of Paradise Lost and suggests the mock-heroic tone of the poem. In the ambiguity of 'seek repose upon' we have a delightful example of the *molle atque facetum* in the Olney poet. But by placing 'I sing the Sofa' (= *Arma uirumque*) before 'I, who lately sang' (= *Ille ego qui quondam*)does he intend to keep us guessing about his own views on the authorship of Aen., I, Ia - Ie? Nearly eighty years before Milton Edmund Spenser had reproduced in the first stanza of The Faerie Queene the verses in question -

"Lo I the man, whose Muse whilome did maske,
As time her taught, in lowly Shepheards weeds;
Am now enforst a far unfitter taske,
From trumpets sterne to chaunge mine oaten reeds,
And sing of Knights and Laides gentle deeds."

I introduce Spenser out of chronological order because I should like to consider for a while Aen.,I,8-II (*Musa, mihi causas memora ..... tantaene animis caelestibus irae ?*) In 1590, six years before The Faerie Queene was published, Spenser had dedicated his epic burlesque Muiopotmos: or the Fate of the Butterflie (a work of 440 verses, almost as long as the Culex of which Spenser wrote an expanded version entitled Virgils Gnat) to 'the right worthy and vertuous ladie, the Ladie Carey'. The fable concerns a handsome butterfly called Clarion who is piteously enticed into the sticky web of his arch-enemy,

the spider Aragnoll. Clarion's fate, expressed in the closing lines, recall Aen.XII, 951-2 -

ast illi soluuntur frigore membra
uitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras.

The lepidopteron expires thus -

"his deepe groning spright,
In bloodie streames foorth fled into the aire,
His bodie left the spectacle of care."

Muiopotmos, after the quaint alliteration of the opening line "I sing of deadly dolorous debate" concludes its invocation thus -

"Reveale to me, and all the meanes detect,
Through which sad Clarion did at last declyne
To lowest wretchedness; and is there then
Such rancour in the hearts of mightie men?"

To Pope's imitation of *tantaene animis caelestibus irae* reference has been made on an earlier page.

Lord Byron, in the Postscript to the Second Edition of English Bards and Scotch Reviewers, alludes to the ravagery of the Edinburgh Reviewers before quoting Aen.,I.11. As he is on the eve of departure to the Near East he hopes to light his pipe in Persia with the next number of the offending journal. That this quotation was a favourite of his may be seen by its humorous abbreviation in Canto XII, stanza 33 of Don Juan.

All of us have our favourite applications of classical authors - even Virgil must not be exempt. Indeed his skill as a parodist is unquestioned. I have tried to show you a few of mine. If I have at times turned too abruptly from the well-kept highways of "Eng.Lit." to unadopted cul-de-sacs and even to muddy bridle-paths I ask your pardon. May I summarize my attitude in two hexameters a friend of Virgil very nearly wrote -

o imitatores, fidum pecus, ut mihi saepe
lusum, saepe iocum uestrae mouere Camenae!

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THE SENSE OF THE PAST IN VIRGIL

A lecture delivered to the Virgil Society
on 24th November 1962

by H. MacL. Currie, M.A.

"*Ab Augusto Aeneidem propositam scripsit.*" Thus Servius on the genesis of the greatest work in the Latin tongue and one of the greatest and most influential in European cultural history.[1*] How welcome the imperial suggestion initially was to Virgil is not known, but in succeeding ages people of taste and judgment have been able to declare with complete conviction that the man and the opportunity met.[2] Not that Virgil's mastery is to be discerned solely in such matters as style, metre and language. As Professor Pöschl at the beginning of his valuable book on the Aeneid[3] remarks, Virgil is the first European who consciously composed symbolic poetry. Homer, he allows, is symbolic, but only in spite of himself. In comparison with earlier epic the Aeneid in its total concept is larger, in spiritual dimensions wider. The vast Bellum Punicum of Naevius and the Annales of Ennius were versified chronicles, and going back to the oral epic of "those incomparable poets, Homer" (to borrow Max Beerbohm's phrase), we find it quite different in scope and intention, though, of course, Virgil's debt to it in many points is manifest. The Iliad and the Odyssey represent to us "Primary Epic" (a term to be preferred to older critics' "Primitive Epic"), whilst in Virgil's "Secondary Epic" we see that "Homer's world of heroic individuals begins to give way to a Roman world of complex responsibilities" (to quote some words of Mr. R.D. Williams in a paper read to this Society[4]). In Virgil there is an enlargement of sensibility, a profound apprehension of the universal, a subtle allusiveness. At whatever level we inspect it the Aeneid has an originality and freshness that mark it as one of the most significant creations of the human mind. The nationalistic theme, embarrassing as it possibly was to the poet in the early stages when he was pondering on his task, was transfigured and given wider import. The poem, with its complex symbolism, dispenses in its course reflections and insights on the moral condition of man and his relationship to the universe as well as general truths and lessons, and how much we can profit from the poet's messages - he has many things to say - depends on our sensitivity and willingness or ability to listen with sympathetic attention. In assessing symbolic meaning, as opposed to interpreting allegory in which one path only of elucidation can be followed, there is much room for personal opinions, but the most diverse may be equally valid. The poem is not always the same thing, the same experience; it changes as we change and is re-created for the perceptive reader every time he turns to it, revealing new depths and layers of meaning. The great work of art suggests much more than it directly conveys, and it is right for the reader to stretch forth and take rather than sit passively receiving, for the ancient belief that the poet composes under

* The notes to this Lecture appear on pages 30-32.

divine afflatus and says more than he knows is not really an insubstantial whimsy. But, even though literary criticism may basically be an exchange of subjective impressions, there are interpretations which can confidently be stigmatised as extravagant and improbable. The Aeneid, so long to make, is poetry of Apollo, not of Dionysus, a poetry of thought and measured emotion; there is no thyroidal ecstasy about it, a fact which has earned it the opprobrious contempt of Mr. Robert Graves, a litterateur whose opinions are stronger than his scholarship.[5] The very profundity of the work has been the source of demonstrable error in its exegesis; it has proved a wonderful quarry for the hewing-out of special theories. Allegorical meaning has been detected at almost every point, and the Italian scholar Sforza in a notorious article (C.R., 49 (1935), 97-108) has actually tried to persuade us that the Aeneid is a vast satire on Augustan ideals - a fantastic notion.

With the production of Virgil's literary epic European literature took a mighty stride forward.[6] As one reads the poem with full awareness one discerns a self-conscious artist at work. We feel that we are in the presence of an architectonic intelligence[7] and a soul that is, to paraphrase some words of F. Klingner, in tune with the unseen power beyond creation. This mystical element in Virgil has attracted many people throughout the ages; in this paper we shall be concerned with a quality related to this, his profound sense of the past and of the process of Rome's history and destiny.

The question of chronology, the supposed sequence of events, in the Aeneid does not fall within our present scope. It has been fully treated, not without wit or pedantry, in R. Mandra's book "The Time Element in the Aeneid" (1935). Such studies, laudable doubtless from one point of view, can be the cause of a certain despair in the reader. Does one really want a chart or time-table in reading Aeneid III? May not one justifiably suppose that Virgil, like Conrad in "Nostromo", intended to do no more than bring about the impression of reality and that temporal or geographical exactitude is not to be rigorously demanded?

Again, the time factor in Virgil's handling of his narrative as it has been discussed by Mehmel[8] and, very recently, by H. and A. Thornton[9] will not be considered in what follows.

Before we settle down in earnest to the advertised topic, there are two points about the ancient view of history which I wish to make. The first will later become relevant to the argument; the second, so easily overlooked in our attempts to appreciate the mental atmosphere of the ancients, deserves to be borne in mind when we reflect on Virgil's attitude to his nation's past. Great art is not timeless, as Professor Kitto wisely reminds us, and though total recovery of the ancient point of view is beyond our reach, we must rid ourselves as much as possible of our clinging modern prepossessions and by making use of all the resources of scholarship strive to get nearer in spirit to the classical writers, for all such effort is rich in reward.

In studying the beginnings of historiography amongst the Greeks what we chiefly observe is that the scope of what was recorded was in the main controlled by the researcher's personal experience of the events or the recollections of witnesses who were available for examination. National and

ecumenical history with a much wider temporal range does not appear till the Hellenistic age when many frontiers, intellectual as well as territorial, were transcended. Amongst Roman historians an already established, endemic feeling for the past was given strength and direction by Hellenistic precept. Pervading classical historiography, however, is an unconsciously assumed metaphysical theory of "substantialism" which originated amongst the Greeks. It was an abiding feature of Greek thought to hold that under the apparent multiplicity of phenomena there lay something constant and unchanging. The economy typical of Greek art and literature is to be explained by their desire to cut away all the transient or immaterial in their search for the essence. This way of thinking is present in the historians who tended to look on events as important in so far as they threw light on the eternal and substantial realities of which they are mere accidents.[10] This philosophical position was taken over by the Romans through a process of osmosis and it affected their thought not only with respect to history but in other ways also; the notion of the *iurisprudentes* that there was an unwritten "law of nature" is one example, and in fact the whole of Roman law is built upon a substantialist basis. In the work of Virgil's younger contemporary Livy this concept is found in all its nakedness. Rome has existed from immemorial antiquity complete with all her institutions, changeless and everlasting; there is no sense of historical development. "Poetry is more philosophical than history", says Aristotle (Poetics, 1451b5), and in Virgil the approach is different[11]). While in the Aeneid he takes the Roman character as something "given", predicating as aboriginal the qualities of *gravitas*, *pietas*, *constantia* and *auctoritas*, he nevertheless makes us aware of the immense struggle entailed to realise these in nationhood. Frustrated hopes, anxious undertakings, dangers and sorrows were the portion of the founding fathers, and reflections on these mythical origins would fill the reader's mind with consciousness of the nation's past achievement, carrying his imagination up and down the corridors of time. *tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem*. As C.S. Lewis has well observed,[12] reading the Aeneid gives one the sense of having lived through so much, and this would be no less true for a Roman than it is for us.

Passing now to the second, more general point I would ask you to notice that another factor obstructing historical vision amongst the ancients was the lack of distinct periodisation.[13] In ancient authors we find such words as παλαιός and *antiquus* applied with subjective vagueness. The past could not be visualised in the schematised form which later European ages have found useful and even necessary for the construction of historical judgments. Without any objective divisions, therefore, the past had to be envisaged and distinguished according to the standpoint of the individual writer. Time for the ancients, if they were ever aware of themselves thinking about it, might have seemed like a mist which, enveloping a town, is viewed from a mountain, roofs, trees and towers appearing through it here and there in varying degrees of visibility. Roman scholars had attempted to establish the date of the City's foundation in order to provide a national chronology; Ennius had put it around 900 B.C., Cincius Alimentus at 728 B.C., and finally the learned Varro fixed it canonically at 753 B.C.[14] But the Varronian Era cannot, any more than the others, be said to have generally permeated Roman consciousness. Romans, at least in the classical period, remained without a distinct, universally

recognised time-scale, though Varro's computation was of increasing use to researchers. For us, however, the Christian Era has focused historical perspective. After the proposal of the Abbot Dionysius Exiguus in the sixth century A.D. that reckoning be made from the birth of Christ was adopted a shape was imposed upon time. Judaeo-Christian teaching, too, it may be asserted, has conditioned the consciousness of time in most people perceptibly or imperceptibly, whether they be *domestici Fidei* or not; the doctrine of divine creation has given a *terminus a quo* -- the human mind is awed into impotence before the thought of infinity and craves boundaries -- and history witnesses the working-out of a plan, however obscure, which is to reach a divinely appointed consummation.[15] A kind of historical determinism has thus evolved which is often to be found lurking in the backyard of the Western mentality, otherwise possibly matter-of-fact or agnostic, ready to be used as a solace, should need arise, against the bleakness of a patternless infinite.

With all this said, Virgil the interpreter of history must now claim our attention. In the Aeneid the sense of time and history is never far off and we are going to examine together some of the ways in which Virgil induces this sense in the imaginative reader who willingly exposes his mind to what the poet offers.

The so-called "Song of Iopas" with which the first book ends (740-6) has been the cause of much learned discussion. What function does it serve? Medieval allegorising provided an easy answer, seeing the whole of Aeneid I as a representation of babyhood and Iopas' song as a lullaby.[16] But this will hardly satisfy us. Professor Pöschl suggests that the song symbolises Dido's inner impulses, her desire to prolong the night. Dido has already been compared to Diana (the moon) and Aeneas to Apollo (the sun), and Professor Pöschl concludes that the *errores* and *labores* of these two heavenly bodies symbolise the fates of both mortals. This is perhaps true; criticism dealing with symbolism is subjective and either plausible or implausible; compulsive proof is out of the question. Acknowledging, then, with all due respect Professor Pöschl's contribution, I should like to indicate another approach in the hope that it may not seem too wild. In his admirably perceptive book, "Hamlet: Father and Son" (Oxford, 1955), Professor Peter Alexander suggests that the core of the drama is the opposition of two ages with their differing ideals. Wittenberg, the University, culture and speculation are set over against the heroic past represented by the ghost of Hamlet's father. And the point is peculiarly enforced by the foreshortening effect achieved in the first act with the encounter on the battlements at Elsinore. An illuminating definition of this kind of foreshortening is quoted by Professor Alexander from Henry James: foreshortening is "representation arrived at not by the addition of items but by the art of figuring synthetically, a compactness into which the imagination may cut thick, as into the rich density of a wedding cake". Is not Virgil "figuring synthetically" in the "Song of Iopas"? Dido, a fugitive from her own country, is hopefully building a new city, and her guest, likewise a fugitive, is seeking for the promised western land in which to create a new Troy and a new life. They have both known much sadness. As we see this pair side by side at the banquet, flushed with good cheer and the "sociability of the hour", as we see Dido pour a libation and hand the cup with a challenge to a nearby guest, the words of Iopas telling of the origin of things,

hic canit errantem lunam solisque labores,
unde hominum genus et pecudes, unde imber et ignes,
Arcturum pluviasque Hyadas geminosque Triones;
quid tantum Oceano properent se tingere soles
hiberni, vel quae tardis mora noctibus obstet (742-6)

sound in our ears and remind us of the "long littleness" of human life set against the background of eternity. The everlasting as characterised by the unchanging processes of nature and the transitory are revealed in "antiperistasis" at the same instant. Aeneas is a man bound by the limitations of time and space struggling to establish the "abiding city". The temporal stretches out to the immortal; the instruments of heaven are the hands of the weak. Aeneas' labour will meet with success, but in no long time we shall witness the ruin of Dido herself.

