Virgil's Georgics and the Art of Reference

Richard F. Thomas

Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, Vol. 90. (1986), pp. 171-198.

Stable URL:

Harvard Studies in Classical Philology is currently published by Department of the Classics, Harvard University.

VIRGIL'S *GEORGICS* AND
THE ART OF REFERENCE

RICHARD F. THOMAS

I N 1942 Pasquali published a brief but important article on the way
in which poets allude to their predecessors, a process which he
named *arte allusiva*.[1] Although this was the first work to confront the
issue as an artistic phenomenon, it needs to be said that certain stu-
dies had already investigated individual instances of allusion;[2] and
since Pasquali, the investigation has been carried on, although not
perhaps as extensively as the subject deserves.[3] The focus of all these
studies is Hellenistic poetry, which has been shown to demonstrate a
certain type of allusion, namely, the use of a dictional oddity whose
sense is to be recovered only by having recourse to the imitated pas-
sage, from which it will normally diverge in any number of ways—a
practice generally referred to as *oppositio in imitando*, but which I shall
call "correction."[4] Most of the work done in this area treats the inter-
play between the Alexandrians, chiefly Callimachus and Apollonius,
and the Homeric text, although Giangrande in particular has exam-
ined lateral activity within Alexandria; so, on a fairly simple level,
where Callimachus has Ἐφύρηνδε (*H.* 4.42) and Αἱμονίηθεν (*Aet.*
1.7), Apollonius will give us Ἐφύρηθεν (*Arg.* 4.1212) and Αἱμονίηνδε

[1] G. Pasquali, "Arte allusiva," *Italia che scrive* 25 (1942) 185–187 (= *Stra-
vaganze quarte e supreme* [Venice 1951] 11–20).
   [2] Notably F. Jahn, *De Callimacho Homeri interprete* (diss. Strassburg 1893);
G. Perrotta, "Teocrito interprete di Omero," *SIFC* N.S. 4 (1924–26) 202–216;
H. Herter, *Kallimachos und Homer* (Bonn 1929).
   [3] Notably by G. Giangrande, "'Arte Allusiva' and Alexandrian Poetry," *CQ*
N.S. 17 (1967) 85–97; "Hellenistic Poetry and Homer," *L'Antiquité Classique* 39
(1970) 46–77; E. Livrea, "Una 'tecnica allusiva' apolloniana alla luce dell'
esegesi omerica alessandrina," *SIFC* 44 (1972) 231–243.
   [4] See below, 185 ff.

(*Arg.* 4.1034);[5] and each of the words appears only once in the respective authors. Both in simple instances like these and in more complex interplays dealing with matters of geography, myth, astronomy, or competing interpretations of Homeric literature, we are given a glimpse into the study of the scholar-poet, and can observe the harmonizing of the two activities. In fact the pervasive nature of the art of allusion in Alexandrian poetry, and the sophistication and subtlety with which the art was practiced, are doubtless a direct result of the intrusion during that cultural period of the scholar into the world of the poet.

When I began working on imitation in Catullus 64 a few years ago, I was surprised to find that among Latin critics there is virtual silence on the subject, but with some reflection I realized the silence was, if not justifiable, at least explicable in terms of the history of classical scholarship. The complexity of Hellenistic poetry and the transmission of that complexity to the Latin poetry of the late Republican and Augustan periods have only come to be appreciated relatively recently,[6] and outside some fairly restricted circles the poetry of Alexandria still tends to be regarded as epigonist and inferior, while its influence on Latin poetry has only been studied with a very limited focus.[7]

To confront the issue of allusion (or, as I would prefer to call it, "reference"[8]) in Roman poetry, it is to be hoped that Latinists in general will come to realize that poets such as Catullus, Virgil, and Ovid had an intellect and scholarly capacity comparable with (and in one

[5] Cf. Giangrande, "'Arte Allusiva' and Alexandrian Poetry" (above, n. 3) 85.

[6] What appreciation there is too often tends to involve the paying of lip service to four or five programmatic passages in Callimachus, as if Roman poets were acquainted with some sort of "programmatic anthology" of Hellenistic poetry.

[7] This is in part testimony to the success with which poets such as Virgil and Horace concealed their deeper poetic structures behind a sort of generic camouflage, and one which has been remarkably successful: the latest general work on Latin literature still states that in the *Georgics* Virgil "aspired to be the Roman Hesiod" (L. P. Wilkinson in E. J. Kenney and W. V. Clausen eds. *CHCL* 2 [1982] 321), in spite of the fact that the single extended reminiscence of Hesiod in the poem is distinctly non-Hesiodic (see below, 190).

[8] I hope it will become clear in the pages to come that Virgil is not so much "playing" with his models, but constantly intends that his reader be "sent back" to them, consulting them through memory or physically, and that he then return and apply his observation to the Virgilian text; the word "allusion" has implications far too frivolous to suit this process.

case superior to) that of their Alexandrian predecessors, and that this, coupled with the temperamental affinity of such poets to those predecessors, might be expected to produce similar poetic phenomena. Two things militate against this hope: the first is that the increasing number of critics who approach the field through certain critical theoretical lines of enquiry may be inimical to or uninterested in such an endeavor, and the second is that when considering the question of influence we tend too often to think in terms of "parallels," whose importance goes uninterpreted and whose provenance seems to matter little.[9] On the positive side, and this cannot be said of Hellenistic poetry, much of the groundwork has been done: the models for the major poets have to a large extent been collected, being handed down from commentator to commentator, and much of the material is waiting to be examined afresh or, in some cases, for the first time.

What I propose to do is to take Virgil, specifically the *Georgics*, and to use the poem as a basis for establishing a typology of reference; the examples I use could be multiplied, but I think they account for all the categories in the poem. It has become apparent to me that within Latin literature the *Georgics* exhibits the greatest concentration of such reference. Virgil, more than any other Roman poet, knew and controlled his inherited tradition, both Greek and Latin, and in his middle work is at his most eclectic as well as his most complex in drawing from that tradition. The *Eclogues* still show some signs of development in this respect, and although they contain some complex allusion, there is not the consistent attitude that emerges from the *Georgics*. As for the *Aeneid*, at certain times (for instance in Book 4) it is possible to observe Virgil's manipulation of his models, but the allusion seems generally less complex throughout the poem, perhaps because that is in the nature of classicism.[10] And finally, unlike the poems which surround it, the *Georgics* has no single formal or generic model—that is, no author and no work could lay claims, even on the surface, to Virgil's allegiance. In the mid-thirties Virgil may have perceived Hesiod as his ostensible model, but as the poem progressed,

---

[9] A revealing example is the recent commentary on the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* by R. D. Williams, which refers the reader as readily to Spenser as to Homer, with apparently no distinction between the two. On "parallels," see below, n. 12.

[10] Where Virgil is concerned with the art of reference in the *Aeneid*, his manner is as complex as anywhere else, as is clear from W. V. Clausen's forthcoming study of that poem (*Virgil's* Aeneid *and the Tradition of Hellenistic Poetry* [Berkeley 1986] *passim*); but it is true to say that the attitude is not as sustained as in the *Georgics*.

in formal as in thematic terms, the relevance of Hesiod receded, the final product resembling no extant or lost work of literature.[11]

Methodologically there is one chief danger in a study such as this, that is, the problem of determining when a reference is really a reference, and when it is merely an accidental confluence, inevitable between poets dealing with a shared or related language. In part the resolution of this problem lies in that most perilous quality of the mind, judgment, but at the same time two absolute criteria will be applied in what follows: the model must be one with whom the poet is demonstrably familiar, and there must be a reason of some sort for the reference—that is, it must be susceptible of interpretation, or meaningful. Here are two contrasting examples: at 1.29 Virgil refers to the possibility of a deified Octavian ruling over the sea: *an deus immensi uenias maris*; for *immensi . . . maris* I have found the exact equivalent in Greek, a rare usage which seems to be confined to one instance in Pindar: ἐξ ἀμετρήτας ἁλός (*I.* 1.53). This I would call a "parallel" rather than a reference,[12] since the adjective is fairly natural in application to the sea, since Pindar is certainly not one of Virgil's favored models, and since there seems little point in recalling Pindar or the Pindaric context at this juncture. On the other hand, at 3.19 we find what before 1975 looked like an ornamental reference to the groves of Molorchus, *lucosque Molorchi.* On two grounds this is a specific and exclusive reference to Callimachus: Callimachus is a poet with whom Virgil was intensely involved (and the name Molorchus occurs before Virgil only in that poet, and as we now know, in the same relative position, at the beginning of *Aet.* 3),[13] and Virgil employs it in the course of justifying his future departure from the themes which occupied Callimachus and the Alexandrians.