Read in this way, the banqueting scene calls to mind another, that in Lucretius' third book where the guests, goblets in their hands and garlands shading their brows, exclaim *ex animo*

"brevis hic est fructus homullis;
iam fuerit neque post umquam revocare licebit." (914-15)

I would not, however, urge that the pessimism of the Virgil scene as I interpret it constitutes a deliberate harking back to the Garden; in the Aeneid Virgil clearly has abandoned Epicureanism in favour of Stoicism. The pessimism is natural to him, being manifest throughout his work as a whole. But Lucretius' writings never ceased to have influence over his imagination.

In the association of Dido and Aeneas despite the received chronology which separated them by three hundred years a masterly stroke has been accomplished by the poet. The acute sense of history which was part of the Roman mentality has already been mentioned, and for the imaginative reader stirred by Virgil's presentation ancestral voices would echo in the chambers of the mind, recalling that terrible rivalry which locked two mighty cities in gigantic combat. A deft thought-transition from the mythological to the historical is brought about. The Punic Wars threw a vast shadow over Roman history and within twelve years of their close there began a century of civil conflict from whose disruptive effects men were recovering under the new dispensation which produced the Aeneid. These historical reflections, evoked by the first book and brought into perspective against the background of eternity in its last scene by Iopas' song, recur throughout the rest of the poem, instancing what Professor Pöschl calls (op.cit., p. 228 ff.) its "emotional continuity" (Gefühlsablauf). Dido with all that she represents in her person never passes completely beyond our ken. In the boy's equestrian display which forms part of the funeral games described in the fifth book the horse that Iulus rides was given by fair Dido *sui monumentum et pignus amoris*; her ghost in high resentment refuses speech with Aeneas in the Underworld; in the ninth book (266) an ancient mixing-bowl, a gift from her, is promised among the rewards offered to Nisus and Euryalus, and in the eleventh book (73-6) a robe that she wove is used by Aeneas as a covering for Pallas' bier. The death scenes, too, of Camilla and Turnus are possibly intended as re-enactments of

her end.[17]

In the earliest legends Atlas was a conquered Titan forced to bear the sky on his shoulders, but later mythology rationalised him into a philosopher and astronomer, though he also continued in what we may call his "supporting" role. Virgil adopts this later version, making him the teacher of Iopas. He reappears in the fourth book where he is described by Virgil as he might have been portrayed by the realistic art of the day (cp. Fairclough's note on IV. 251, Loeb Classical Library), a pine-wreathed, weather-beaten, snow-covered mountain. It is from his glacial slopes that Mercury, his grandson, descends to chide Aeneas as he dallies in Carthage and to stir him to action. Professor Pöschl (op.cit., p. 237 ff.) not only sees a contrast between the grim chillness of the mountain and the luxury Aeneas is enjoying but also thinks that the mountain (whose description has been criticised adversely) symbolises the cruelty of the gods. In singing of the everlasting laws of nature Iopas, the pupil of Atlas, can also be said to touch on the same theme, the inexorability of divine purpose. Thus it is more than likely that the two episodes are to be taken as symbolically complementary. But we have not yet heard the last of Atlas, for in his interview with Evander in the eighth book Aeneas is at pains to demonstrate, taking nine lines (134-42) to do so, that they have Atlas as a common ancestor and should therefore form an allegiance against the common foe. In stressing Atlas' genealogical position Virgil may have something more than the immediate needs of the context in mind and we should accordingly take note, for it is a good rule, if we would penetrate to the poet's meaning, to scrutinise narrowly everything he says; he composed with deliberation. First, then, Atlas figures ominously at the festivities of Dido and Aeneas and then in their unhappy separation, and finally he is advanced as a compelling reason for a confederacy which is of primary importance to the Trojans. The fallen Titan, himself the representative of an older cosmic order who has learned what the penalty for rebellion is, becomes in the poem, we may be inclined to think, a vehicle conveying the idea of divine ordinance in things and dutiful compliance with it for the furtherance of the one great aim.

Certain critics have been disposed to interpret the song of Iopas as some kind of autobiographical intrusion on the part of Virgil. P. Boyance, for example, has suggested[18] that Iopas may be the cosmological poet Virgil had once hoped to be himself. The alleged personal reference is seemingly lent colour by the fact that two of Iopas' lines (745-6) are repeated from that striking passage (Georgics II, 481-2) where Virgil asserts on the one hand his desire to emulate the great poets who have sung of Nature's secrets and his contentment on the other to be simply a bard of the countryside should the fulfilment of such ambition be beyond him. That he should thus recall, ruefully or ironically, his former Epicureanism is scarcely credible; to violate the impersonality of epic with such an inward-looking allusion is not consonant with his usual artistic procedure. In the absence so far of a convincing explanation let us leave the question.

It has been remarked that the modern poet apprehends both temporal and spatial landscape in simultaneous perspective. T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land",

for instance, begins in Munich, passes to a London public house, then to the Paris of Baudelaire, then to St. Augustine's Carthage. To claim that Virgil forestalled the twentieth century in this would not be the act of an uncritical sectary. Carthage, Troy and Sicily, each with its richness of historical associations for the Roman imagination, come successively into the consciousness before the primeval land of Latium is reached. Though the poet explicitly derives the proper noun from the verb *latere* with reference to the banished Saturn's taking cover there (VIII, 322-3), he also doubtless wished to exploit or induce a fancy in the Roman reader's mind which, playing etymologically round the word Latium, would take from it the further sense of a land that had lain hid for many long ages awaiting discovery and colonisation by the newcomers.

From ancient Carthage we are taken back in the second book further into the heroic past to hear the tale of another ancient city and its fall. As if to emphasise the shift to the Greek element the book carries an air reminiscent of Greek tragedy, particularly Aeschylus' Persians, with Aeneas playing the part of a messenger narrating the scenes of fighting and destruction.[19]

The sense of time and space is conveyed very strongly in the third book, so often condemned as dull, with the wanderings of the homeless Trojans -

> *diversa exsilia et desertas quaerere terras*
> *auguriis agimur divum ...*

As they move hither and thither over the estranging sea making landfalls first in Greek places, Thrace, Delos, Actium and Buthrotum, and then towards Hesperia, the land of the West, at Ceraunia, Aetna and Drepanum, the whole course of Greco-Roman interpenetration is brought into focus before our eyes. There is suspense, too, for knowledge of the promised land comes to the weary travellers in slow stages only. The Aeneid was composed *particulatim* for recitation in parts, and Richard Heinze (Virgils epische Technik, 3rd ed., 1957, p. 82) believes that the third book was written after Virgil had realised that the introduction of this uncertainty would increase dramatic interest. "Life" said Samuel Butler, the Victorian sage and man of letters, "is like someone playing a violin solo in public, learning the instrument as he goes along", and there is much of the perennial human predicament in this book.

In the twenty-third chapter of the Poetics Aristotle, drawing his authority from Homer's practice, declares that an epic requires a beginning, a middle and an end - that is, a unity of theme. To achieve this a single "hero" is not necessary. The Iliad is concerned with the wrath of Achilles and its consequences, the Odyssey as much with the wanderings and adventures of Odysseus as with Odysseus himself. Virgil adheres to Homeric precedent. Professor R.J. Getty, therefore, in his interesting and helpful discussion of the question "Who is the hero of the poem?" in the introduction (pp. xxiv-xxix) to his edition of Lucan I (Cambridge, 1955^2) has this to say: "If Aeneas is the 'hero' of the Aeneid, it is not the modern sense of the word that must be understood. He is the 'hero' because he is the most important person in the poem, and he is the most important person in the poem because it revolved around one phase or rather purpose in his life."

In studying the Aeneid we must not, then, try to disengage the figure of Aeneas and treat him in isolation since he embodies in himself the poem's

meaning. If we read attentively we see that the characterisation of Aeneas is densely packed with thematic references expressive of the main idea that lies behind the poem. Many people have judged Virgil's 'hero' a failure, but this is because they have been actuated by a misplaced romanticism; Virgil offers us not a 'hero' in the sense of nineteenth century drama or fiction but a 'principal person' who through what he does and what happens to him gives unity to the work.

From the outset Virgil clearly assumed that Roman history had been controlled by the shaping hand of Fate and it would be perverse to deny that Stoicism with its doctrine of *providentia* suffuses the whole of the Aeneid. By the first century B.C. Stoicism had become widely influential, many leading Romans being adherents in varying degrees of intensity. Livy's presentation of history is more than a little tinged with Stoic beliefs. In adopting Stoic "machinery", as it were, Virgil would be able the more successfully to recommend his matter to a public that was already prepared and receptive.

How is Aeneas made to fit such a conception? Richard Heinze postulates a development of character in Aeneas (op.cit., pp.278 ff.), but this is questioned by Professor Pöschl (op.cit., pp. 89 ff.). Aeneas, says Heinze, starts with a very weak faith; Anchises has continually to encourage him, and after Anchises' death Nautes takes his place; Mercury has to rebuke him with bitter words and even friendly assurance from heaven has only momentary effect on his wavering mind. Once, however, he has seen the apocalyptic vision in the sixth book he is a changed man, growing into a Stoic acceptance of his fate and performing with alacrity what is required of him. After the great sixth book Aeneas, according to Heinze, steadily takes on the lineaments of the Stoic sage. This Pöschl will not have; Aeneas, he argues, never attempts to attain insensibility; he feels grief in his heart to the utmost degree, but in spite of the greatest suffering ("trotz grösster Empfindung" - p. 89) he earnestly applies himself to the performance of his task. There may be a connection, Pöschl admits, between Aeneas' ordeals and the Stoic idea of *exercitatio*, but he insists that Aeneas has little in common with the Stoic sage, for such a figure would be destructive of the work's poetic quality (op.cit., p. 94).

While the two champions wrestle, let us turn aside for a moment to consider the ancient notion of character. Greek tragedy as we have it, Professor Kitto remarks (Greek Tragedy, 1961^3, pp. 23-4), is not interested in the development of character, but it did gradually reveal a developed character. Now this is a place where the theory of substantialism will stand us in good stead, for surely the Greek tragedians, probably unconsciously, presumed that the elements of a man's character were present in him from the start, and in their dramatic portrayal of people they were demonstrating how these elements manifested themselves in the activities of life. This philosophical notion crossed over to Rome, as I have mentioned, and is well exemplified by Tacitus' handling of Tiberius and Nero; innately flagitious, they steadily showed their true selves as their mask of hypocrisy wore thin.[20]

Where do we stand now? The Aeneid is instinct with Stoicism. Heinze says that Aeneas grows into the Stoic sage and Pöschl denies this. Aeneas, I have urged, is to be regarded as a function of the concept that governs the poem, giving it shape and direction. What resolution of the problem is to be propounded?

The substantialist notion, I think, lies behind the depiction of Aeneas. In the very beginning he appears to us stamped with the mark of *pietas* (a quality which is rooted, Pöschl finely observes (p.67), in the heart and not the head). As the epic unfolds, his *pietas*, seen in his loving concern for his comrades and devotion to the ideals proposed to him, grows plainer to our eyes; he comes fully to face up to the implications of his charismatic leadership. The situation is, moreover, presented in Stoic terms. In saying this I am not really subscribing to Heinze's interpretation; I do not believe that in the second half of the poem Virgil wishes us to see Aeneas as the uncompromising figure immune to human impulses that the Zenonian Stoics set forth for admiration, for this does not square with the facts. Besides, this austere, forbidding figure was ever only a visionary ideal; - Seneca asks (de Tranquillitate Animi, 7.4): *ubi enim istum (sc. sapientem) invenies quem tot saeculis quaerimus?* No, it was not the Old Stoa with its rigorous perfectionism which informed the writing of the Aeneid, but the Middle Stoa under Panaetius and Posidonius. These teachers, relaxing the old sternness, made concessions to commonsense which much appealed to the practical mind of the Romans. Posidonius (who was born in 135 B.C. and died at the age of eighty-four in 51 B.C. when Virgil was a youth of 19) was responsible for the introduction into the school of certain Platonic doctrines, and in what, for our present purpose, is a very relevant passage from Seneca (Ep.Mor., lxxi. 27) there finds utterance a dualistic theory of psychology strongly reminiscent of Platonism but probably descended ultimately from earlier religions, especially the Persian. The theory was clearly part of the revised teaching of the Middle Stoa on the make-up of the *sapiens*. Here is what Seneca says: *memini ex duabus illum (sc. sapientem) partibus esse compositum; altera est inrationalis, haec mordetur, uritur, dolet; altera rationalis, haec inconcussas opiniones habet, intrepida est et indomita. in hac positum est summum illud hominis bonum. antequam impleatur, incerta mentis volutatio est; cum vero perfectum est, immota illa (illi, Bücheler) stabilitas est.* Later in the same letter (section 29) Seneca warns Lucilius against imagining that human virtue transcends nature: *et tremescet sapiens et dolebit et expallescet. hi enim omnes corporis sensus sunt.*

Does not Seneca's description strongly suggest Aeneas' character? In the first half of the poem he is a man conscious of what he should do but hesitant to do it - *incerta mentis volutatio est.* The experience in the sixth book marks a great step forward in his προκοπή and he approaches and almost possesses the desired *immota stabilitas*, but importunate humanity will assert itself. Virgil had studied the human heart too well to prescribe overdemandingly for it. He found in the more humane, hellenised Middle-Stoic theory of man's nature something that both came near his own preconceptions and suited the needs of his epic. Aeneas is portrayed for us as a man with his feet on the path of virtue, but a man inclined to stumble - as who is not? Virgil's Pilgrim, compounded of opposing principles, is a type and symbol of the struggling human race on its journey through history.

Conceived within the broad frame-work of the Middle-Stoic view of human nature Aeneas combines in himself reflective sensitivity with the valour and endurance of the Homeric hero. Courage was one of the major virtues for the Stoics (who did not preach pacifism) and in ordinary Roman belief martial

bravery was always praiseworthy; Tibullus is the only Latin poet who explicitly condemns war (I.10). However, while in the Aeneid we witness Aeneas exercising courage throughout and gradually as the poem progresses attaining mastery over the irrational in his make-up, at least on two very notable occasions in the second half this base part temporarily gains control. The irrational flashes forth in dreadful anger.