---

[11] A possible exception, in formal terms, is the *Aetia* of Callimachus himself (a fact not sufficiently appreciated), which, as we know since the publication of the *Victoria Berenices*, exerted at least a structural influence on the *Georgics*; cf. R. F. Thomas, "Callimachus, the *Victoria Berenices*, and Roman Poetry," *CQ* N.S. 33 (1983) 92–113.

[12] By "parallel" I mean an accidental (and inevitable) linguistic confluence, occasioned by the fact that certain phrases, metaphors, and the like are merely a part of a society's or language's parlance and to that extent defeat any attempt to prove that a given poet's usage is motivated by any other instance of the phenomenon.

[13] Frequency of usage is also a criterion to be applied in determining whether a reference is intended: if a particular myth, geographical or astronomical detail, or the like is both rare and shared by two poets who are otherwise demonstrably connected, then it is again possible that intentional and specific reference is intended by the later poet.

In pursuing the question of reference in the *Georgics* I have established a typology with several categories, and although certain of these overlap and others have their own subcategories, the issue is most conveniently approached with recourse to the following types: **casual reference, single reference, self-reference, correction, apparent reference**, and **multiple reference** or **conflation** (this last being the most sophisticated form of the art and often including within it a number of the other categories).

Casual reference will not concern us for long. It is quite simply the use of language which recalls a specific antecedent, but only in a general sense, where the existence of that antecedent is only minimally important to the new context, where, one could say, an atmosphere, but little more, is invoked. This occurs most frequently in the *Georgics* with reference to Lucretius. For instance, the opening *nonne uides . . . ?*, normally employed to exemplify a precept, may fairly be called Lucretian,[14] and when Virgil uses it[15] the effect is simply to recall Lucretius in a general way, that is, to instill generic veracity in his poem. Precisely the same might be said of the transitional phrase *quod superest*, another Lucretian favorite,[16] which Virgil uses twice in the poem (2.346; 4.51); in both instances the stance is certainly didactic (and to that extent "Lucretian") but in no way evocative of a specific Lucretian *locus*.

A specialized type of casual reference deserves some attention. Virgil will frequently recall the words of a model in a situation where there is no particular meaning to be derived from the reminiscence, but where he also studiously alters the context of the model. This type of play is most frequently carried on with Lucretius, whose language rather than subject matter was of great influence. One example will suffice. At *G.* 3.360 Virgil, drawing thematically from Herodotus' ethnography of Scythia (4.5–82), refers to the freezing over of rivers: *concrescunt subitae currenti in flumine crustae.* An elegant line, with words beginning with *c* shaping the line much as those with *p* do the first line of Catullus' epyllion: *Peliaco quondam prognatae uertice pinus* (Cat. 64.1). Virgil's *concrescunt . . . crustae* clearly recalls the phrase *concrescere crustas* at Lucr. 6.626, but where Virgil is treating the freezing of water, Lucretius' reference was to the effects of the wind in causing an overnight crust on mud.

---

[14] It occurs fifteen times in that poet, always with the same function.
[15] As he does only in the *Georgics* (1.56; 3.103, 250).
[16] He uses it over twenty times.

A note of caution: sometimes an apparently casual reference will be far from casual. That is, the context evoked may not seem relevant but on further examination may emerge as highly significant. In *Georgics* 3 Virgil, in discussing *morborum causae et signa* as a preliminary to the great plague of Noricum which will form the climax of that book, stresses the need for surgery: *ferro . . . rescindere summum | ulceris os* (453–454). Otherwise the infection will progress from within: *alitur uitium uiuitque tegendo* (3.454). Every commentator refers to Lucr. 4.1068:[17] *ulcus enim uiuescit et inueterascit alendo.* That Virgil's reference is an active and conscious one needs little argument: his use of *ulcus* (at the beginning of 454) is unique, the unusual impersonal use of the gerund *tegendo* ("through concealment") responds to the same use by Lucretius of *alendo* ("through nourishment"),[18] and *alendo* is represented in Virgil by *alitur*; the Lucretian line is reworked, but is still very much in evidence. What is noteworthy about Virgil's reference to Lucretius is that he refers not to the Lucretian plague in Book 6 of the *De rerum natura* (from which he draws extensively at the end of *Georgics* 3) but to a line in Book 4; and Lucretius, unlike Virgil, is not speaking of disease, but is using the language of disease in his diatribe against sexual passion. So far, then, Virgil's reference may have the appearance of being casual—the context of the model seems not quite relevant. But it is in fact deeply so, for the crisis of the first half of *Georgics* 3, matching the destruction brought by disease and plague in the second half, lies precisely in Virgil's demonstration of the calamitous effects visited by *amor* on the works of man. Thus the line under consideration becomes one of many in the second half of the book which suggest that sexual desire and disease are parallel and virtually interchangeable phenomena.[19] But only an awareness of the actual *context* of Lucr. 4.1068 allows the reader to appreciate the connection Virgil is making. In reality, then, this example belongs in the paragraph to follow, and is anything but "casual."

[17] To my knowledge none does more than cite the reference, at the most printing Lucretius' line.

[18] A usage found at *Ecl.* 8.71 (*cantando*) and *G.* 2.250 (*habendo*).

[19] Both love and disease are described in terms of excessive heat, which in particular consumes the inner body: (*amor*) 258–259, 271–272 / (*pestis*) 457–459, 482–483; both are conceived of as *furores*: (*amor*) 244, 266 / (*pestis*) 458, 511; both cause *obliuium pabuli*: (*amor*) 216 (*nec . . . meminisse . . . herbae*) / (*pestis*) 498 (*immemor herbae*), etc. And, of course, on a less detailed level, the two themes give definition to the whole book.

In the treatment of **single reference**, it will be useful to begin with Giangrande's observation on Hellenistic practice, since it applies equally to Virgil: "plain echoing of the model was, of course, felt as far too rudimentary by the Alexandrian poet."[20] Virgil's chief purpose in referring to a single *locus* is simply stated: he intends that the reader recall the context of the model and apply that context to the new situation; such reference thereby becomes a means of imparting great significance, of making connections or conveying ideas on a level of intense subtlety. One of many instances occurs early in the poem. At *G.* 1.50–53 Virgil recommends knowledge of the climate and the nature of the land before ploughing, which he refers to as follows: *ac prius ignotum ferro quam scindimus aequor* (1.50). *Aequor*, of course, here means "plain," but with one change (*ferro* to *rostro* or *pinu*) it would mean "sea," and even without the change the line recalls Cat. 64.12, describing the sailing of the Argo: *quae simul ac rostro uentosum proscidit aequor.* Virgil intended the reminiscence, this being the first of many suggestions throughout the book[21] that agricultural activity and seafaring are ethically identical—both follow the golden age and are constantly paired by Hesiod, Virgil's generic model, at least in the first book.[22]

A second instance of this type also deals with Catullus and also comes early in *Georgics* 1. In the second half of the prayer which opens the poem, that is, in the part addressed to Octavian, Virgil considers one of the possible destinies awaiting the *princeps*—catasterism: *anne nouum tardis sidus te mensibus addas* (1.32). The phrase *nouum . . . sidus* looks directly to Catullus 66.64, where Berenice's lock became a *sidus nouum*, and through Catullus Virgil recalls the same line from Callim. *Aet.* 4, fr. 110 Pf., where the lock was referred to as ἄστρον . . . νέον. The beginning of the *Georgics* refers to the end of the *Aetia*, as Virgil implicitly equates Octavian with Berenice, himself with Callimachus, and the *Georgics* with the *Aetia.*[23] And it is only

[20] Giangrande (above, n. 3 [1970]) 46. The preceding paragraphs to some extent present a modification of Giangrande's claim insofar as it is to be applied to Virgil, but it is in fact surprising how seldom this poet, like those of Alexandria, merely "echoes" or refers casually to his antecedents.