In the tenth book (517-20) there is a horrible scene in which Aeneas, incensed at the killing of Pallas, offers live captives as victims in honour of the dead. Editors compare Achilles' sacrifice of twelve noble Trojan youths on the pyre of Patroclus (Iliad XXIII, 175-6). There are no other instances of human sacrifice either in Homer or Virgil, and so alien is it to the spirit of Homer that Gilbert Murray ("The Rise of the Greek Epic", p. 141) uneasily concludes that it appears in the Iliad because "it was too firmly fixed in the tradition to be denied". Such an explanation will not, we know, suffice for Virgil.

Pallas, Evander, in ipsis
omnia sunt oculis, mensae, quas advena primas
tunc adiit, dextraeque datae. (515-17)

Aeneas' emotions outrun his judgment for a space and chaos is come.

The second occasion is in the very last scene of the last book when Aeneas is almost ready to grant the doomed Turnus' request that his corpse be handed over to his father. The belt stripped from Pallas catches Aeneas' eye as it flashes on Turnus' body and, infuriated, he stabs, shouting:

tune hinc spoliis indute meorum
eripiare mihi? Pallas te hoc volnere, Pallas
immolat et poenam scelerato ex sanguine sumit.
(947-9)

We shall return to this scene later.

Emerson said that history is the lengthened shadow of a man.[21] The conflict, internal and external, in which Aeneas engages seems to typify the process of history.

In classical antiquity the contrast of opposing qualities appealed to the imagination. In literature we have Zeus and Prometheus, Creon and Teiresias, and there is the anecdote about the reputed meeting of Solon and Croesus. Virgil possibly intended to recall these established types of contrast[22] in his portrayal of Aeneas in relationship with Dido or matched against Turnus, thus emphasising the Stoic dualistic notion which, it has been argued, informs the characterisation of Aeneas. Dido, Turnus, Nisus and Euryalus, Lausus, Camilla and Mezentius stand as a cloud of witnesses showing forth the truth of the Horatian apophthegm: *vis consili expers mole ruit sua.* In his treatment of Aeneas' Italian enemies Virgil is generally sympathetic, partly because he remembered that they were Italians and therefore ancestors of the people to whom the poem was directly addressed. But, with the exception of the brutal Mezentius, *contemptor divum*, no one at all in the Aeneid is entirely wicked. The group of characters mentioned, Trojan or non-Trojan,

friend or foe, individually exemplify the reckless force of the irrational, an *impotentia* that Virgil finds pitiable, and thus throw into contrast the supreme effort that Aeneas makes to bring his natural impulses under rational control. I give only one instance, one that has been commonly remarked upon. After the visitation from Allecto in the seventh book Turnus frenziedly seeks for arms in his sleep, aflame with lust for war, and in a simile he is compared to a brazen vessel of boiling water which eventually overflows (462-65). When at the beginning of the eighth book Aeneas realises that war is to be waged and instantly his active minds starts to lay plans, it is no accident that he too is likened to a brazen vessel, but here it is one in which the flickering reflection from sun or moon lights up whatever it touches. The contest is to be between violent impetuosity and the composure of organised strength.

As a last word on Stoicism in the Aeneid, I would refer you to the eighth book. There (102-25) Evander is sacrificing to Hercules when Aeneas arrives, and later (300 ff.) Aeneas' and Evander's men join in singing a hymn of praise to the hero. Why this prominence for the cult of Hercules? Antiquarianism? A flattering allusion to Augustus? Both suggestions are arguable, but we should also remember that for the Stoics Hercules represented the quality of heroic endurance; he was, too, the bringer of justice, holiness and peace (Seneca, de Beneficiis, I.13.3). Did the poet wish us to associate the functions and attributes of Hercules with Aeneas?

The mention of antiquarianism carries us on to the next topic. So far we have been considering various symbolic intimations of Virgil's attitude to the past, but the Aeneid contains many explicit tokens of a scholarly antiquarianism which enhances the historical atmosphere of the poem. *Vergilius amantissimus vetustatis* is a very proper remark, and Catherine Saunders' book "Vergil's Primitive Italy" (1930) illustrates it interestingly. The poet was clearly anxious to impart the greatest possible accuracy to his description of earlier peoples and times, she observes. We find a careful distinction made between methods for disposal of the dead, the Trojans cremating and the Etruscans burying (C. Saunders, op.cit., pp. 121-28). The facts about arms and warfare are presented with similar attention to authenticity (ibid., 129-93). This scholarly care is accompanied in Virgil by an enthusiasm for the past which confronts us at every turn in the poem. The word *antiquus* occurs over forty times in the Aeneid, *vetus* about thirty, *longaevus* (which does not appear in the other works) about a dozen, *pristinus* and *primaevus* three times each. These rough statistics only reinforce what is obvious to any sentient reader, Virgil's preoccupation with the idea of time past. Many wonderful passages testify to it. Think of the primeval forest in the sixth book (179 ff.) in which trees are cut down for Misenus' funeral pyre. Norden in his edition of this book remarks that tree felling is a favourite subject for description in the poets, but around Virgil's words there floats a numinous air stirring the imagination. Or think again of the picture of king Latinus' palace in the seventh book (170 ff.), awesome with *religione parentum* and the *effigies veterum avorum* carved *antiqua e cedro*. The names of Trojans and Latins are taken from Homer, early Italian history and classical myths with the deliberate intention of working on the affective associations which they would have in the Roman mind.[23]

"*Ab Augusto Aeneidem propositam scripsit.*" In origin the Aeneid is

political, but Virgil overcame in amazing fashion the limitations of such a theme, raising his matter to the level of the universal. In the time that remains to us I wish to enquire briefly into his historicist position as it appears directly or indirectly in the poem. There is no doubt that Virgil treats the Augustan settlement as the predestined culmination of Roman history; by so doing he has worked the task-work honourably and kept faith with the authorities. Besides, to the poet, as to countless other persons, the peace and order brought about by Augustus must have been truly welcome, though the sensitive and intelligent would entertain reservations about the political methods employed, the cunning and treachery of it all. Rome, Virgil seems to be saying in the Aeneid, has moved on a predestinate track, encountering many vicissitudes but always growing in power and influence through the innate virtues of her people, until she has reached a position of apparently stable eminence. "Apparently stable" I say advisedly, for if we apply a candid scrutiny to the poem we detect an uncertainty about the future. In his prophecy in the first book (257 ff.) Jupiter assures Venus that in space as well as in time no boundary has been set to the Roman empire: *imperium sine fine dedi* (279); but it has been well pointed out[24] that "no such assurance recurs, either in the glowing prophecy of Anchises of the new era for mankind to be initiated by Augustus (VI, 791-805) or in the same speaker's epilogue when he defines Rome's greatness (851-3); we do not find it in the prophetic description of Aeneas' shield at the end of the eighth book, nor in the final discourse between Juno and Jupiter (XII, 791 ff.)". Virgil gladly accepted the Pax Augusta; hope, wild and eager, leapt up within him, and this hope was put in the form of prophecy, hailing Augustus as inaugurator of a new age of blessings. But in Virgil's mind there dwelt a tragic spirit which deeply tinges the Aeneid. An historical poem should carry the mind forward from the events treated. With what message for the future does the Aeneid leave the reader? Here I would return to the last scene and suggest that the poem ends sadly in a question mark. Virgil seems to sense that his hope of betterment in human affairs is vain and that the tendency to decline (which in the Georgics he pessimistically notes as being present in nature) is also inherent in the human situation. Throughout the Aeneid he assumes that fate has guided Rome to a desirable position, but predestination operates in more than one way, leading one, it may be, to prosperity or ruin - or to ruin by way of prosperity, a route so often traced in the works of the Greek dramatists. The essence of tragedy, according to Goethe, is that nothing is solved, and with his tragic view of life Virgil in this great poem is, I believe, figuratively relating this lesson. Aeneas almost succeeds in mastering completely the irrational impulses in himself, those impulses which we all have and which are always destroying our best endeavours. And ironically (and is not life full of irony?) it is a virtue in him that detonates the explosive charge - his loyalty and affection towards Evander and his son. (In the work already cited, Professor Peter Alexander powerfully argues that the tragic hero, Greek or Shakespearean, is betrayed not by any weakness but by some good quality in his make-up.) After Aeneas has stabbed Turnus to death in a transport of rage, we close the book with troubled mind. Is life a long fool's errand to the grave? What is the meaning of history?

The killing of Turnus at the end of the twelfth book invites comparison with a similar scene at the end of the tenth where Aeneas, aiming at Mezentius,

slays his son Lausus instead. Aeneas is moved by pity and with a chivalrous lament he hands over the body to the young man's terrified comrades.

"The consciousness of history", writes Raymond Aron,[25] "varies with peoples and times; now it is dominated by nostalgia for the past, now by the feeling of preservation or hope concerning the future. These fluctuations are easily understood. Certain peoples expect greatness, others preserve the memory of it, some feel linked with a tradition they wish to prolong, others are eager for novelty, thirsting for liberty and forgetfulness." Augustan propaganda was orientated so as to utilise the inborn sense in Romans of their own history, leading them to expect that on the solid foundations of the national character and past achievements there would be built and maintained future greatness; the glorious past was to be continued and freshly commemorated in ever more notable deeds. Acquiescing publicly in this aspiration Virgil yet did not surrender his private feelings. What may be termed the element of escapism in him has in recent years been studied by scholars who have traced it from the Eclogues through the Georgics to the Aeneid. Certainly the *cura morum* of Augustus was accompanied, as Heinze remarks, by a moral tendency in the literature of the day which regarded Rome's early period as a better source of *exempla* than the teaching of the philosophers, but nevertheless, allowing for this, we can recognise in Virgil a yearning for the remote, happy times of innocent simplicity that is a purely personal emotion. Franz Beckman in a very interesting monograph[26] suggests that the ideal way of life set forth in the Eclogues was the unvarying standard by which he measured reality, while A.J. Gossage has most ably discussed the "Arcadian longings" with which the whole of Virgil's work is shot through,[27] and Inez Scott Ryberg[28] and Margaret Taylor[29] have examined in detail how ideas of an immemorially distant Golden Age predominate in the poet's imagination.

With all his tender sensibility it is difficult to believe that Virgil ever became internally reconciled to the regime, that band of faithless murderers and opportunists. Virgil's was too large a spirit to be subsumed within their political programme. Though he could and did say an honest "Amen" to their nobler aspirations, his soul remained secretly apart. The Aeneid stands out as a consecration of the great virtues of the Roman people, but its author looking both fore and after saw the dark clouds that for ever gather and hover round human existence.[30]

Notes

1. Servius (Diehl, p.41, line 17 ff.) says that the Eclogues were produced under the patronage of Pollio, the Georgics under that of Maecenas and the Aeneid under that of Augustus.

2. Dissentient voices have been, and continue to be, heard from time to time, but they do not disturb the faithful. For an interesting survey of opinions of Virgil's artistry from Macrobius down to recent times see G.B. Townend, Classical Journal, lvi (1960), pp. 67-77.

3. "Die Dichtkunst Virgils", Vienna, 1950. This work is a landmark in Virgil criticism. An English translation has been announced.

4. "Virgil and the Odyssey", Virgil Society Lecture Summary no. 53.

5. See his "debunking" article, "The Virgil Cult" in Virginia Quarterly Review, 38 (1962), pp. 13-35.

6. For a discussion of Virgil's innovating genius in the epic genre see C.M. Bowra, "From Vergil to Milton", 1945, pp. 1-32. C.S. Lewis, too, has valuable things to say on this subject in "A Preface to Paradise Lost", 1942; - cp. particularly ch. vi.

7. After the original research of P. Maury, "Le Secret de Virgile et L'Architecture des Bucoliques", Lettres d'Humanité, 3 (1944), pp. 71-147, the word "architectonic" has been applied in its specialised sense to Virgil by certain scholars who find reason for believing that the poet composed in accordance with Pythagorean notions of mathematical symmetry. The leading exponent of the theory is now Professor G.E. Duckworth of Princeton - cp. his article, "Mathematical Symmetry in Vergil's Aeneid", T.A.P.A., xvi (1960), pp. 215 ff. A book on the subject by Professor Duckworth is due to appear before the end of this year.

On first learning of this approach to the work of a poet the natural reaction in most people is incredulity combined with a feeling that here is a flagrant case of "misapplied mathematics", a fit subject without any doubt for the curriculum of Swift's "College of Projectors". But study and reflection should modify initial indignation though they may not lead to full conviction. Without at the moment taking sides, one may consider the theory inherently not unreasonable by bearing in mind the ancients' experience of, and response to, the world about them. In the seventeenth century "the Cartesian spirit made for the sharper separation of the spheres of prose and poetry, and thereby hastened that 'dissociation of sensibility' which Mr. Eliot has remarked as having set in after the time of the Metaphysical poets." (I quote from the 1962 Penguin edition, p. 83, of Prof. Basil Willey's "The Seventeenth Century Background" which was first published in 1934.) The ancient way of looking at reality was not departmentalised as it is for us; poetry for feeling, prose for thought was not a distinction they ever dreamed of making. All modes of being and acting came within the purview of the artistic imagination.

8. F. Mehmel, "Virgil und Apollonius Rhodius: Untersuchung über die Zeitvorstellung in der antiken epischen Erzählung", Hamburg, 1940.

Notes (Continued)

9. H. and A. Thornton, "Time and Style", London, 1962. Their Virgil references, irrelevant to our present purpose, are not extensive, but, taken with their general exposition of their thesis, interesting. In fact, the criticism made by Huckleberry Finn after dipping into "The Pilgrim's Progress" (Mark Twain, "Huckleberry Finn", ch. xvii) could well be invoked here: "The statements was interesting, but tough." It is not an easy work.

10. This paragraph was inspired by R.G. Collingwood's "The Idea of History", Oxford, 1946, pp. 42 ff., from which a phrase or two has been borrowed.

11. For a study of the relationship between Livy and Virgil see A. Rostagni, "Da Livio a Virgilio e da Virgilio a Livio", Padua, 1942.

12. op.cit., p. 37.

13. Cp. E.R. Curtius' remarks: "Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter", 1948, pp. 255-6: "Das Altertum hatte kein historisches Bewusstein in unserem, durch Epochenabschnitte bestimmten Sinne. Und was es davon besass, vermochte es mangels historischer Begriffsbildung nicht auszudrücken."