[21] Cf. 1.204–207, 253–254, 300–304, 371–373, 429, 436, 456–457.

[22] Professor Tarrant also notes that Virgil's *ignotum . . . aequor* recalls some of the sense of daring and mystery found in the preceding line of Cat. 64 (*illa rudem cursu prima imbuit Amphitriten*, 11); evocation of this atmosphere is particularly appropriate at the beginning of the *Georgics*.

[23] These are connections which will be brought out more fully by Virgil in the proem to *Georgics* 3, as we can now see since the recovery of the *Victoria Berenices* of Callimachus; cf. R. F. Thomas, "Callimachus, the *Victoria Berenices*, and

through a recognition of the provenance of the words *nouum . . . sidus*
that a full appreciation of these important connections can be attained.
Incidentally, if this literary background were more fully acknowledged,
critics might be less troubled by the excess that seems to characterize
the prayer to Octavian: it is a trait chiefly attributable to emulation of
Hellenistic encomium.

   Reference to a single author or passage is often such that the full
force of the reference and significance for the new setting can only be
recovered through consultation of a larger context of the model than
has in fact been recalled. This is particularly the case when Virgil
makes the simile of a predecessor his own reality. In what seems to
be a very mundane and technical passage,[24] Virgil describes a man in
the act of irrigation:

> quid dicam, iacto qui semine comminus arua
> insequitur cumulosque ruit male pinguis harenae,
> deinde satis fluuium inducit riuosque sequentis,
> et, cum exustus ager morientibus aestuat herbis,
> ecce supercilio cliuosi tramitis undam
> elicit? illa cadens raucum per leuia murmur
> saxa ciet, scatebrisque arentia temperat arua.
> (1.104–110)

The lines have long been acknowledged as a close translation of *Iliad*
21.257–262:

> ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἀνὴρ ὀχετηγὸς ἀπὸ κρήνης μελανύδρου
> ἂμ φυτὰ καὶ κήπους ὕδατι ῥόον ἡγεμονεύηι
> χερσὶ μάκελλαν ἔχων, ἀμάρης ἐξ ἔχματα βάλλων.
> τοῦ μέν τε προρέοντος ὑπὸ ψηφῖδες ἅπασαι
> ὀχλεῦνται· τὸ δέ τ' ὦκα κατειβόμενον κελαρύζει
> χώρωι ἔνι προαλεῖ, φθάνει δέ τε καὶ τὸν ἄγοντα.

Virgil makes sure that the adaptation is noticeable and beyond dispute
(so, for instance, *supercilio cliuosi tramitis* closely renders χώρωι ἔνι
προαλεῖ, while the noun *scatebris* matches the Homeric verb κελαρύζει
in sense and in rarity), but recognition of the model (and little more
than that is found in the commentaries) is only the starting point.
What Virgil expects of his reader is recollection of the *context* of the

---

Roman Poetry," *CQ* N.S. 33 (1983) 92–113.

   [24] It is, by the way, at such moments that the eye of the reader should be at
its keenest.

Homeric simile (a context not represented in the Virgilian lines), for it is that context, and not the simile itself, which informs his deeper poetic intentions. The figure behind the Homeric irrigator is of course Achilles, and Achilles at a vital moment of the poem, doing battle with the river Scamander. Although the Homeric simile contains no hint of the military action which it exemplifies, Virgil has imported such language (*iacto qui semine comminus arua | insequitur*, 104–105), which thereby serves, along with the (suppressed) outer context of the Homeric model, to present agrarian man's activity as a warfare waged against the forces of nature—precisely the import of the episode in the *Iliad*, and a theme which pervades the *Georgics* (e.g., 2.369–370 *dura | exerce imperia et ramos compesce fluentis*). It is fair to say that a failure to note the ultimate Homeric reference behind Virgil's lines (Achilles and the Scamander) will produce a reading of *G.* 1.104–110 which results in an at best partial appreciation of Virgil's ability as an adapter of Homer and which will find the passage merely to be a "technical" part of a "didactic" poem.

A special type of reference within this category is what I would call "technical reference," by which I mean that the poet deals not so much in reshaping an entire line or number of lines but rather, through the use of a morphological oddity, rhetorical figure, metrical or rhythmical anomaly, or even by numerological criteria, intends to send his reader to a specific model.

Sometimes a single and apparently unexceptionable word is intended to refer us to the model and to apply its situation to the new context. There are several such instances from the end of Book 3, where plague destroys the livestock. In these lines Virgil twice uses adverbs in *-im*, first at 485, where the bodies decay from within and liquefy "bit by bit," *minutatim*, and later where Tisiphone, instrument of death, piles up corpses "in heaps," *cateruatim* (556). The adverbs are not entirely unremarkable, since with one other exception the domain of such words is prose and not poetry: that exception is in Lucretius—both words occur in that poet's description of plague at the end of Book 6 (1144 *cateruatim*; 1191 *minutatim*). Virgil uses the two only here, and their sole function is to recall Lucretius and thereby enrich our reading of the Virgilian version.

As for rhythmical reference, a good instance may be cited, again from Virgil's description of the plague. The infection from disease is pervasive:

> et genus omne neci pecudum dedit, omne ferarum,
> corrupitque lacus, infecit pabula tabo
>   (480 – 481)

The first of these lines is an obvious pastiche of Lucretian material[25] combined with the added element of Virgilian self-reference,[26] but the provenance of 481 is less evident. Conington noted that the absence of a copula after *infecit* links the two clauses closely and has the effect of making them emphatic, and also that the line is a syntactical imitation of Lucr. 6.1140 (whose subject is, of course, also the plague) *uastauitque uias, exhausit ciuibus urbem.* He might have observed that the imitation is not confined to syntax but also operates on the level of word shape and rhythm. Although not a single word is shared between the two lines, the reminiscence is incontrovertible.

In the first book, in a passage which will soon assume great importance for this study,[27] Virgil speculates on the possible conditions in the southern temperate zone; one option is eternal night:

> illic, ut perhibent, aut intempesta silet nox
> semper et obtenta densentur nocte tenebrae.
>   (1.242 – 243)

Nox intempesta, in that order, is an exclusively Ennian combination (*A.* 33, 160 Skutsch). Virgil has used it here with *nox* placed last in the line, a fairly rare occurrence in the Virgilian hexameter, although fairly common in Ennius. Even rarer for Virgil, the final monosyllable is preceded by a word of iambic shape.[28] This cadence (iambic word + final monosyllable) is on the other hand strictly Ennian;[29] so Virgil takes an Ennian combination (*nox intempesta*) and rearranges it so as to present it in a line whose metrical shape, unique to the poem,

---

[25] Cf. 6.1092 *morbida uis hominum generi pecudumque cateruis* and 1144 *cateruatim morbo mortique dabantur.*

[26] Cf. 3.242 – 244 *omne adeo genus in terris hominumque ferarumque | et genus aequoreum, pecudes pictaeque uolucres, | in furias ignemque ruunt.* See below, 182 – 185 for self-reference in Virgil.

[27] See below, 195 – 197.

[28] This is the only instance in the entire poem, and the first instance in the corpus. It has the effect of ensuring coincidence of accent and ictus in the fifth foot, compensating for the lack of it in the sixth.