14. On these differing calculations see H.A. Sanders, Classical Philology, 1908, pp. 316-324.

15. T.F. Driver's "The Sense of History in Greek and Shakespearean Drama", New York, 1961, handles this topic perceptively if not entirely convincingly. See D.W. Lucas' review, C.R., n.s. xii. i, March 1962, pp. 30-2.

16. See Comparetti, "Virgil in the Middle Ages", trans. by Benecke, London, 1895, pt. i, ch. viii, p. 107.

17. Michael C.J. Putnam makes this point in footnote 27, p. 236, of his article "Unity and Design in Aeneid V" (Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, 66 (1962), pp. 205-39).

18. R.E.L., 32 (1954), pp. 220-49.

19. See V. Ussani Jr., Maia, 3 (1950), pp. 237-54.

20. Furneaux, "The Annals of Tacitus", Oxford, 1896, vol. i, p. 158.

21. My source for this Emerson allusion is T.S. Eliot's "Sweeney Erect", seventh stanza.

22. See H.D.F. Kitto, "Greek Tragedy", 1961^3, p. 61, where he uses this type of contrast to explain the Prometheus Vinctus.

23. See C. Saunders, T.A.P.A., lxxi (1940), pp. 537-55.

24. See M.E. Taylor, "Primitivism in Virgil", A.J.P., (1955), pp. 261-78. The sentence quoted is on p. 267.

25. "Introduction to the Philosophy of History", trans. by G.J. Irwin, London, 1961, p. 319.

26. "Mensch und Welt in der Dichtung Vergils", 1950; Orbis Antiquus, Heft i.

27. Proceedings of the Virgil Society, 1961-2, pp. 35-45. This is the substance of a paper read to the Society on 17th February 1962, under the title "Vergil in Exile".

28. T.A.P.A., lxxxix (1958), pp. 112-31.

29. See the article referred to in note 24 above.

30. In the last part of this paper it was not possible to do more than present the bare bones of what I am pleased to call my argument, though "assertion" may be a better word. There was no time to elaborate on the poet's relationship with Octavian/Augustus. What of the various laudatory references? What about Virgil and imperial deification? Briefly, my position is that Virgil wished for full reconciliation, moved by a deeply felt hope that happier days were to come, and thus he was tempted into a fulsomeness of language in keeping with contemporary practice but probably not unmixed with tactful prudence. His realistic assessment of history and human nature, however, led to a despair which would out.

V.S. Lectures, No. 61

VERGIL AND THE TWO CULTURES

A lecture delivered to the Virgil Society
on 19th January 1963

by J.G. Landels, M.A., Ph.D.

This paper must begin with an *apologia pro insolentia sua*. The Vergil Society is accustomed to being addressed by Vergilian Scholars - those who are spending a lifetime studying Vergil's works and grappling with Vergilian problems. I cannot claim to be one of this distinguished fraternity. My study of Vergil began in the usual way, with Aeneid II at "O" level (School Certificate, as it was called in those days): and my response to Vergil was what I suspect is the usual schoolboy's response - I thought him very simple and greatly over-rated. But in my final year at school I had an unusual piece of good fortune. I became a part-time student at the University College (as it then was) at Exeter, and my tutor was a scholar to whom I and my generation of classicists owe a great deal - Mr. Jackson Knight. I forget exactly what he was scheduled to teach me - I think it was Greek Prose Composition - but the result was that I acquired an enthusiasm for Vergil which has never deserted me. I began to realize that there is more in Vergilian scholarship than memorizing patronymics and swotting up a crib. This awareness of my ignorance gradually became more and more acute throughout an undergraduate career at two universities, in both of which great stress was laid upon Vergil; and when I finally graduated from Cambridge, I felt that the time had come when something really ought to be done about it. But alas, practically nothing has been done. My post-graduate researches have gone in other directions: and though it is difficult to abandon Vergilian studies without regret, it is easy to console oneself (to parody the famous words of Livy) with the greatness and splendour of those by whom one would inevitably have been eclipsed.

And if, despite all this, I none the less presume to address you this afternoon, it is not with any intention of breaking the excellent tradition of the Virgil Society with regard to their choice of speakers, nor of attempting a task which should properly be left to a competent Vergilian scholar. What I wish to do is to discuss a modern educational problem, and its bearing on Vergil himself, on his works, and on our study and appreciation of those works.

We live in a divided society - a sick society; and the sickness which afflicts us constitutes, in my opinion, a serious obstacle to a complete understanding of Vergil. I refer, of course, to the Two Cultures - or rather, to the yawning chasm of ignorance, mistrust and snobbery which divides them. On one side of this chasm lies the older, the poorer but the more respectable of the Two Cultures: its devotees call it "the Humanities", intending to imply that scientists lack humanity: scientists call it "the Arts", intending to imply that it is suitable only for arty people, or artful people. Scientists use methods which they imagine to be new, and believe to be infallible: they pursue definite lines of research, and produce results which are "useful to the

community" (a gross fallacy this, which they can maintain only after making their work unintelligible to all but their immediate colleagues). The Arts Men have no method, and chase after will-o'-the-wisp notions; scientists deal with Reality and Scientific Truth. The opponents of the scientific culture say that it is not worthy to be called a culture at all; a scientific training does not enable a man to express himself intelligibly, or to deal with social, moral or political problems: and despite the vast changes which science has brought about in our lives, these still remain the most fundamental and the most important of all our problems.

How does Vergil fit into this unhappy picture? Has he any place in it at all? Does he belong to either of these cultures, or to both? Can we study him fully and satisfactorily from one side of the dividing chasm, or must we bridge it, partially at least, before we can get him into perspective? When Vergil wrote, there was only one culture: does this mean that he has nothing to say to us? Or that he has everything to say to us?

Let us begin with the easiest of these questions: has Vergil any meaning or value to a scientist today? This is surely what the grammar books call "a question expecting the answer 'no'". The subject matter of the Eclogues and Aeneid is not likely to interest anyone with a purely scientific background; and if he ever gets around to reading the Georgics, what can he do but deride Vergil's naive beliefs - for instance, in the spontaneous generation of plants and animals. In a number of passages where the source of Vergil's technical information can be traced, the scientist will generally prefer to consult that source - Cato, perhaps, or Theophrastus; Vergil's version of it may be condensed to the point of unintelligibility, (as for instance in the lines in Book II about placing stones over young vine plants to protect them from rain and heat[1]) or to the point of apparent error. In fact, just as a classicist is the most severe critic of Hollywood epics about ancient Rome, and the least likely to be pleased by them, so a scientist is more likely to enjoy those parts of Vergil's work in which he avoids meddling with science, and does what he (the scientist) conceives to be the poet's job - writing pretty phrases, telling a good story. The poet should use his imagination to create a dream world and dream people, and leave observation of the real world and real people to those who are better equipped and better trained.

Just in case you should think that this is a vague generalization, let us take a particular phrase from Aeneid XII and interpret it from a scientific viewpoint. You remember how the truce between the Trojans and Latins is broken, and Aeneas gets shot at by an anonymous sniper. He is taken to the casualty clearing station, and the M.O. does his best, but to no avail; until Aeneas' mother Venus takes a hand. She fetches a herb called dictamnus from Crete, and adds two other ingredients to the lotion the M.O. is using - *spargitque salubres/ambrosiae suocos et odoriferam panaceam.*[2] Aeneas' wound is at once miraculously cured. There are two possible attitudes towards this incident, of which a scientist might adopt either. He might think that Vergil is doing exactly what Jules Verne did - reaching out in imagination beyond the limitations and failures of contemporary science. Just as Jules Verne was fifty or a

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1. II. 350-353.

2. A. XII. 418-9.

hundred years ahead of the technology and engineering of his own day. so Vergil reaches out beyond the crude and primitive medical science of the ancient world. This is a clever thing to do; but in the last analysis the most that poetic imagination can achieve is to challenge the complacent scientist, or entertain and console the frustrated scientist. The man who really matters is the one who makes these pipe-dreams into reality. Cures as miraculous as that effected on Aeneas are commonplace in hospitals today; but the credit for that belongs to the Alexander Flemings of this world, not to the Vergils.

Alternatively, the scientist may regard Aeneas' cure as extraordinary, perhaps unique, but none the less historical fact - an actual achievement of ancient medicine. *Salubres* means "health-giving". Of course, Vergil knew nothing about bacteria or viruses, but we do, and so we can interpret and understand his words better than he could himself. *Sucos* is a technical term of the apothecary; (the ancients apparently did not acquire the knack of distillation: if they had, whisky would have crossed Hadrian's wall many centuries earlier, and in the opposite direction). Their only method of making a concentrated essence was by decoction - boiling away the water - and herbal remedies were often prepared in that way. And what about *ambrosia?* Vergil probably chose this name for its poetic overtones: it was, of course, the name given to the diet of the Gods, being derived from the Greek word for immortality. The manufacturer of tinned rice puddings who named his product "Ambrosia" knew just what he was doing. But poetic overtones are of no importance to the scientific mind; all that matters is the identification of this herb *ambrosia*, and the question whether it would have been beneficial in the treatment of a flesh wound: and, fortunately, *ambrosia* can be identified with reasonable certainty. So ... Dryden translated the passage "and brews/ th' extracted liquor with ambrosian dews"; modern science can give us the true meaning - "adds 1 c.c. antiseptic extract of *artemisia botrys* or Turkish Mug-wort".

It is easy to sneer at this kind of attempt to interpret poetry; a narrowly scientific discipline produces in the mind, at the best, atrophy of the poetic sense, or at the worst, aggressive philistinism: but there is another side to the question. Just consider for a moment the kind of criticism made on the Georgics by a very eminent Vergilian scholar, J.W. Mackail: here is what he says in his book "Latin Literature".[1] "Seven years following on the publication of the Eclogues were spent by Vergil on the composition of the Georgics. They were published two years after the battle of Actium, being thus the first, as they are the most splendid, literary production of the Empire. They represent the art of Vergil in its matured perfection. The subject was one in which he was thoroughly at home and completely happy. His own early years had been spent in the pastures of the Mincio, among his father's cornfields and coppices and hives; and his newer residence, by the seashore near Naples in winter, and in summer at his villa in the lovely hill-country of Campania, surrounded him with all that was most beautiful in the most beautiful of lands. His delicate health made it easier for him to give his work the slow and arduous elaboration that makes the Georgics in mere technical finish the most perfect work of Latin, or perhaps of any literature. There is no trace of impatience in the work. It was

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1. John Murray, London 1902, p. 95.

in some sense a commission; but Augustus and Maecenas, if it be true that they suggested the subject, had, at all events, the sense not to hurry it. The result more than fulfilled the brilliant promise of the Eclogues. Vergil was now, without doubt or dispute, the first of contemporary poets".

Imagine a newcomer to the Classics reading this paragraph, and thinking to himself "Yes, it sounds very attractive; let's have a look at these Georgics". He opens his text at random, and what does he find? *Quod superest quaecumque premes virgulta per agros/sparge fimo pingui et multa memor occule terra.*[1] "Whatever you plant out in the open, plaster it with rich manure and don't forget to pile the earth on top." Surely there is some mistake; this is not the poem Mackail was talking about? The Georgics are all about beautiful Italian scenery. Well, yes ... here is a bit in Book II: *hic ver adsiduum atque alienis mensibus aestas/bis gravidae pecudes, bis pomis utilis arbos.*[2] But he goes on to speak of human achievements: *adde tot egregias urbes operumque laborem.* And though he devotes a whole line to the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian seas, he devotes four lines to the Portus Julius, a piece of marine engineering. To gaze from the terrace of one's villa across the bay of Naples is one thing; to look out over cranes and concrete - and make poetry out of them - is quite another. Mackail nowhere actually tells us that the Georgics are didactic; he gives no clear statement of the subject; one might almost think that he considered it indelicate. This is not good enough; there is more in the Georgics than pretty words and pretty scenery.

So much for the attitudes of the Arts man and the Scientist towards Vergil's works: let us now take a closer look at the works themselves; how do they stand vis à vis the Two Cultures?

Apart from a few controversial poems in the so-called Appendix Vergiliana, the earliest we have is the Eclogues: and from these poems it appears that Vergil is to be placed, firmly and without hesitation, on the Arts side. True, when the two shepherds and their lady accomplice (in Eclogue VI) tie up Silenus and make him sing, he responds with an account of the genesis of the universe; but this can scarcely be called scientific - it contains much mythology and little physics. The Eclogues are about country characters in a country setting; Vergil is, on the whole, more interested in the characters than in the setting - a symptom of humanity, and yet another string with which to tie on the Arts label. Nor is his interest in the setting that of a keen or scientific observer; in fact, if we assume that it is meant to be Italian, we must assume that his ideas on the flora and fauna of his own countryside were a bit astray. Lynxes are mentioned in Eclogue VIII, and T.E. Page points out that "lynxes do not exist in Italy". This, of course, is the old Turkish Mug-wort doctrine in another disguise.

Vergil was without doubt imbued with a deep and lasting love for the countryside. In this respect he has often been compared with Wordsworth: but my impression is that Wordsworth's descriptions of natural scenery are the work of a poet whose senses were very alert and whose emotional responses were very intense: but he was, from first to last, an observer, recording the reality of his native Cumberland. In later years, he was able to examine his experiences objectively and assess their effect on the development of his mind. But the

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1. G. II. 346-7.

2. G. II. 149 ff.

countryside which forms the setting of Vergil's Eclogues is quite different from Wordsworth's Cumberland; it was the outcome, not of observation and record, but of creation.