[29] I count 24 such lines in the fragments of the *Annals* —a substantial ratio of 4 percent.

is also Ennian.[30]

Single reference can also occur through the particular positioning of a word, or group of words, within the line, and although the recall may be slight, in such cases it is nevertheless often extremely specific. When at *Od.* 4.463 Proteus asks Menelaus of his mission, the reply comes: οἶσθα, γέρον, "you know, old man." When, in Book 4 of the *Georgics*, in a sequence which draws heavily from the episode in the *Odyssey*, Virgil's Aristaeus captures the sea god and is asked the same question, it is not particularly surprising that he gives the response *scis, Proteu* (447). But what Virgil intends at this point is a double reference to the Homeric model: not only are the words more or less a translation, they also occupy the same position, the first one and one half feet of the line.

Indeed even the placing of a word at a given line number may produce a reference. On this I need only briefly repeat the brief argument of a recently published note:[31] Virgil in his corpus mentions the Euphrates three times: six lines from the end of *Georgics* 1 (where the river threatens war), six lines from the end of *Georgics* 4 (the setting of Octavian's fulminations), and six lines from the end of *Aeneid* 8 (where, after Actium, the river is one of many now captive to Rome). We might see this placement as a bizarre coincidence (although I am told the probabilities against such a pattern are astronomical) were it not for the fact that the same river appears in the programmatic close of Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo* (with which Virgil was intimately familiar), six lines from the end.

Finally, within this category, Virgil even provides reference by imitation of a rhetorical device. At 1.252–256 he treats the application of seasonal change to the performance of various activities, agricultural and nautical:

> hinc tempestates dubio praediscere caelo
> possumus, hinc messisque diem tempusque serendi,
> et quando infidum remis impellere marmor
> conueniat, quando armatas deducere classis,
> aut tempestiuam siluis euertere pinum.

---

[30] It is of course possible that the actual pattern *intempesta silet nox* is itself Ennian, although I strongly doubt it; the level of subtlety of Virgil's reference in these lines is high, and the scheme as I have suggested it here is characteristic (see below, 186).

[31] R. S. Scodel and R. F. Thomas, "Virgil and the Euphrates," *AJP* 105 (1984) 339.

At 254 the phrase *remis impellere marmor* recalls Ennius *Ann.* 384–385, which contain the same combination. The reminiscence is intentional, since all three lines recall in theme the famous opening of Euripides' *Medea*, of which Ennius' translation was one of the best known passages of archaic Latin:

εἴθ᾽ ὤφελ᾽ Ἀργοῦς μὴ διαπτάσθαι σκάφος
Κόλχων ἐς αἶαν κυανέας Συμπληγάδας,
μηδ᾽ ἐν νάπαισι Πηλίου πεσεῖν ποτε
τμηθεῖσα πεύκη, μηδ᾽ ἐρετμῶσαι χέρας
ἀνδρῶν ἀρίστων.
                              (Eur. *Med.* 1–5)

Euripides' lines define the journey of the Argo in three movements: its sailing through the Symplegades, the felling of the pine from which it was built, and its being equipped with a team of rowers. Commentators uniformly note the inversion of logical sequence in Euripides' lines, whether they call it hysteron-proteron or not.[32] Certainly Ennius noted the oddity, for he "corrected" the lines, in the process removing the vividness of the original:

    utinam ne in nemore Pelio securibus
    caesae accidissent abiegnae ad terram trabes,
    neue inde nauis inchoandi exordium
    coepisset quae nunc nominatur nomine
    Argo, quia Argiui in ea delecti uiri
    uecti petebant pellem inauratam arietis.
                              (Enn. *Scaen.* 246–251 V[2])

In *G.* 1.254–256 Virgil, while employing Ennian language, treats the themes of the Euripidean lines and restores the Euripidean sequence, "improving" on it by making it a perfect hysteron-proteron: "when to row on the sea, when to drag the ships down to the sea, and when to fell the pine [to build the ship]."

Self-reference in Virgil, as in any poet, can be an important means of imparting significance. It clearly belongs in the same realm as single reference, but the fact that the recalled *locus* is the poet's own

---

[32] Cf. D. L. Page, *Euripides: Medea* (Oxford 1952) 61; his blunt finding that it "is not an hysteron-proteron, but a logical sequence of thoughts" will not satisfy all. What he seems to mean is that the first, important movement is placed at the beginning.

work creates the potential for highly allusive statement, particularly when the self-reference operates within a single poem—what may be called "internal" self-reference.

In the *Aeneid* Virgil employs his own earlier texts somewhat as he does those of others, and this is particularly the case in the interplay between simile and outer context. So, for instance, in Book 2 Pyrrhus, as he stands on Priam's threshold about to butcher the aging king, is likened, through a famous simile, to a snake emerging from its lair at the beginning of summer:

> qualis ubi in lucem coluber mala gramina pastus,
> frigida sub terra tumidum quem bruma tegebat,
> nunc, positis nouus exuuiis nitidusque iuuenta,
> lubrica conuoluit sublato pectore terga
> arduus ad solem, et linguis micat ore trisulcis.
>   (*Aen.* 2.471–475)

Lines 473–475 employ almost precisely the same words used to describe the deadly *chersydrus* at *Georgics* 3.437–439.[33] It will enrich our reading of *Aeneid* 2 if we observe the self-reference and recall that the snake of *Georgics* 3, the *pestis acerba boum* (419), is there a symbol of destruction as terrible as Pyrrhus, standing symbolically for, and immediately preceding, the real *pestis*, the plague that desolates the Italian countryside. A few lines later in *Aeneid* 2, Pyrrhus and his men are compared to a river in flood:

> fertur in arua furens cumulo camposque per omnis
> cum stabulis armenta trahit.
>   (*Aen.* 2.498–499)

This too recalls a reality of the *Georgics*, the flood which follows the assassination of Julius Caesar at the end of Book 1 and which is very much a counterpoint to the plague of Book 3:

> proluit insano contorquens uertice siluas
> fluuiorum rex Eridanus camposque per omnis

---

[33] Only the middle line of the three is altered, as the original no longer suits the new context; so *uoluitur, aut catulos tectis aut oua relinquens*, *G.* 3.438, becomes *lubrica conuoluit sublato pectore terga*, *Aen.* 2.474 —and this line is itself a reworking of *G.* 3.426 *squamea conuoluens sublato pectore terga*.

cum stabulis armenta tulit.
$$(G. 1.481-483)$$

In each of these cases the earlier passage exerts a powerful influence upon the later, enriching it and broadening its application.

"Internal" self-reference operates in the same way, with the important distinction that significance may be imparted in more than one direction, that is, *loci* which refer to each other inform and enrich each other. Perhaps the most compelling instance of this type occurs in *Georgics* 3, traditionally regarded as the most "bleak" book of the poem, where the twin forces of sexual passion and disease define the book structurally and effectively set at nought the expending of man's *labor* and *cura* on livestock. The two forces are ultimately interchangeable. They are both characterized as fire and madness:

Amor

omne adeo genus in terris hominumque ferarumque
et genus aequoreum, pecudes pictaeque uolucres,
in furias ignemque ruunt.
$$(3.242-244)$$

Pestis

furiisque refecti

ardebant.
$$(3.511-512)$$

contactos artus sacer ignis edebat.
$$(3.566)$$

The effect of the mare on the stallion is identical to that of disease:[34]

Amor

carpit enim uiris paulatim uritque uidendo
femina, nec nemorum patitur meminisse nec herbae
dulcibus illa quidem inlecebris.
$$(3.215-217)$$

---

[34] Incidentally the present parallelism shows that *studiorum* at 3.498 is dependent on *immemor* (as *nemorum* is an objective genitive after *meminisse* at 3.216) and not, as some commentators would have it, on *infelix*.

Pestis

labitur infelix studiorum atque immemor herbae
uictor equus.

(3.498 – 499)

And this complex is strengthened by an external reference already mentioned,[35] where Virgil describes disease (*alitur uitium uiuitque tegendo*, 3.454) with a strong reminiscence of a Lucretian metaphor for *amor* (*ulcus enim uiuescit et inueterascit alendo*, 4.1068). In a case such as this, self-reference serves both to create a structural bond for the book and to provide a subtle, unstated nexus between ideas: in the end plague is merely a more destructive instance of the resurgence of nature against man's works, with the same symptoms and effects as sexual passion.