Heaven knows, I do not understand how a poet's mind works; and I have little sympathy with those who claim to do so. But there is one process which took place in Vergil's mind which is comprehensible because it happens in a greater or lesser degree to many of us, whether poets or not. It is that process whereby a place that one has known and loved in childhood lingers in the memory, and its image undergoes a gradual change; all the unpleasant, gross or tragic elements are purged away, and there remains nothing but perfection, brilliance and beauty - in a word, Arcadia. Two conditions seem to be essential for this process - one is love, the other exile. Whether a person brought up in an ugly industrial slum ever transforms it into an Arcadia, I do not know; I hardly think so. Nor is it likely that one born among beautiful country scenery who spends all his life among the sights and sounds of his childhood ever transforms their image into something other than the reality, of which he is constantly reminded. Arcadia is always the beloved, and always the lost. (Here I should like to acknowledge much enlightenment from a profound paper given to this Society a year ago, entitled "Vergil in Exile":[1] in it, Dr. Gossage developed the thesis that Vergil always felt himself to be spiritually in exile - like Meliboeus in Eclogue I, driven out of his *patria*.) And when he created the scenery for the Eclogues, he was not, I think, recording the sights which surrounded him; he was *à la recherche du temps perdu*. As for the characters which he created to act in front of this backcloth, the shepherds, nymphs and deities, they are drawn from life, but in the special sense in which the backcloth is drawn from life. They have undergone a subtle change: they have ceased to be individuals: they have no nationality, and they belong to no point in history. (The obvious exception is Gallus, but then he is a 'felicitous anomaly'.) They resemble actual people in certain respects; this fact has furnished scholars and allegorizers with many hours of employment and frustration. But a universalized character is bound, in the nature of things, to resemble particular people; the trouble is that it usually resembles too many particular people.

In the Eclogues, then, Vergil aligns himself very firmly on the Arts side: he shows little or nothing in the way of methodical observation or scientific record of the countryside. Neither he himself nor his shepherds seem to have much interest in stock-breeding; their only practical measure is to get Tityrus to act as lamb-sitter while they are otherwise occupied. The geographer, the botanist and the sociologist can find little to praise and much to censure; but of course, Vergil did not write his Eclogues for the likes of them.

"Vergil's next work", say the potted histories of Latin literature,"was a didactic poem on agriculture - the Georgics." I have been told this many times, but I do not remember anyone ever suggesting to me that here is a startling and incredible fact; yet it is. Having created Arcadia, Vergil performed a sudden *volte-face*; he took a journey - a remarkably unsentimental journey - back to the reality from which he had started, and treated it in a completely different

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1. Proceedings of the Virgil Society, 1961-2, pp. 35-45.

spirit. It is as though he had written a full and realistic account of the countryside, discarded all the ugly or painful aspects, and created Arcadia from the rest; now he suddenly up-ends the wastepaper basket, and makes another quite different poem using, among other material, the screwed-up bits. Now you may say, with some justification, that I am exaggerating the contrast: the Eclogues are not all sweetness and light; the Georgics are not all "steaming manure and slashing rain". True; but in them Vergil faces the harsh realities of a farmer's life much more squarely than Thyrsis or Corydon ever did. *Labor omnia vincit/improbus et duris urgens in rebus egestas.* "Unending toil and the urge of grinding poverty will triumph over all things." This comes from the wastepaper basket; in Arcadia, *omnia vincit Amor* - it is Cupid who triumphs over all things.

Of course, in the Georgics Vergil was not only concerned, not even primarily concerned, to present the other side of the picture - to create "Anti-Arcadia". He had taken upon himself the role of teacher: and though he no doubt remembered some snippets of agricultural lore from his childhood, he had enough intellectual humility to do what all good teachers ought to do - he swotted up the standard textbooks on the subject: some of them (Cato and Varro) in Latin, others (Theophrastus, Aratus, Nicander) in Greek. This also is usually taken for granted, as an obvious and natural thing for a poet to do: but is it? Can we honestly imagine Wordsworth, after writing his poem about the host of golden daffodils, trying his hand at a didactic poem about bulb culture, or swotting up a textbook on the subject written (let us say) in Dutch? And how practical would his poem be?

> "O bulbs, whose green tips coyly show
> Enfibred in an earthen pot,
> When white roots burgeon from below,
> Why do some sprout, while others rot?

It is perfectly fair and legitimate to ask whether Vergil is a competent teacher; he makes the explicit claim at the beginning of the Georgics that he is going to give a course of four lectures on various branches of agriculture. And we may ask about Vergil, as about any other professed teacher, two basic questions familiar to all Headmasters and Principals of training colleges: (1) Does he know his stuff? (2) Is he good at putting it over? To answer the first question, one would require a lot of time, and an expert knowledge of agriculture in general, and in particular of farming on Italian soil and in the Italian climate. May I instead quote one simple test to which Vergil's technical knowledge can be put. In a course of lectures on the Georgics which I remember with particular pleasure, Professor Mynors quoted extensively from a pamphlet on bee-keeping issued during the war by the Ministry of Agriculture. Almost every precept in that pamphlet could be found somewhere in the fourth book of the Georgics.

Vergil's skill as an exponent is another large topic, which deserves a whole paper to itself; may I once again mention just one aspect of that skill. Some of you have probably seen, at one time or other, a lecturer subjected to what I believe to be the most gruelling and searching test of his ability. This occurs when he is giving a lecture illustrated with lantern slides, and the projector breaks down. If he can carry on and make something out of the lecture, then he is without doubt an extremely able teacher: I have seen it done

once, and have held the speaker in the deepest respect ever since. Vergil had to manage without a projector. (He had ample warning of this, unlike a former colleague of mine who was told while mounting the steps on to the platform that his slides could not be shown.) But the Georgics, none the less, are illustrated with slides - verbal pictures, painted very vividly in a few lines, which elucidate each paragraph and help to fix it in the memory. Here are just two examples, in a translation which I think is most appropriate to this occasion, that of L.A.S. Jermyn.[1] The first is from Book II, lines 410 ff.

> Be late in harvesting your clusters: twice
> The shade falls heavy on your vines, and twice
> The thorny scrub, thick-grown, will choke your crop.
> Hard is each kind of toil. Praise large estates
> But cultivate a small one! Then the time
> Comes, too, for cutting thorny butcher's broom
> In woods, on river banks the fringing reeds,
> While uncouth willows find you work to do.
> Now may your well-trained vines and their supports
> Dispense with pruning. The last dresser sings
> Lustily over his completed rows.

And earlier on, lines 276 ff.[2]

> Let every avenue with clear-drawn line
> Tally exactly when you set your trees.
> As when ofttimes on some huge battlefield
> The legion's lengthy column has deployed
> Its cohorts, halting in the open plain
> With lines all dressed for action; far and wide
> Over the earth ripples the gleam of steel
> From bristling spears poised for the imminent fray,
> While doubtful strides the War-God in the midst -
> So be your whole plantation meted out ....

You may call this a quasi-epic simile, if you like; I prefer to call it a "visual aid". One can, of course, multiply these examples.

You may say, perhaps, "granted - the Georgics are didactic, and granted - Vergil was a competent teacher. But what he has to teach is not science as we understand it; he has chosen a topic which is comparatively humane - a science which at times comes dangerously near to being an art. There is something in this. Gardening, after all, is agriculture on a small scale; and even the most impractical Classicist, who would never attempt to mend a fuse or put a new washer on the kitchen tap, might try his hand at growing brussels sprouts, or even a rose or two. The fact is that with gardening, as with farming, the subject itself is not the determining factor; it is the individual approach which may be scientific or otherwise. Some farmers treat their livestock as machines. I heard a poultry farmer being interviewed on television a short time ago: he measures the exact weight of the food which is

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1. The Singing Farmer (Blackwell, Oxford 1947), p. 39.

2. ibid. p. 34.

given to each of his turkeys, and compares it with the weight of the bird when trussed ready for the oven. He boasted of having bred "a more efficient bird": to him, a turkey is a meat-producing mechanism. On the other hand, there are farmers who think of their livestock almost as human beings: like a friend of mine who used to keep pigs, and named the breeding sows after his sisters.

What is Vergil's approach to his subject? As we should expect from the Eclogues, it is humane, and personal. In Book IV, when he tells of the bees' social organization and their ideal of devotion to the community, the human analogy is there ready-made, and Vergil exploits it to the full. Nothing could be more humane than his account of the old ox who, despite years of honest toil and clean living, none the less falls victim to the terrible plague.[1] But even the plants with which he deals in Book II are "personalized" to a remarkable extent. The sucker which grows from the base of a bay tree "crouches under its mother's broad shadow": fruit on old trees deteriorates in quality, and the trees must be replaced from time to time; *pomaque degenerant sucos oblita priores* - they "forget about" their former flavour. A tree can be grafted with shoots from a different variety of the same fruit, or even from a different fruit; when the graft is successful, the tree grows enormous boughs, *miraturque novas frondes et non sua poma.* - "is astonished at its strange leaves and alien fruit";[2] "Well, well ... Cox's Orange pippin, and I always thought I was a Worcester Pearmain!" Servius calls this *ingens phantasia* - going a bit too far.

Our imaginary objector, Mr. Quispiam, will say at this point that we have finally put paid to all that nonsense about science. Here is a clear case of Vergil presenting, not a factual account, but a lyrical caricature of physical nature; a tree expressing surprise - any moment now we shall have a lot of them gathering round and groaning, as they did in Eclogue V over the death of Daphnis. But Mr. Quispiam is mistaken. This is not Vergil the whimsical poet, it is what Mr. Douglas called Vergil the Realist: not a distorted fancy, but the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Plants <u>are</u> like people: they behave exactly as people do. If you feed them properly, they grow strong and healthy; if you feed them too much fertilizer, they stuff themselves and make themselves sick. If you bring them up with reasonable severity, they will fend for themselves later on; if you pamper them in the artificial air of a hothouse, you must not expect them to survive the harsh realities of the world outside. Wild trees, says Vergil, are unfruitful, but they grow rank and strong; the task of the grower is to "civilize" them - *mollite colendo*, until they lose their wild character, *exuerint silvestrem animum*. But they do so at a price; *mollite* means "make gentle", but it also means "weaken". A dog-rose in a hedge does not need sprays and powders to protect it from mildew, black spot, greenfly and a dozen other ailments to which Paul's Scarlet or Albertine fall ready victims. And civilized man, who in important respects resembles a tea-rose grafted on to a briar stock, is heir to many diseases, of the body and of the mind, which his savage ancestors never knew. So Vergil's realism embraces both the perspicacity of the scientist and the imagination of the artist: it combines strict and literal truth to nature with that power to discern analogies which is, according to Aristotle, the most valuable natural endowment a poet can possess.

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1. G. III, 515-30.

2. G. II, 19, 59, 81-2.

Having maintained that Vergil is a genuinely scientific writer - and more than just that - I would admit one reservation. The science of the Georgics is almost all applied science; if Vergil had been of a truly scientific bent, we might have found some pure science in his work. He gives us a series of specific instructions to be carried out under particular circumstances. A writer of Aristotelian disposition would have made some attempt to move from the known towards the unknown - from the particular towards the universal - but Vergil rarely does so. Is this a damning criticism? It would be, if Vergil had claimed this as his objective in the first place, or if he had attempted it and failed in the attempt. But he did neither; his only claim, expressed in the exordium to Book I, was to give practical advice, and that was all he ever attempted to do. If this is borne in mind, some of the attacks on Vergil's technical errors lose much of their point: for instance, he thought, mistakenly, that the principal bee in a swarm is male. But he is giving practical advice on how to manage bees; and so far as the beekeeper is concerned, the sex of the principal bee in his hive is not a matter which concerns him intimately; it is of interest only to an academic biologist, or to another bee.

The Georgics are a skilful compound of science and art: if we fail to see the relevancy of the passage in Book II about the primeval marriage of Earth and Sky, and the birth of mankind, it is because our minds are not broad enough: if we do not enjoy the passage in Book II about empirical methods of determining soil density, and feel inclined to skip ahead to Orpheus and Eurydice, this also is because our minds are not broad enough. We may glibly say that Vergil has failed as a scientific writer, or failed as a poet; but in reality it is we ourselves who have failed as readers.

And even if we are fortunate enough to possess sufficient breadth of interest to enjoy, consistently, the whole of the Georgics, we shall find ourselves faced with another, even more baffling duality. The Georgics are a blend of art and science; they are also a blend of Romance and grim reality, of toughness and tenderness: and whereas Vergil's background, and a childhood spent on his father's farm can account quite adequately (it seems to me) for both the art and the science, it accounts for only one half of the other, more important antithesis. Farmers are on the whole conservative in their outlook and methods; but they do not allow sentiment to interfere with progress. If the horse is getting old, they send him to the knacker's yard and buy a young one; if a thatched cottage gets in the way of the combined harvester, they bulldoze it out and build an Attractive Modern Residence elsewhere. No one but an impractical sentimentalist would try to prevent them. Vergil is not impractical, nor a sentimentalist, but he does show a particular sensitivity, which I suspect would have been blunted if he had not abandoned farming for another profession. His attitude is well illustrated by a short passage in Book II of the Georgics: he speaks of the various types of land suitable for crops, with particular recommendation for virgin soil - land from which trees have recently been cleared: (207 ff.)

Aut unde iratus silvam devexit arator
et nemora evertit multos ignava per annos ...

"or land from which the angry ploughman has removed the trees, and overthrown

the groves which have lain idle for many a year". We start with what looks like the authentic farmer's attitude; "they bloomin' old trees - us'll root 'un out and have acre an' half o' barley". But right from the start, Vergil sets our teeth on edge; *iratus* .. why is he angry? Is it, as Conington suggested (and Servius before him) because the groves have been idle for so long? Or, as one of my Reading students suggested, because ploughmen are by temperament hard-swearing, violent men? Even if that is true (which I doubt), *iratus* is a remarkably strong word for Vergil to use; it suggests blind anger which distorts a man's judgment, and goads him into doing something which, in his calmer moments, he would recognize as wrong. Again, what about *nemora*? Is this just a poetic variant for *silvam*? Surely the word *nemus* itself had overtones of sanctity: if spelt with a capital N, it meant a particular sacred grove at Aricia. In Book III, Vergil tells how flocks should be driven into the shade at midday - "where Jove's great oak stretches out its huge boughs of ancient timber, *aut sioubi nigrum/ilicibus crebris sacra nemus accubet umbra* - or where a dark grove of close-planted ilexes reclines in a holy shade".[1] If animals are to be herded into it, presumably it is not a sacred enclosure; yet Vergil still says *sacra umbra*. So I think that when a Roman heard the words *et nemora evertit* his first immediate impression would be of a man desecrating a holy place.

Vergil continues with some even more jarring discords (209 ff.).

> *antiquasque domos avium cum stirpibus imis*
> *eruit: illae altum nidis petiere relictis.*
> *at rudis enituit impulso vomere campus.*

He is concerned, as the farmer is not concerned, about the trees, and what happens to the birds who have built their nests in them. The satisfaction of progress shines out from the last line; but Vergil has not forgotten the cost.

Looking at this passage critically, I have found two faults in it. Vergil is supposed to be a poet of extreme condensation; not one word, we are told, can be taken away from any line without some loss of meaning. But what about *illae*? Does it add any meaning, or clarify the rest of the sentence? No, it does not. Let us then ask a different question; under what circumstances would Vergil be obliged to put in the word *illae*? Surely, if there were two lots of birds to be distinguished from each other; one group, *illae*, flies up into the sky: there should be another, *hae*, doing something different.

The second fault concerns the phrase *antiquasque domos avium*. Anyone who has read the Georgics will recognize here a favourite Vergilian trick: with a blend of irony and tenderness he speaks of the habitat of small animals in grandiose terms. The little mouse burrows under the threshing-floor and "builds his grain-silos" (*horrea fecit*); in the same place blind moles "site their boudoirs" (*posuere cubilia*);[2] and the Battle of the Bees in the fourth book is given the full epic treatment. It is ironical, but at the same time it gives us a "mouse's eye view" of what may be, for a mouse, a great undertaking.[3] To call a bird's nest *antiqua domus*, words suggestive of a mansion in Grosvenor Square, is to be ironical, but also to remind us that there are beings to whom a

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1. G. III, 332-4.
2. G.I, 181-3. cf. A. IV, 404-7.
3. Television camera techniques provide a close analogy in what is termed (I believe) a "zoom-in shot".

circular structure of twigs somewhere in a particular tree may mean a very great deal.

This I take to be the effect which Vergil intended; but he spoils it in two ways. The second line is so condensed that there is a danger of taking *antiquas domos* to mean trees (not nests) and so missing the "close-up" effect. And in the next line he gives the game away (for irony is a game) with the word *nidis*. These two faults - the superfluous *illae* and the weakening of the irony - can be explained away if we suppose that Vergil, in his characteristic fashion, is trying to suggest or adumbrate a second meaning alongside that which we have so far elicited. You remember that *illae* rather calls for a second group of birds: are we to suppose that the nexts which the first group leaves behind are empty? Or are there perhaps some nestlings, too young to fly, who are killed when the trees are felled? Surely it is not by chance that *domus*, *stirps* and *nidus* are all words with extensions of meaning - *domus* and *stirps* both meaning "family" or "descendants" and *nidis* used (in Georgics IV, 17) to mean "nestlings". (Dryden goes so far as to translate *nidis* as "young ones" in this context.)[1]

These lines, then, bear two related but different meanings: there is no question of deciding which Vergil "really intended" - he intended both, and the reason why he did not express one quite so well as he might have, was the need to express the other, at the same time and in the same words. There are a lot of other comments to be made on the passage - on the remarkable way in which the sound suits the sense; on the paragraph structure, with heterodyne in the first four lines and homodyne in the last: and on the queer metrical jerk in the last line, which I believe to be a short syllable *enituit* with a pause for breath before the explosive power of the second half. But there is no time to go into these points.

Indeed, you are probably thinking that I have already spent far too long on what is, after all, an unimportant bit of Georgics II. But I make no apology for this: because here, in the space of five lines, Vergil expounds a complete theme: and it is nothing less than the theme of the whole of the Aeneid - the destruction of the old in order to make way for the newer and supposedly better: the reward of great human achievement and the price which must be paid in blood and sorrow.

And when Vergil came to tell the same story on a much larger scale, he seems to have recalled this little episode. In Book II Aeneas tells how the Danaans overthrew Troy (*eruerint*): just as the clearing of this grove sweeps away something that has stood for many years, so does the sack of Troy - *urbs antiqua ruit multos dominata per annos*: when Aeneas and the other survivors arrange to rendezvous outside the city, it is near to an ancient cypress tree, *religione patrum multos seruata per annos*.[2] Aeneas is permitted to see with his own eyes the Gods taking part in the destruction of Troy - even Jupiter himself; and Vergil effects the transition from this supernatural vision back to normality by means of a simile - the simile of a great tree being felled.[3]

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1. My suggestion is that *domos ... cum stirpibus imis* means (a) the trees, down to their lowest roots, and (b) the families, together with the last surviving generations. I hope to argue this in detail elsewhere.

2. A.II.363, 715.

3. A.II.626-31.

Aeneas then returns to the home where he has lived all his life; *atque ubi iam patriae perventum ad limina sedis/antiquasque domos*,1: Vergil could easily have said *antiquamque loram* ... but he didn't. (Incidentally, Servius, commenting on this passage, says of the word *antiquas* "*aut re vera antiquas, aut caras* ", and quotes an example from Sallust of the word *antiquitas* used to mean "affection".) Finally, the word *altum* just happens to mean "deep" as well as "high"; when Aeneas set sail with his pitiful group of exiles, he says, *"feror exsul in altum/cum sociis natoque penatibus et magnis dis"*.[2]

Aeneas is lucky; his son and his home, in a sense, go with him. Does the parallel cease from this point? No. The role of the nestlings if filled by Astyanax: he is too helpless to escape with the rest: he dies (if you will forgive the gruesome detail) in much the same way as the nestlings, being hurled down from a high tower. And just as the nestlings (if my interpretation of this passage is right) are only alluded to in a very oblique way, so also is Astyanax. His name is mentioned in passing during the description of Priam's palace,[3] and again in one of the most terribly moving passages of the Aeneid - the episode in Book III when Aeneas visits Buthrotum, to find Andromache and Helenus living in a re-created Troy. Everything is there - the river Simois, the Scaean Gate and a citadel called Ilium: yet, in a sense, nothing is there. Andromache's true allegiance is to a dead man: and whereas Aeneas takes with him hope for the future embodied in his son, Andromache has no son, and no future - only the past. Here, surely, are two cultures; on the one side the mobile, forward-looking, ambitious and unscrupulous culture - the culture that was to break Dido's heart and kill Turnus, take Evander's son from him and embroil the peace-loving, innocent Latins in a disastrous war. On the other side is the static, sentimental culture, trying to put the clock back, and live as though the Trojan War had never been. Both these groups once belonged to a single community; but the cataclysm of war has isolated the two elements in the compound that was Troy - those who turned their backs on Ilium, and sailed forth into the unknown to make a fresh start, and those who stayed where they were, surrendered to the Greeks and salvaged what they could from the ruins of their lives. Vergil also shows us the feelings of these groups towards each other. There is a bond of affection between them - they were once all Trojans together - yet there is jealousy too. Aeneas is supported and stimulated by the knowledge of his great destiny; but he envies Helenus the tranquility and calm tenor of his life - *vobis parta quies*. Aeneas' greatest trials are yet to come; Helenus has not "to plough a great expanse of sea, or seek the lands of Italy which always escape from his grasp". But Aeneas does not settle in Buthrotum, or accept Helenus' "final solution of the Trojan Problem". *"vivite felices, quibus est fortuna peracta/iam sua"* is an ambivalent phrase;[4] it can mean "you are lucky - your trials and tribulations are all over", or it can mean "you are a lot of has-beens (or should it be "have-beens"?)

Helenus gives to Aeneas the guidance of prophecy, drawn from profound knowledge and profound inspiration - the greatest gift from the past to the future. Andromache's gift to Ascanius is simple, but touching. She sees in him the chance of realizing all that she had hoped for, in vain, from her own

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1. A. II, 635
2. A. III, 11-12.
3. A. II, 457
4. A. III, 493-4.

son. *O mihi sola mei super Astyanactis imago*: his eyes, the poise of his hands, the cast of his features was the same: and he would be just about your age now. There are those who think that the teaching of Latin Grammar is too analytical and too pedantic: but if one fails to realize that *pubesceret*, the imperfect subjunctive, denotes the apodosis of an unfulfilled condition, with suppressed protasis, one is liable to overlook one of the master-strokes of Vergil's art; there are some ideas which are more eloquently expressed in silence than in words. And surely, just for the sake of understanding this one line, and nothing else, the effort of learning all about conditional clauses (Arnold-Bradley-Mountford, pp. 246-262) is well worth while.

At this point in Book III of the Aeneid Vergil shows us his two cultures side by side, but not in violent contrast. This is because the portrayal of Aeneas' character is not static, but dynamic. He begins as one of the birds who fly away when the tree comes down; and for a time - the phase is scarcely over when he reaches Buthrotum - he looks back with longing to the past, and tries unsuccessfully to re-create it. But as the story unfolds, his character turns the full circle from sentimental nostalgia to ruthless imperialism - progress at all costs and to hell with anyone who gets in the way. He ends up, *furiis accensus et ira*, hacking down someone else's tree. He has crossed the gulf - and it is a very real gulf - from one culture to the other.

I have left until last the passage near the end of Georgics II in which Vergil makes what looks like an explicit statement of his attitude towards science and the scientist.[1] He asks, above all, that he may find favour with the Muses, who will teach him all about "celestial orbits and the stars, eclipses of the sun and all the moon must suffer, whence come earthquakes and tidal waves, that burst forth and then subside again; why the sun hastens to set in winter months, and what it is that delays the tardy nights". ... The Natural Science Tripos. In the Eclogues, Vergil had spoken of his ambition to write a Roman epic; and in due course he fulfilled it. Whether, had he lived longer, he might have attempted a scientific poem on the lines laid down here, we cannot tell; all we know is that the Muses did not grant this prayer to Vergil during his lifetime. He himself envisaged a different obstacle to its fulfilment - not premature death but "refrigeration of the pericardial blood-supply" - one of the very rare touches of satire in Vergil's work, and a neat little dig at the materialistic psychologists of his own day.

He goes on to say: *felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas*
atque metus omnis et inexorabile fatum
subiecit pedibus strepitumque Acherontis avari.

I do not understand these lines as well as I should like to. In the first place, who is this chap? Is it Lucretius? What Mr. Jackson Knight calls "Vergil's negative capability" is clearly at work here. Is this man the scientist, as we know him? *rerum cognoscere causas* - able to probe the innermost secrets of the physical universe: *metus omnis subiecit pedibus*- debunked religion, with all its taboos and hobgoblins. But scientific materialism, as expounded by the Greek atomists brought with it determinism; and *inexorabile fatum* sounds to me like an allusion to fatalism or determinism. Why then does this man, whoever he is,

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1. G.II. 475 ff.

"trample it underfoot"? Was it for the same reason that Epicurus introduced a suspect and very unscientific idea - the "swerve" - and so re-instated free-will - because in a context of total determinism human life has no meaning, and moral philosophy has no use? If so, was he not, to that extent, a humanist?[1]

Vergil next draws a comparison between this man (whoever he is) and his "opposite number": we are conditioned to think of him as a scientist, having only one possible opposite number. "Fortunate also is he who..." Does what? Writes poetry? Composes music? No. *Fortunatus et ille deos qui novit agrestes*: the countryman. Nor is the main contrast that between science and art, as we should expect: after all, the countryman is a scientist of sorts. Vergil is weighing the humble piety of the countryman against presumptuous atheism: he is comparing the man who seeks through science to conquer and dominate the physical universe with the countryman who settles for peaceful co-existence and mutual respect. And finally, Vergil contrasts the relationships of these two men with the physical universe: to the one, the world is "it", and his attitude to it is detached and objective. To the other, the world is "thou", and his relation is intimate and personal: *deos qui novit agrestes* - "who is on familiar terms with the country gods". These main points of contrast are highlighted in a further series of comparisons between the countryman and a sort of Rogues' Gallery - the man of ambition, the man of greed, the man of violence: they each achieve great things, at a terrible cost: but none of them can ever know the peace and stability of the countryman's life:

> *agricola incurvo terram dimovit aratro,*
> *hinc anni labor, hinc patriam parvosque nepotes*
> *sustinet ...*

Here are Vergil's two cultures - Aeneas and Helenus: Octavian and the Republican Party: the Atomic Energy Authority and the Society for the Preservation of Rural England. They were the two inseparable halves of Vergil's world, and the two halves of Vergil's own soul - Meliboeus and Tityrus in the very first Eclogue. To reconcile them, and to discover the tragic paradox of our existence - that birth can only come from death, and peace can only be won by violence - cost Vergil long and agonizing thought: it took much of the happiness out of his later years, and all the laughter out of his poetry. As for our Two Cultures, what are they but the complementary halves of the apple of knowledge, which grows on Mount Helicon and is presented, whole and undivided, to the fortunate among mankind? And the gulf between them, of which we make so much? Vergil crossed and re-crossed it, time and time again; and I doubt very much whether he even noticed it.

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1. Cf. the exact Greek equivalent of *inexorabile fatum*, ἀπαραίτητον ἀνάγκην in a supposed quotation from Epicurus, Ritter and Preller, HPG 463, note (a) fin.

V.S. Lectures, No. 62

VERGIL'S PHILOSOPHY IN THE GEORGICS

A lecture delivered to the Virgil Society
on 16th March 1963

by C. Whitaker, M. A.

Whatever the precise occasion for writing the Georgics, in Vergil's own thinking they represent an answer to problems which he was unable to solve at the time of writing the Eclogues. The Eclogues do form a patterned unity; the scheme which Maury found is there (ap. Perret: "Virgile, l'homme et l'oeuvre") by which the theme of the Eclogues rise to a climax in the fifth and decline again by the same steps to the ninth, through the subjects of land, love, music, supernatural revelation and apotheosis. The tenth eclogue is a credible counterpoint to the fifth. It is also difficult to deny that there are various numerical patterns in the totals of the lines and in the arrangements of the lines within individual eclogues, but all these patterns are superimposed from outside on a corpus of poems already written round other interests. The mystery of the Eclogues springs from Vergil's firm conviction that his ideas ultimately cohered, and his inability at this stage of his intellectual development to show that they did cohere. Therefore he imposed the external patterns by way of asserting the interrelation of ideas which were waiting to be organised round their own natural centre.

It is characteristic of Vergil's artistic expression to put his points as reflections on, or discords with, an established form already familiar in the literature of Greece or Rome. His use of these 'models' is a kind of intellectual shorthand, taking the content of the previous work for granted and significantly expressing his own thought across it. Theocritus served as the irritant and the vehicle for his thinking, and in the third eclogue in particular, his own convictions are made to float on a conventional shepherd conversation, as in the modern art style of superimposing black line drawings on an independent coloured background (like a world within a world), or like Henry Moore boring holes into his statues to explore the texture and qualities of the stone of which they are composed. Perhaps a better comparison might be the recent use of independent choreography and music (when it can be experienced in this country!) where the one is said to form a contrasting commentary on the other in a rhythmically double ballet.