Perhaps the quintessentially Alexandrian type of reference is what I would call **correction**, Giangrande's *oppositio in imitando*. This type, more than any other, demonstrates the scholarly aspect of the poet, and reveals the polemical attitudes that lie close beneath the surface of much of the best poetry of Rome. The process is quite straightforward, at least in its working principles: the poet provides unmistakable indications of his source, then proceeds to offer detail which contradicts or alters that source. I have elsewhere suggested[36] that Catullus' choice of the Argo's sailing as the opening theme of his epyllion, poem 64, created chronological inconsistencies concerning the story of the marriage of Peleus and Thetis but was nevertheless chosen precisely because, by the range of prior literary treatment it had received, it gave Catullus the opportunity to overhaul, partly through correction, that entire tradition. So, while allusively referring to Apollonius' and Ennius' etymologies for the Argo (in the one case from its builder, Argos, in the other from its crew, Argives), he rejected both, perhaps promoting an obscurer and possibly Callimachean variant, that it came from the Homeric adjective ἀργός = "swift." Or, again, he corrected Ennius' use of *abies* ("fir") to render Euripides' πεύκη ("pine") by emphatically referring to the ship's material as *pinus* in the first line of the poem (ensuring recognition of his correction by providing unmistakable reference to the versions of both predecessors).

[35] Cf. above, 176.
[36] Cf. R. F. Thomas, "Catullus and the Polemics of Poetic Reference (Poem 64.1–18)," *AJP* 103 (1982) 144–164.

	The *Georgics* contain many instances of this phenomenon, and perhaps the most appealing comes from the first book. In the middle of a section apparently indebted to the Hesiodic *Works and Days* (1.276–286), Virgil gives us an adaptation of *Od.* 11.315–316 on the attempt of Otus and Ephialtes to storm Jupiter's Olympus:

> ter sunt conati imponere Pelio Ossam
> scilicet atque Ossae frondosum inuoluere Olympum.
> 						(*G.* 1.281–282)

The essential reminiscence of the lines from the *Odyssey* is self-evident:

> Ὄσσαν ἐπ᾽ Οὐλύμπωι μέμασαν θέμεν, αὐτὰρ ἐπ᾽ Ὄσσηι
> Πήλιον εἰνοσίφυλλον.

Virgil, doubtless attentive to the fact that the Homeric text had two lines earlier specified Olympus as the object of these monsters, questioned the reasoning of ending up with Olympus at the bottom of the heap and gave us the present lines: thrice they tried to put Ossa on Pelion and on Pelion to roll leafy Olympus—in other words he reversed the Homeric order.[37] At the same time he improved on his model, by giving an elegant chiasm not in Homer: *Pelion — Ossam — Ossae — Olympum*: Ossa is now visually in the middle. So too, in *Pelio Ossam*, we find a Homeric correption, not present in the Homeric model. Nor could Pelion, once at the top, now at the bottom, any longer be described as having quivering leaves; so the Homeric εἰνοσίφυλλον, used to describe the superior mountain, Pelion, becomes for Virgil *frondosum*, but it now modifies *Olympum*. In passing Virgil demonstrated his mastery of the Homeric text, by speaking of a triple effort, which is three times repulsed: *ter sunt conati . . . ter pater . . . disiecit*, *G.* 1.281–283. This formula is Homeric, to be sure, but it comes 100 lines earlier in *Od.* 11, when Odysseus tries three times without success to embrace the shade of his mother:[38]

> τρὶς μὲν ἐφορμήθην, ἐλέειν τέ με θυμὸς ἀνώγει,
> τρὶς δέ μοι ἐκ χειρῶν σκιῆι εἴκελον ἢ καὶ ὀνείρωι

---

[37] Not that the Virgilian image makes greater visual sense than the Homeric.

[38] The context in which Virgil will twice use it in the *Aeneid*: 2.792–793; 6.700–701.

ἔπτατ'.
                              (*Od.* 11.206–208)

Incidentally, it is interesting that Horace and Propertius rejected
Virgil's logic in this matter, both of them putting Ossa or Pelion back
on Olympus while referring specifically to Virgil's lines.[39]

Sometimes the correction takes the form of a dialogue. This type
of reference characterizes much Augustan poetry, particularly program
poetry, and is fairly natural in the context of a restricted poetic com-
munity. Between Horace and Propertius, for instance, one can detect
an allusive dialogue which becomes explicit, from Horace's point of
view, in *Epistles* 2.2. Virgil's participation in this sort of process is
fairly limited.[40] He seems, particularly after the *Eclogues*, to have
avoided polemical or other reference to contemporary poets, and the
reason may in part be a generically motivated one—the *Georgics* and
Aeneid were so very different from anything of quality that was being
written in the thirties and twenties.[41] There are, however, some traces
of such dialogue, and there is at least one instance in the *Georgics*. In
Eclogue 4, in the description of the coming golden age, Virgil pro-
phesies the immunity of livestock from their natural predators: *nec
magnos metuent armenta leones* (*E.* 4.22). In Horace's version of Uto-
pia in *Epode* 16, a poem which most now see as imitative of and not
imitated by *Eclogue* 4, lions lie down with herds not on the Blessed
Isles but in the *adynaton* that motivates migration: "We shall not
return to Rome *until* the herds cease to fear great lions," i.e., never.
On the actual Blessed Isles he has a very odd scene to match that of
Virgil: *nec uespertinus circumgemit ursus ouile*, "bears don't growl
around the sheepfold in the evening." Virgil would have none of
this. When at the end of *Georgics* 3 he presented a plague-ridden
world which had ironically reverted to the golden age (snakes dying
off, deer wandering among the dogs, etc.) he rejected the strange bear
of Horace, replacing it with the more conventional wolf and referring

---

[39] Cf. Hor. *Odes* 3.4.51–52 *fratresque tendentes opaco* | *Pelion imposuisse
Olympo*; Prop. 2.1.19–20 *non ego Titanas canerem, non Ossan Olympo* | *imposi-
tam, ut caeli Pelion iter esset.* On the involvement of other poets in this ζήτημα
see R. J. Tarrant, *Seneca: Agamemnon* (Cambridge 1976) 239; in essence it is
presumably Virgil's alteration which gives rise to the subsequent history, as
poets accept either the Virgilian or the Homeric order (although, in the case of
Ovid and Seneca, not consistently, as Tarrant observes).

[40] Depending, that is, on our views of the Gallus of the *Eclogues*.

[41] Whereas Horatian lyric and Propertian elegy naturally lend themselves to a
polemical and emulative relationship.

to Horace's language while doing so: *non lupus insidias explorat ouilia circum | nec gregibus nocturnus obambulat*, 3.537–538—*ouilia, circum*, and *nocturnus* recall in reverse order Horace's *ouile, circumgemit*, and *uespertinus*. Horace in turn seems to have accepted the correction when, in *Odes* 1.17, in the description of his Sabine farm, which shows unmistakable signs of being a golden age setting,[42] he observes that his goats are immune to the dangers of the traditional predators: *nec uiridis metuunt colubras | nec martialis Haediliae lupos*, 8–9.

Related in nature to this type of correction (although more complex) is a feature which I would call "window reference." It consists of the very close adaptation of a model, noticeably interrupted in order to allow reference back to the source of that model: the intermediate model thus serves as a sort of window onto the ultimate source, whose version is otherwise not visible. In the process the immediate, or chief, model is in some fashion "corrected." The best instance of this type comes from Virgil's treatment of *prognostica*, or weather signs, in *Georgics* 1:

> numquam imprudentibus imber
> obfuit: aut illum surgentem uallibus imis
> aeriae fugere grues, aut bucula caelum
> suspiciens patulis captauit naribus auras,
> aut arguta lacus circumuolitauit hirundo
> et ueterem in limo ranae cecinere querelam.
> saepius et tectis penetralibus extulit oua
> angustum formica terens iter, et bibit ingens
> arcus, et e pastu decedens agmine magno
> coruorum increpuit densis exercitus alis.
>   (1.373–382)

Although Aratus is the chief model throughout the second half of Book 1, in these particular lines Varro of Atax is more immediately in Virgil's mind; we are much indebted to the commentary of Servius Auctus (*ad* 1.375): *hic locus de Varrone est; ille sic enim*:

> tum liceat pelagi uolucres tardaeque paludis
> cernere inexpletas studio certare lauandi
> et uelut insolitum pennis infundere rorem;
> aut arguta lacus circumuolitauit hirundo,

---

[42] Cf. R. F. Thomas, *Lands and Peoples in Roman Poetry: The Ethnographical Tradition* (Cambridge 1982 [*Proc. Camb. Phil. Soc.* Suppl. 7]) 25–26.

> et bos suspiciens caelum — mirabile uisu —
> naribus aerium patulis decerpsit odorem,
> nec tenuis formica cauis non euehit oua.

Of the seven lines preserved, one (4) appears intact in Virgil, and others are modified in fairly slight ways. Such precise reproduction of a Latin model is extremely unusual in Virgil and is normally seen as a tribute to Varro. I believe the chief reason for such close imitation lies elsewhere: we are supposed to notice the closeness and then to notice the departure, for it is such departure which creates the type of reference of this category. After mentioning swallows as givers of signs (377 — the line reproduced exactly from Varro) and before taking up ants (379–380 — where the wording is close to Varro's), Virgil has included frogs (*et ueterem in limo ranae cecinere querelam*), which Varro omitted but which Aratus, the source of Varro as well as the ultimate source of Virgil, had treated, also immediately after swallows and soon before ants:

> ἢ μᾶλλον δειλαὶ γενεαί, ὕδροισιν ὄνειαρ
> αὐτόθεν ἐξ ὕδατος πατέρες βοόωσι γυρίνων.
> (*Phaen.* 946–947)

Virgil, then, has restored Aratus' frogs, but he has done so in a special way. Cicero's translation of these lines of Aratus also survives, and as Voss saw, his wording (*aquai dulcis alumnae*, Cic. *Arat.* 946) artfully recalls Aristophanes' description of the frogs as λιμναῖα κρηνῶν τέκνα (*Frogs* 211), with *alumnae* also recalling λιμναῖα in sound, if not in sense. Voss then pointed out that Virgil noticed the allusion, for his *in limo* recalls the same Greek word in sound *and* sense, while his *cecinere querelam* is a not unreasonable reminiscence of Aristophanes' famous croaking, βρεκεκεκέξ.[43] Virgil's lines, then, look through the "window" of Varro of Atax to the ultimate model of both, Aratus (with passing reference to Cicero and to Cicero's model, Aristophanes); in the process Virgil comments on and indeed corrects Varro's omission of the signs given by frogs, and it is doubtless this fact, rather than mere respect for Varro, which motivates the otherwise close adaptation of his Latin model.

---

[43] I would add that the adjective with which their croaking is modified, *ueterem*, might function as a gloss on these literary frogs — *uetus comoedia* being a standard term for Attic old comedy (e.g., Cic. *Leg.* 2.37). Cf. on these lines L. P. Wilkinson, *The Georgics of Virgil* (Cambridge 1969) 238–239.

Apparent reference is a particularly complex phenomenon. I use
the term of a context which seems clearly to recall a specific model
but which on closer investigation frustrates that expectation. This
type of reference in Virgil has not been at all well handled, which is
perhaps testimony to the success with which he manages it. On *Geor-
gics* 1.276–286, for instance,[44] the most recent commentator has
noted, "This passage is taken from Hesiod *WD* 802ff." However, as
we have seen, half of the passage is Homeric (involving "correction"
of Homer), and the other half cannot simply be called Hesiodic, since
although it treats Hesiodic days, the fifth, seventeenth, and ninth, the
activities that Virgil assigns to those days are distinctly non-Hesiodic.[45]
But the supreme instance of apparent reference lies elsewhere, in the
fourth book. At 315–332, at the beginning of the epyllion, Aristaeus,
robbed of his bees, goes complaining to his mother, the nymph
Cyrene, in lines which specifically recall Polyphemus' complaint to his
father Poseidon at *Od.* 9.528–535, as well as that of Achilles to his
nymph-mother Thetis at *Il.* 18.79–93. We have been prepared for
what immediately follows, the catalogue of nymphs in attendance on
Cyrene:

<div style="margin-left:2em;">

     eam circum Milesia uellera Nymphae
carpebant hyali saturo fucata colore,   335
Drymoque Xanthoque Ligeaque Phyllodoceque,
caesariem effusae nitidam per candida colla,   337
Cydippe et flaua Lycorias, altera uirgo,   339
altera tum primos Lucinae experta labores,   340
Clioque et Beroe soror, Oceanitides ambae,
ambae auro, pictis incinctae pellibus ambae,
atque Ephyre atque Opis et Asia Deiopea
et tandem positis uelox Arethusa sagittis.
                    (4.334–344)

</div>

Virgil gives us twelve nymphs: Drymo, Xantho, Ligea, Phyllodoce,
Cydippe, Lycorias, Clio, Beroe, Ephyre, Opis, Deiopea, and Arethusa.
Catalogue poetry tends to be rather dull, and we might be justified,
given the recent reference to *Iliad* 18, in seeing a reference to the

---

[44] Treated above, 186–187.

[45] That is, they are not the activities found in *Works and Days* for those par-
ticular days. They are, however, ultimately Hesiodic, and it may be relevant
that in the *Works and Days* they belong to consecutive days (although they do
not appear consecutively in that poem), namely, the twelfth, thirteenth, and
fourteenth of the month.

Homeric catalogue of nymphs which appears a few lines earlier in that book (*Il.* 18.39–49). The problem with this is that not one of Homer's 33 nymphs appears in Virgil's list—which is to say that in spite of invoking the Homeric context and giving us an apparently Homeric catalogue, Virgil studiously avoids mentioning any Homeric nymph.[46] The alert reader might then turn expectantly to Hesiod *Theogony* 240–264 to that poet's catalogue of 50 sea nymphs. If so, he will find the same situation, that not one of the 50 appears in Virgil's list[47]—in other words, archaic catalogue poetry is Virgil's apparent model, but the items within the catalogue are very deliberately not those of the formal model. The next and obvious question is "Who are these nymphs?" It is not an easy question, and it needs to be said that the names are all fairly obscure, but patterns emerge.

There seem to be two groupings. One contains sylvan figures: Drymo ("oak"), Phyllodoce ("leaf-receiver"), and Opis, whom Virgil connects with Diana at *A.* 11.532;[48] and for that matter Arethusa seems also to be sylvan (*positis . . . sagittis*). The other consists of names in some way suggesting music or poetry, particularly Hellenistic poetry: Xantho is a girl from the *Anthology*, specifically one who sings well in Philodemus, *AP* 9.570. Ligea ("clear-voiced") is a siren in Lycophron (726). Cydippe can only suggest Acontius and Callimachus' *Aetia*, and Lycorias points to Lycoreia, a town at Delphi, which appeared in the *Aetia* (*Aet.* 3, fr. 62), and which, through association with that place, is used to create an epithet for Apollo at Call. *Hymn* 2.19 (Λυκωρέος . . . Φοίβου).[49] Clio suggests the Muse, while Ephyre is either a daughter of Epimetheus or an Oceanid, who gave

---

[46] The Homeric resonance is strengthened by the fact that 336 (*Drymoque Xanthoque Ligeaque Phyllodoceque*), although non-Homeric in detail, is a precise, and surely deliberate, rhythmical imitation of *Il.* 18.45: Λωτώ τε Πρωτώ τε Φέρουσά τε Δυναμένη τε.