The most arresting instance is in line 40 of the third eclogue, where instead of the conventional sculptures on the shepherd's cup, he has a picture of the scientist Conon and possibly Eudoxus, showing that Vergil felt there was a natural kinship between the shepherd and the scientist - some comparable awareness, perhaps, of the wonders of nature. Again in line 60, the shepherd quotes lines of Aratus: 'all the streets are full of

God.' Here Vergil seems to mean that embedded in the everyday conversations of shepherds are profundities of realisation, an awareness identical with that of the philosopher, so that shepherd, scientist and philosopher are akin. At the end of the eclogue (101) he thinks of the pains of love uniting man and beast in a common experience, which is natural enough; but more significantly speaks of a thirst in the meadows not for water but for music; a need of nature which the shepherds can satisfy (109).

In line 84, Pollio appears among the imaginary shepherds. He is a poet, an artist as well as a statesman. Vergil could be saying, with Matthew Arnold, that in the essentials of all our lives there is the simplicity of the shepherds'. But he seems rather to mean, as when Pollio appears again in the fourth eclogue, that the age of miracles is now; that poets are near the truth now and that the golden age is not a past loss but a present possibility.

Stravinsky has a fine image of the kind of achievement that Vergil looks for in his ballet Apollon Musagète. The Muses' beautiful but uncoordinated dances are first taught to the infant Apollo. Then Apollo, grown to manhood, draws all their steps together in an ordered whole. Their dancing forms a harmonious pattern under his interpretation. In the succession from Apollo, there are poets in every age taking in the experience of their times, the understanding of their fellow poets, in their youth, and at maturity finding new unity, new order where there was confusion before. In the mythical past, Daphnis had been articulate for nature. Nature had responded to him as to Orpheus. He had made nature and the relation of man to nature intelligible, but he was gone, his inspiration was lost. The shepherds are waiting for another singer like him. His work was unfinished. In the fifth eclogue, the shepherds set offerings to him alongside those to Apollo (66). All the worshipping of Daphnis is something to be done in the future. Their promises show their determination. They will bring back into the world the light that went out of it when he died (35) by their devotion to him, to his genius. No doubt Vergil saw in Caesar and later in Octavian a man who would make sense of existence, but his poetic contemporaries too had something of Daphnis' qualities. It was expected of them all to help interpret man's place in the world, to make him feel more at home in it. Gallus might have helped to do this (Ecl. X, 16-17, 35-6). Therefore Vergil laments that he is lost to this endeavour. He calls on Arethusa, whose waters were unsullied by the salt sea, perhaps to help draw Gallus back to his vocation as poet, undamaged by his yearning for Lycoris and war. He might be an Apollo to bring new order to the Muses' dancing. (Eclogue 6, lines 64 ff., especially line 66, where the chorus of Apollo rises to greet him and the Muses offer him the pipes, much as Apollo is given the lyre by the Muses in the ballet - it is for him to make nature respond to the tunes he will play on them.)

The sixth is another eclogue in which the discomfort of unsolved problems is acute. Shepherds cannot understand the world without a seer to explain it. The first simple steps of Silenus' revelation (lines 31-40) are a Lucretian, a scientific, view of matter. But there are so many other questions unanswered. Must anyone who steps beyond the barrier between men and animals be mad and suffer agonies like Pasiphae? Her effort to under-

stand, through her human love, the mind of the bull (53 ff.), to sympathise with his longing for the pastures, seems monstrous and repellent, and yet we feel for her in her madness. Why can there be no understanding? Again, why are there so many kinds of animals? (62 ff.) Can it be true that the past sufferings of men have been so painfully intense as to impress themselves on the very sounds and movements of nature? Are the cries of the birds a mournful echo of past agonies? (78) - But all this is speculation; the world of nature remains alien and unapproachable, though there is hope in Gallus, to whom the Muses have entrusted the pipes of Hesiod, who used to make the trees come down from the mountains!

This is a very surprising claim to have made for Hesiod. Probably he was thinking of the Theogony and perhaps the ages of the world in the Works and Days; the telling of the history of the world, the knowledge of its origins, all those past events about which Nature must be silent, awaken a sympathetic echo in Nature. Nature moves, remembering its own past, hearing the poet articulate for itself, revealing the secrets that it has no voice to tell but his. So the hope of the shepherds is in their singers.

At another level, song consoles them in rejection, and when the seasons as well as love seem cruel. It is some comfort to Corydon in the second eclogue to think of Polyphemus, whom he has sung so often in the shepherd tradition, as the Beast needing Beauty but unable to claim or win her. He feels that he <u>is</u> Polyphemus. The town cannot value the country any more than the sea the land. In the eyes of the town, the country is his ugliness. (56) The shepherd of eclogue 8, too, cannot blame his love, but is hurt that his countryside is rejected, that Nature does not help its own. Who will make the country understood by the town? Who will proclaim the values by which the shepherds live? The country needs its <u>spokesman</u> as well as an interpreter for itself.

And what can relieve the countryman in the distress of war, the hardships of the allotments of land? They must depend on an Octavian. The harsh reality of the first eclogue is lightened by Tityrus' thankfulness. This was something given which he could not earn or repay - as by heaven (*deus nobis haec otia fecit* 6) - and his thankfulness is of value in itself. In the seventh eclogue, too, Corydon does not win the contest so much because of his artistic skill as through his outlook on life. He is thankful, and for himself and for those who hear him, the world is a brighter place (*Ex illo Corydon, Corydon est tempore nobis* 70). The prize must go to his happiness, not to Thyrsis' complaining.

And what of those who are born into this time of civil war and suffering? The child of Vergil's own friend was born at this period of crisis and Vergil consoles him and his parents with a promise of a dawning golden age which will make him glad to be alive. This is a confident promise to which Vergil can give only mysterious substance. He knows that this is possible, that all he feels will be seen to be true, but he cannot yet give reasons for any of these convictions. He cannot give grounds for thankfulness, or confidence in a golden age, proof of the presence of Jupiter in the world, an understanding of the relationship of man and nature, or even an understanding of the kinship between the countryman, the scientist and the poet.

But he does know that the poet is the voice of nature, and Nature mysteriously responds to the truth about itself. As a poet, it is his business to seek out this truth, to be articulate for the shepherds, to speak for Tityrus.

This is what he calls in the second book of the Georgics (175) 'revealing the sacred spring'. At the end of the same book, he speaks of himself as the priest of the Muses, tells how he longs to be allowed to understand the secrets of the heavens (475). But his mind is too dull, as he puts it, to approach these parts of nature (*accedere* 483). People like Lucretius are lucky who can approach them and trample the fear of death underfoot. He must content himself with knowing the gods of the countryside. In fact his approach is different altogether from that of Lucretius; Lucretius' interpretation had not solved Vergil's problems. The understanding Vergil sought was still not found. He wished to know why, not only how.

In the same passage you can feel Vergil's conviction that he has understood and interpreted the more limited subject he assigned himself. He has dealt with reality (*in manibus terrae, non hic te carmine ficto* ... II, 45). He is interpreting the world in which the farmers actually lived from day to day. That is, he has succeeded by limiting his objective. There is an unhealthy element of self-consciousness and melodrama in Epicureanism - 'Shipwrecked Man defiantly faces an Alien Universe'. There is something of this too in the lovesick and discontented shepherds of the Eclogues, but not in the outlook of Vergil's thankful countryman.

We can only guess at the lines along which Vergil's thought advanced, but it is significant that this triumphant passage comes at the end of a book dealing mainly with trees and vines. His shepherds in the Eclogues were busy tending animals and very naturally spoke of them in an affectionate way as persons, he and she. But hearing countrymen speak of tending young trees and vines (268), propagating (23, 301) and grafting (82) them, Vergil found their language reflecting a tendency to regard even plants as persons. This is visible in the language he uses himself in the poem. Here is a very simple relationship of man and plant. The wild plant does not flourish like the cultivated one; the cultivated one would not be what it is without human care. Therefore he is making a living thing new with his own hands. He depends on it for food; it depends on him for its flourishing. It cannot by itself be as beautiful, as healthy, as prolific as it is capable of being, and here is a mutual involvement of the man and the plant: the development of it is an adventure, full of possibilities not all of which are yet realised. So in this very small part of the universe, there is need for man, an opportunity for man. Arguing from this example one would conclude that man had an essential place in nature and was invited to enjoy seeing it flourish through his help.

Obviously a tree is much more an individual than a crop of corn. It has a character and possibilities which can be understood by a skilled man. It can be known as if it were some sort of person - through experience and in time. In raising a crop of corn, it is really the land itself that needs to be known in this way; what it is capable of growing, what treatment it will respond to-Vergil himself uses the word respond (I,47). The farmer must make

himself a means of it flourishing. The food he grows on it will support him; he must serve it, know it thoroughly and individually, and give it the right treatment at the right time (208 etc.). He cannot treat it as he likes and when he likes, but must enable it to fulfil itself and must live all his life to the rhythm of nature and the seasons. He is not, like the lovelorn shepherd, conscious of the seasons and the weather as in or out of sympathy with his own mood, but thinks of the effect on his crops. He becomes aware for them so that he can act for them. So, at the very beginning of the Georgics (43) we step out onto a field at the end of winter with the spring sunshine glinting on the ploughshare, the oxen straining at the plough, and from then on there is an unending succession of tasks for the farmer to perform.

Vergil describes himself as the Italian Hesiod (II, 176). He details the labour involved in farming as relentlessly as he did, but the result is better food than nature ever produced unaided. 'Cores', he says, 'first taught man to plough as acorns and wild strawberries failed him (149) .... your hard-working neighbour will have piles of produce - if you have not worked hard, you will be back on acorns (159)!' In fact, Vergil thinks so little of the conventional golden age that he absent-mindedly calls the primitive men who saw the young world in its first springtime (II, 341) '*ferrea progenies*'. Jupiter took away this false golden age where there was no real liberty (124), no need of or place for man in nature, and introduced apparent imperfections to make nature depend on man as well as man on nature (133). If a man tends his crop to the best of his knowledge and ability, this interdependence and involvement with nature can be productive of something new. Starting from what he is given and taking care to respect its individuality, the farmer can, within the compass of his own fields, make his own golden age.

'*Si te digna manet divini gloria ruris*' (I, 168)

'So surely as the glory of the divine countryside shall be your rich reward.' Jupiter gave not prosperity itself, but the opportunity to prosper through involvement with nature, and Jupiter has been careful to make it possible by forming the world to man's measure in its imperfections (121-3), which are the farmer's opportunity. His labour does not simply reinstate a previous perfection but creates new perfection with the individual mark of his hands upon it. The ancient carts of Ceres (163) and the rest of the rustic equipment are a reminder of the long stages through which man's skill has been nursed by providence (133-4) and crafts have been developed to enable him to survive with less help and more freedom to fulfil himself.

The farmer must take action at the right time of year, but the time of year is marked out for him by stars which are beautiful to look at (especially the '*lucidus Anguis*', line 205) and he notices their beauty more because he has need to observe them. All kinds of human activity are measured in this way (253 ff.) and this is no idle contemplation of beauty any more than the orderliness of the fruit trees is an idle creation of beauty (I, 257; II, 285). When our needs oblige us to contemplate something beautiful in nature, we are more acutely aware of it. The farmer's involvement heightens his awareness.

It is not simply his awareness of beauty that is heightened; there is also

the awareness of danger, the danger of storms when he must fear for his crops (335). He cannot help living dangerously. But when he stands on the fresh spring grass making an offering to Ceres, he is thankful that all is well.

Sacra refer Cereri laetis operatus in herbis (339). One of the safeguards he has against the storm is the signs of impending weather (351-5). Vergil could not have included so much detail as Aratus gives without disproportion in the work as a whole, but his treatment is not only abbreviated, it is poetically developed (356 ff.). The effect of all the changes and additions is to make the reader feel, in the sounds, rhythms and words themselves, the threatening atmosphere before a storm, sense the oncoming rain; in other words to reproduce in the reader's mind what it feels like to the farmer to be anxiously observing the weather. This is true of the whole of Vergil's treatment; that it is not so much to inform a person what he must do as to allow him to feel what it is like to be a farmer carrying out these tasks; the little satisfactions of skill, the thrill of all the sights and sounds around him as he works. The treatment is friendly, almost apologetic:

> *Possum multa tibi veterum praecepta referre*
> *ni refugis.* (I, 176-7)

Like Lucretius 1, 400:

> *Multaque praeterea tibi possum commemorando*
> *Argumenta fidem dictis conradere nostris.*

he will omit proofs rather than be tedious. He wishes to prove something about the life the farmer leads; if he were instructing, it would be less reasonable to think of omitting these details. This poetic textbook has been made a vehicle for conveying an awareness of a special kind, acquired by working in this way in and with nature.

The farmer is acutely aware of this impending weather because of the risk to his crops; there may be disaster and disappointment and he is afraid (316 ff.). The corn crop is the most exposed to the weather, the most liable to be completely destroyed by it. But this fear is not something to be removed on intellectual grounds, but to be accepted as an essential part of full awareness. It is part of thankfulness. To prevent disaster you must accept and try to know nature better. Not only is it made possible for man to have this place in nature, cooperating with it, but nature is at least partly intelligible (I, 353 *Ipse pater statuit ...*)

The farmer could work in a town where he had no need to observe and fear the weather, but his life as a farmer never lets him down (*nescia fallere vita* II, 467). He does not feel impelled to stop and ask himself why he should be doing this work. Exposed as he is, he is in touch with reality; near enough to nature to come to know it through experience. His understanding and knowledge of nature will grow as he lives, because he is awake to the life of all nature around him. If disaster does strike him, he can accept it and learn from it and say of nature 'You destroy me, you are good for me' (*Labor omnia vicit Improbus* I, 145), because he can be confident that he has been given his place and what he does is never pointless, but fundamentally needed (*squalent abductis*

arva colonis I, 507).

It is through doing his work that he knows, and through living in nature that he becomes aware, and all this awareness is integrated in his own person - it is a relationship between him personally and nature itself. All that the scientist or philosopher can tell him is a supplement to this awareness, not a ground for dismissing it as invalid or misleading because not intellectually or logically but personally coherent. In effect the logic of Vergil's Georgics is not the subject-object, or the action-reaction logic of the philosopher or scientist, but one of giving and acceptance. The logical intelligibility of the world is itself seen as something given along with the means of livelihood, the crops, the sun and rain. All are aspects of the making of the world to the measure of man. The philosopher or the scientist makes himself a little box, puts inside it whatever parts of experience will fit neatly together and then, looking out through a window in it, interprets the world outside by what he has inside (in Lucretius' case a sort of atomic model). Vergil says No! You must go out and be in the world, tread on it, smell it, pick it up, reshape it and be yourself involved, exposed, afraid, thankful, in a word aware.

Despite the gentleness and modesty with which he expresses himself (II, 483 ff., 493 ff.) it is clear that Vergil found a fundamental contradiction in Lucretius. The philosophical argument by which he hopes to convince us intellectually is embedded in poetry whose sensitive awareness disproves it. He refuses to accept the whole of his experience in evidence and concludes in a paradox; that man, in whose eyes the world is beautiful, under whose hands it yields food, to whose mind its movements are intelligible, is shipwrecked in it and doomed to become nothing. And so, Vergil constantly uses Lucretian language in a poem whose general tendency is quite contrary to his outlook.

A farmer depends on having many things given to him. His land, good weather, a time of peace. He recognises his dependence on these gifts and is thankful for them. On either side of the temperate zones, as Vergil emphasises in Book I in his translation from Eratosthenes (233 ff.), there are the burning sands and the icy wastes. The temperate zones are '*munere concessae divom*' - the only phrase that Vergil adds to his original (238). For its climate, its variety of soil, its fertility, the richness and variety of its scenery and products, Italy will compare with any country in the world (II, 136 ff.). Your own plot of land with the right treatment will be as good as the famous lands of the mysterious East (I, 56 ff.) - only ask of it what it is best fitted to provide. This is not just patriotism, but part and parcel of Vergil's conviction that here and now are as wonderful as any other age or place, and present a challenge, offer an opportunity, which man must surely seize (II, 433 - '*et dubitant homines serere atque impendere curam?*') It was in this mood of conviction, of himself living in a wonderful age, that Vergil meant to write the work on Octavian projected at the beginning of the Third Georgic, and would have found this easier than the task immediately before him (III, 40, 41).

The groundwork of Vergil's reinterpretation was complete in the first two books, because it was through thinking of trees and crops that he had arrived at it. Now he must deal with the remaining important divisions of farming from

his new viewpoint. The distinction between the kinds of care needed in agriculture and those needed in tending animals is clearly drawn in the opening lines of the work. The animals have a more independent life of their own and proportionately more skill and knowledge is required if the farmer is to intervene to their benefit (*quae cura boum, ,qui cultus habendo sit pecori* I, 3). This applies even more to bees which possess their own highly organised way of life, where unskilled attentions may do nothing but damage (*apibus quanta experientia parcis* I, 4).

Vergil approaches Book III with misgivings. In the Eclogues he has already faced this problem of the relationship of man and beast and found himself unable to discover the essence of it. In the context of the Georgics, using the principle of interpretation which he applied with such success to crops and plants, he must look for where man has a place in the wellbeing and perfection of animal nature.

Any observer would be moved by the slow, patient strength of the ox, and exhilarated by the fire and energy of the stallion. To a farmer these are precious and perishable qualities (III, 63-8). He knows with what care and difficulty they are maintained from generation to generation, how much they represent the outcome of human discipline and the protection of the animals from the unthinking violence and self-destruction of their own passions (209-241). The farmer delights in them more, knowing this. The spectator at the circus (103 ff.) sees the stallion prodigal of its youthful strength, the fire of life bursting into flame. The farmer knows how soon this beautiful creature, in itself one of the glorious of nature. will be old and spent (95 ff.). He lives and works for these moments when the creatures he cares for can be seen one after another at their prime, so that the world is never without these paragons of the joy of living (118-9). There is a noble abandon about their passions and recklessness of death which commands admiration along with sorrow at the destruction they wreak upon themselves. They are so like men in these sufferings (262-3). The farmer is nearest to them when they respond to his praise and obey his discipline (III, 185). The female ox is 'la belle laide' - her beauty is in her strength, the toughness and endurance of her calves (51 ff.). Here again there is a glory of nature that dies so quickly in the individual, and the farmer is poignantly aware of it when it is at its height and about to decline. He thinks of his own youth, passing away more slowly but no less inexorably (66-68) and there is a strong bond of sympathy between him and these creatures who experience so much of life as we do, but can never communicate directly with us.

The farmer's awareness of life in his cattle is also full of tragedy; his helplessness to assist them when they die of disease. When the sad farmer (517) watches his ox die, he can do nothing, but in his mind tries to enter into the thoughts of this creature as Pasiphae did in the sixth eclogue, and imagine its remembrance of the soft pastures and the clear streams to which it can respond no more (520 ff.). His heart is pained by the injustice of its pitiable death after a lifetime of labouring, and in this moment he knows that he is involved in the suffering of his cattle and has somehow failed them. Men's excesses are less severely punished than this innocence. Quick action at some stage (468) might have prevented this widespread destruction. This is not a lesson in Stoic '*ataraxia*', but brings a determination to devote himself more

completely and by extending his knowledge and skill, find more points at which he can intervene in the life of his flocks and herds, gladly because they have need of him (176, 319-20). Nature is not a 'moral gymnasium' but valued for itself.

So the prevailing mood of Book III is realism, toughness, the presentation of a challenge not yet met. Providence will not put things right without man's efforts (456). Vergil is not just blowing hot and cold on the reader but has succeeded in this book in a difficult task, as he puts it, '*angustis hunc addere rebus honorem* (290)', that is to show this significance, the importance of this part of farming life. The book is full of urgency and shows the farmer confronted with quickly passing lives similar enough to his own for him to be chastened and his awareness of life itself to be heightened by the inadequacy of his best efforts. So the book is sobering, real, challenging rather than triumphant, though Vergil does not forget to be thankful for Italy - so much more is possible there than for the nomad in the heat of Africa or in the icy wastes of Scythia. He thinks gratefully of the cool evening pastures:

Solis ad occasum, cum frigidus aera vesper
temperat, et saltus reficit iam roscida luna,
litoraque alcyonen resonant, acalanthida dumi.

(336-8)

Vergil turns to the subject of bees with a sigh of relief; he delights in constrast, and loves to turn from the very large to the very small (as from the track of the ant to the rainbow in the first book:

Angustum formica terens iter; et bibit ingens
arcus.

(380-1)

and so keep his reader's observation alert and comprehensive. In the general scheme of the whole work, too, he wishes to show the farmer inevitably aware both of the vastness of the heavens, the large time scale of the seasons and the weather, and of the delicate complexity of the world in miniature. It is a corrective to the comparative grossness of the farming life in other departments. And here he can make the bees' weather himself (64, 87) and create an environment for them (26 ff.) with stones for their safety in the pool and thyme beds near at hand. He should make a complete flower garden round them too if he has a taste for that kind of thing (112.). The bees will accept all this as a matter of course and make use of it '*more suo*' (55), not being able to get anything so large as a man into focus. No one could refuse to help them in their dangers and difficulties (241). The farmer himself is not exposed to much risk in this case. He finds himself almost in the position that the benevolent country spirits occupy towards himself.

Vergil can only regard the wonderful instinct and organisation of the bees as a privilege given them for some cosmogonical service to the infant Jupiter (149), but when he refers to the belief that the bees share in the 'divine mind' (219) he does so without committing himself, as if to say that this is a speculation which may well occur to anyone involved in handling bees. He pictures the farmer absorbed in his observation and reflecting on it.

In fact, by including bees in his poem, Vergil demonstrates the range of

awareness which is possible and often necessary for the farmer. What understanding he reaches through it is a personal matter - the integration must always be his own and other people's theories can be blind enclosures as well as opening vistas. But in this kind of work, given wholehearted commitment, a man can put himself in the way of enough breadth of experience to allow his thought to develop, to crystallize, dissolve and recrystallize rather than ossify within it. The most important facts - the pattern of giving and acceptance in which his life consists - he will not be able to ignore.

It remains a good way of life to the end. Having mentioned gardens in connection with bees, Vergil takes the opportunity to prove it. The old pirate is content and supports himself and surrounds himself with beauty on a very poor plot of land (127). He shows how nature can be made more perfect than you would think possible through mature skill and patient care.

It is a microcosm of farming life and Vergil could not have expanded it without repetition of points already well made. But on this scale, it does show to what extent the potentialities of a plot he knows thoroughly can be realised by a gardener, in a harmony of man and nature so complete that the two have a rather better seasonal rhythm than the imperfect world outside!

Anderson (C.Q. 1933, 36-45) proved that the second half of the fourth Georgic was not substituted for 'Laudes Galli'. It must be an integral part of the work as originally conceived and in fact round off the thought of the Georgics as a whole. It is introduced by an elaborate description of the extent of Egypt throughout which this macabre method of recovering one's hive of bees was practised. Where the river runs, there is a land of green crops and black earth (291), away from it, the red sand. As in Book I with Eratosthenes (233) he thinks of men living in the temperate zones with lands where man has no place on either side. He thinks of the river making life possible for men within the desert and of water as a gift on which man is everywhere dependent.

Aristaeus, the Daphnis of the Georgics, petulant with the failure of his skill on which he so prides himself, complains on the river bank. His mother and her sister water nymphs and wood nymphs receive him magically into their abode, in a scene worthy of Cocteau. In the dripping and echoing caves beneath the river

Speluncisque lacus clausos lucosque sonantis (364)

Aristaeus finds the sources of many other streams. Vergil names them and they prove to be rivers flowing through lands famous for their fertility. This fertility depends on their waters. Aristaeus is being introduced into a Platonic underworld not only to understand part of eternal justice, but to see the sources of life and growth and know the spirits of nature who preside over them. It is a much homelier place than Plato's (Phaedo 111 ff.). The Nymphs are spinning and being entertained as they work by stories of the loves of the Gods. Aristaeus is made welcome. The Nymphs pour water on his hands to wash them (376) but his mother prays to the Nymphs (382). Why should the same Nymphs serve him and be the object of prayers and libations on his behalf? Like water itself, they serve man's humblest needs but also have in them part of the secret of life, and make the lands flourish through which their rivers flow. Water is

ordinary and practical but also mysterious; it should be respected as the gift of the Nymphs. They do not deny it to Aristaeus; they do not forsake him altogether despite his offence against Eurydice who was their companion. Life is not taken away from him as a punishment and his skill will be restored to him, new understanding will be given to him when he again accepts the conditions under which it can be given.

This fight for self-knowledge is not easy. Vergil in his allegory of it (387 ff.) has developed the story of Proteus in the Odyssey in his own way. In the second eclogue, the world seemed alien to Corydon in the heat (12-13) and here too the dizziness of the heat is made to represent Aristaeus' feeling of being cut off from his confident everyday reality as he prepares to face the burning sea-green eyes of Proteus (451)

'cava flumina siccis
faucibus ad limum radii tepefacta coquebant.' (427-8)

(rather like the heat suffered by Mersault in Camus' L'Etranger).

He is to have revealed to him not only the conditions under which he has received his skill, but also Eurydice and Orpheus themselves. He will become aware of her fragile humanity, his terrible desolation, their devotion to each other, and realise the hurt he has inflicted. Like the offender in Plato's Phaedo (114) crying out from the river which bears him helplessly along to those on the bank whom he has wronged, Aristaeus must ask forgiveness. His skill counts for nothing; he cannot claim justice - it is claimed from him (455).

Aristaeus' feeling of guilt is doubled by Orpheus' failure to bring Eurydice back. The triple crash over the lake of Avernus strikes terror into him as Proteus continues his narrative (493) and after it, Eurydice's voice asking 'what madness ruined me and thee' he feels as a condemnation of himself.

'Illa "Quis et me", inquit, "miseram et te perdidit, Orpheu,
quis tantus furor?"' (494)

In fact he must at first have taken her to mean by *quis* 'who ruined me and thee' and found '*quis furor*' even more remorseful in his guilt. Eurydice feels instinctively for Orpheus (*et te perdidit, Orpheu*). That is why she tells him she can do nothing and explains to him how she is weak; she knows that he needs her (*heus non tua*) - it is her own helplessness that distresses her. Proteus tells Aristaeus that she no longer saw him in the moments when he was trying to reach out to her for the last time. This is a very real touch in a description of death, however extraordinary this death may be otherwise, and it is calculated to strike hom with Aristaeus, whom Proteus now compares to the cruel farmer who takes the fledglings from the next. He too has brought unbearable grief on one of nature's singers. He has taken nature's voice away. The farmer who works with nature has helped to destroy the poet who interprets it. As Proteus tells him how the ice cold stream bore Orpheus' cold dead body, it is not difficult to imagine the cold despair in Aristaeus' own heart.

The sacrifice that the Nymphs require is itself the means of restoring

his bees - this must be why Vergil repeats the instructions (295 ff. and 538 ff. without the ghoulish details) - it is dramatically effective for Aristaeus to be in ignorance while the reader recognises the formula which he already knows will give him what he is seeking. It is entirely appropriate that a separate thank-offering should be made to Eurydice (547) because her companions the Nymphs destroyed Aristaeus' bees (532). Aristaeus seeks pardon (536) and an end of their anger against him. He receives more than this - a new technique, if you can call it that, for recovering bees on any occasion. This is the discovery Vergil is explaining in the story (315-16). The Nymphs have been kindly (*faciles* 535) on Eurydice's behalf and his offering is to be a mark of respect (*venerabere* 647) and an acknowledgment of his indebtedness to her. Vergil leaves it to be assumed that he did make this offering when he saw the bees were there (554), but this is natural - the implication is that his whole attitude of mind was changed and this is the point of the story in the context of the Georgics. Vergil seems to mean that it is only with this attitude of thankfulness, or realistic humility before nature, the '*di agrestes*' (II, 493) and his fellow men that understanding is possible.

This completes a profound statement of the knowledge of the world which is attainable by the farmer through his involvement in nature. Science is not alien to this knowledge but a welcome deepening of his awareness in particular directions. There seems to be a note of relief in the last lines of the Georgics. Vergil feels that his treatment of the country life in the Eclogues has been less serious, perhaps presumptuous (*audax* 565) but now at least he has done justice to the outlook he admired in Tityrus the old man, and he has made good use of his leisure in trying to make his readers sympathetic to it; in fact trying to bring them to a fuller awareness of life than philosophies of an academic kind could offer.