[47] Incidentally, not that it is needed, damning evidence against *G.* 4.338 (*Nisaee Spioque Thali<a>que Cymodoceque*), interpolated from *Aen.* 5.826, is provided by the fact that those nymphs do in fact appear in the Homeric catalogue (*Il.* 18.39–40).

[48] That connection seems to be Callimachean; at *Hymn* 3.204–205 Callimachus reports that the name Οὖπις (i.e., Opis) was transferred to Artemis herself from the nymph Britomartis.

[49] Also thus in Apollonius (*Arg.* 4.1490 Φοίβοιο Λυκωρείοιο). If the epithet and its connection with Apollo are in essence Callimachean, there are grounds for suggesting that Gallus chose the name Lycoris for its Callimachean flavor, just as Propertius presumably was influenced by Callimachean Κύνθιος in choosing the name Cynthia.

her name to Corinth, and hers is the only name by which Callimachus
or Apollonius calls that city.[50] As for Deiopea, or at any rate Δηιόπη,
she is connected to poetry by her marriage to Musaeus ([Aristot.]
Mirab. 143b4). And Arethusa has already become a Virgilian muse as
the addressee of *Eclogue* 10. Beroe seems to be a total mystery, but
so she is at Ovid *Met.* 3.278, where she is a nurse of Semele.[51] Cal-
limachus and Alexandria are suggested not only by many of the
names but also by the repetition at 341–342, *Oceanitides ambae |
ambae auro, pictis incinctae pellibus ambae.* In Call. *Hymn* 3.42–43,
Artemis goes to Oceanus (cf. Virgil's *Oceanitides*) and chooses many
nymphs (none is named), πάσας εἰνέτεας, πάσας ἔτι παῖδας ἀμί-
τρους, "all nine-year-olds, all girls as yet ungirdled." Virgil's repeti-
tion of *ambae*, given the shared subject matter, recalls the anaphora of
πάσας, as his use of *incinctae* recalls ἀμίτρους (although the *in-* of
incinctae, unlike the α of ἀμίτρους, is affirmative rather than priva-
tive).[52]

   What, then, to make of Virgil's nymphs, who look as if they
should be Homeric or Hesiodic but whose identities seem to be essen-
tially Hellenistic, a number of them specifically Callimachean? What
follows is necessarily speculative, but, I hope, finds some support
from what has preceded. Call. *Frag. Gram.* 413 Pf. is supplied by Sto-
baeus, a quotation concerning an Arcadian nymph by the name of
Nonacrina. It is the sole surviving witness of Callimachus' treatise
Περὶ Νυμφῶν, and Nonacrina, like Virgil's nymphs, and doubtless like
the rest of Callimachus' nymphs (which may be saying the same
thing), does not appear in the Homeric or Hesiodic nymph catalo-
gues.[53] I might add that twenty lines later in *Georgics* 4 Virgil has
another catalogue, this of eight rivers, which I am sure looks to a
somewhat better-known Callimachean treatise, demonstrably used by
Latin poets, the work "On the Rivers of the Known World" (*Frag.*

---

[50] Pausanias (2.1.1) states that the archaic Corinthian poet Eumelus had her
as an Oceanid; the Alexandrians will doubtless have had an antiquarian interest
in her.
   [51] Her existence in Virgil and Ovid (between whom there is no apparent con-
nection in this matter) suggests strongly a lost common model, Callimachus
being the most obvious possibility.
   [52] The blend of sylvan nymphs and Oceanids is a feature of *Hymn* 3 as well as
a mark of the Virgilian list.
   [53] This would be absolutely typical of Callimachean practice. So, for instance,
he seems to have given a list of the seven Pleiades, who coincide only in one
instance (Maia) with the more usual list found at Arat. *Phaen.* 262–263 and
who are otherwise unknown in such a connection.

Gram. 457–459 Pf.). I have so far omitted to mention one of Virgil's nymphs, and she perhaps proves the point. She is, of course, Clymene, who at 345–347 is distinct from the rest of the nymphs on two grounds: first, Arethusa was presented as the last of the actual catalogue (344 *et tandem . . . Arethusa*), and in addition Clymene is described distinctly from the rest in that she sits among them singing (345 *inter quas . . .*); they may be associated with singing, but it is she who is actually singing. This separate thirteenth nymph is also distinct in that she *is* Homeric—she appears at line 47 of *Iliad* 18. Virgil has given us a single Homeric nymph who sits among Hellenistic nymphs singing (what else?) the song within the song of the *Odyssey*, Demodocus' account of the love of Ares and Aphrodite. At the end of the song in the *Odyssey* (8.367) Demodocus is referred to as ἀοιδὸς . . . περικλυτός, and since the adjective is formed on the same root as, and means much the same as, κλύμενος, this etymological link may account for Virgil's choice of Clymene to stand in for the bard, and to serve as the sole representative of the Homeric nymphs, surrounded by nymphs of a different literary provenance.[54]

The most complex type of reference in Virgil is **conflation**, or **multiple reference**, a practice which allows the poet to refer to a number of antecedents and thereby to subsume their versions, and the tradition along with them, into his own.[55] As will become clear, this type may include within it the category of correction, and like that category its function is ultimately polemical—that is, its function is to revise the tradition. Before looking at an instance of massive conflation of multiple models, I want to turn to a particular, limited type. It consists of the melding of two models and occurs in a special setting, usually in a single line dense with proper names and (therefore) traditionally dubbed "ornamental" by commentators. I include two such instances, whose function is similar. The first, from the so-called "theodicy" at *Georgics* 1.125–149, is a line referring to three of the constellations used as navigational aids after the passing of the golden age:

> Pleiadas, Hyadas, claramque Lycaonis Arcton.
> (1.138)

---

[54] According to Pausanias (10.24.2) there was a tradition on Ios making Clymene the mother of Homer; if Virgil was aware of this, it could well have helped to motivate his choice.

[55] For this phenomenon in Catullus 64, cf. Thomas (above, n. 36) 154–160.

The temptation with such lines, as I have noted, is to dub them "ornamental" and leave it at that, but, particularly in Virgil, such a practice is hazardous. The first half is easy enough; it is a transliteration of *Il.* 18.486, the opening of the description of the shield: Πληιά-δας θ' Ὑάδας τε, but that line ends not with Arctus but rather with Orion (τό τε σθένος Ὠρίωνος), while Arctus begins the next line (Ἄρκτον θ'). Forbiger believed that Virgil was reproducing a lost line and produced a perfectly acceptable possibility: Πληιάδας θ' Ὑάδας τε, κλυτήν τε Λυκάονος Ἄρκτον. While Virgil certainly gives the impression of there being such a line, it is not in fact needed. *Lycaonis Arcton* is an odd sort of hybrid, referring to the constellation of Arctus or the Bear by the patronymic *Lycaonis*, he being the father of Callisto *before* her metamorphosis and catasterism. Such recondite allusion smacks of Alexandria, and that is where we find the second half of Virgil's line, at Call. *Hymn* 1.41, Λυκαονίης Ἄρκτοιο. The result for Virgil is a line which *could* be a transliteration (and that is intentional), but which is in fact a melding of Homer and Callimachus, a subsumption of his prime areas of interest, archaic and Hellenistic, into a single Virgilian line.

A similar instance occurs at 1.332, although my conclusions on it are necessarily somewhat more speculative. In the midst of the storm scene Jupiter is hurling down his bolts against three distinct places:

aut Atho aut Rhodopen atque alta Ceraunia.

The first half is Theocritean: ἤ Ἄθω ἤ Ῥοδόπην (7.77)—Virgil even imitates the correption in Ἄθω. But as with the second half of 1.138, so here *alta Ceraunia* is initially puzzling. The full term, Acroceraunia, does not appear in Greek until Ptolemy; in fact this is the first instance of it, if we see *alta* as a gloss on ἄκρος. *Acroceraunia* itself first appears at Horace, *Odes* 1.3.20, in the propempticon to Virgil himself, and Nisbet-Hubbard, who are not concerned with Theocritus or Virgil, plausibly argue that the dangerous promontory occurred in the propempticon to Pollio of the neoteric poet Cinna (pp. 87–88 Morel).[56] If so, Virgil noticed it. It is time to reveal the context of Theocritus 7.77: it occurs within the song of Lycidas, which is, of course, a propempticon, to Ageanax. What Virgil seems to have given us is half a line of Theocritean propempticon and half a line of a neoteric poet's treatment in the same genre. Archaic and Hellenistic

---

[56] See Nisbet-Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace: Odes Book 1* (Oxford 1970) 53.

are here answered by the other influential pair, Hellenistic and neoteric Roman. Taken together they represent the chief areas of Virgil's reference and also represent in microcosm the method of his poetry in broader terms: to fuse, subsume, and renovate the traditions which he inherited.

Much the same may be said of the purpose of multiple reference or conflation on a larger scale, where there seems at times to be an added motive of sheer demonstration of virtuosity. I have chosen what is, I think, the most densely allusive passage in ancient literature, Virgil's treatment of the celestial and terrestrial zones, a passage of a technical rather than a highly literary nature:[57]

> idcirco certis dimensum partibus orbem
> per duodena regit mundi sol aureus astra.
> quinque tenent caelum zonae: quarum una corusco
> semper sole rubens et torrida semper ab igni;
> quam circum extremae dextra laeuaque trahuntur   235
> caeruleae, glacie concretae atque imbribus atris;
> has inter mediamque duae mortalibus aegris
> munere concessae diuum, et uia secta per ambas,
> obliquus qua se signorum uerteret ordo.
> mundus, ut ad Scythiam Riphaeasque arduus arces   240
> consurgit, premitur Libyae deuexus in Austros.
> hic uertex nobis semper sublimis; at illum
> sub pedibus Styx atra uidet Manesque profundi.
> maximus hic flexu sinuoso elabitur Anguis
> circum perque duas in morem fluminis Arctos,   245
> Arctos Oceani metuentis aequore tingi.
> (1.231–246)

The passage shows the influence of seven authors, from Homer to Varro of Atax, and it is perhaps as a result of such density that Virgil's astronomical expertise has been somewhat questioned in these lines—as so often in the poem his intent is not primarily didactic. The primary or skeletal model, as has been appreciated, is the *Hermes* of Eratosthenes, the critic, geographer, and astronomer who, even if he was not actually a student of Callimachus, was cut from the right cloth. By great good fortune enough of the poem is saved in various scholia to allow us to observe Virgil working very closely with this

---

[57] In the *Georgics* it is often with such technical material that Virgil, almost it seems as compensation, is at his most "literary."

text:

> αὐτὴν μέν μιν ἔτετμε μεσήρεα παντὸς Ὀλύμπου
> κέντρου ἄπο σφαίρης, διὰ δ' ἄξονος ἠρήρειστο.
> πέντε δέ οἱ ζῶναι περιειλάδες ἐσπείρηντο·
> αἱ δύο μὲν γλαυκοῖο κελαινότεραι κυάνοιο,
> ἡ δὲ μία ψαφαρή τε καὶ ἐκ πυρὸς οἷον ἐρυθρή.   5
> ἡ μὲν ἔην μεσάτη, ἐκέκαυτο δὲ πᾶσα περι<πρὸ>
> τυπτομένη φλογμοῖσιν, ἐπεί ῥά ἐ Μαῖραν ὑπ' αὐτὴν
> κεκλιμένην ἀκτῖνες ἀειθερέες πυρόωσιν·
> αἱ δὲ δύω ἑκάτερθε πόλοις περιπεπτηυῖαι,
> αἰεὶ κρυμαλέαι, αἰεὶ δ' ὕδατι νοτέουσαι·   10
> οὐ μὲν ὕδωρ, ἀλλ' αὐτὸς ἀπ' οὐρανόθεν κρύσταλλος
> κεῖτ' αἰάν τ' ἀμπίσχε, περὶ ψῦχος δ' ἐτέτυκτο.
> ἀλλὰ τά μέν χερσαῖα ...
>   ... ἀνέμβατοι ἀνθρώποισι·
> δοιαὶ δ' ἄλλαι ἔασιν ἐναντίαι ἀλλήλῃσι   15
> μεσσηγὺς θέρεός τε καὶ ὑετίου κρυστάλλου,
> ἄμφω εὔκρητοί τε καὶ ὄμπιον ἀλδήισκουσαι
> καρπὸν Ἐλευσίνης Δήμητερος· ἐν δέ μιν ἄνδρες
> ἀντίποδες ναίουσι.
>   (*Hermes*, fr. 16 Powell)

The two texts have long been recognized as linked, and there is no need here to point out Virgil's faithful adaptation of Eratosthenes' substance or language. Not that his passage is a mere translation. He does, for instance, move Eratosthenes' adverbs (10 αἰεί ... αἰεί) from the polar to the torrid zones (235 *semper . . . semper*), and there is one significant omission in his version,[58] but the fabric of the original is intact. On this fabric, however, Virgil has created an embroidery of secondary references. The word *caeruleae*, at the beginning of 236, recalls in sense, shape, and position in the line Homer's κυάνεαι at *Il.* 4.482, where it is followed by the same strongly felt caesura. In *Riphaeasque arduus arces* (240) there is a reference to Apollonius *Arg.* 4.287 (Ῥιπαίοις ἐν ὄρεσσιν) and/or

---

[58] Virgil avoids defining the climate of the temperate zones (17 ἄμφω εὔκρη-τοι), the most important detail of Eratosthenes' passage. The concept, represented in Latin by *temperatio*, *temperatus* (which the hexameter will not accommodate), and *temperies* (first attested at Hor. *Epist.* 1.16.8), is one which is crucial in the *Georgics*, and Virgil's "lapse" may even be seen as constituting a further category of reference, "reference by omission." On this see Thomas (above, n. 42) 11–12.

Callimachus ('Ῥιπαίου ... ἀπ' οὔρεος, *Aet.* fr. 186.9 Pf.).[59] Along with these references to the Greek tradition, Virgil has included a reference to the shadowy but important Varro of Atax, a poet whose more substantial survival would have told us much about the poetic activities of the fifties and forties. At 237–238 Virgil treats the two temperate zones: *has inter mediamque duae mortalibus aegris | munere concessae diuum* —words roughly approximate to Eratosthenes' ἐν δέ μιν ἄνδρες | ἀντίποδες ναίουσι (18–19), but which in fact constitute a precise reminiscence of a line from Varro's *Chorographia: sic terrae extremas inter mediamque coluntur* (p. 97 Morel) — *has* in the Virgilian line refers back to *extremae* two lines earlier. And *mortalibus aegris* in the same line of *Georgics* 1 is a casual reference[60] to Lucretius. At 243 the influence of Eratosthenes recedes, replaced by that of his fellow poet-scientist, Aratus. Virgil adapts *Phaen.* 45–48 with the same precision as he had Eratosthenes: *circum perque* recalls περί τ' ἀμφί τε, in morem fluminis, οἵη ποταμοῖο ἀπορρώξ, and so on. But, as in the preceding lines, onto this central reference Virgil has grafted secondary allusions: in describing the fact that the Bear, as a polar constellation, does not set, he states *Oceani metuentis aequore tingi* (246). This captures well enough Aratus' κυάνεου πεφυλαγμέναι Ὠκεανοῖο (48), but it does so in a way that refers back directly to Aratus' Homeric source, once again from the astronomical lines in the description of the shield: οἵη ἄμμορός ἐστι λοετρῶν Ὠκεανοῖο (*Il.* 18.489); with *metuentis . . . tingi* Virgil has restored the bathing image of Homer, absent from the primary, Aratean, model.[61] As in the lines derived from Eratosthenes, so here a secondary reference to a Greek author is balanced by reference to a Latin model, not now to Varro, the translator of Eratosthenes, but rather to the translator of Aratus. In describing the coiling appearance of Draco, Cicero translated Aratus' verb εἰλεῖται ("it winds") with the somewhat more colorful combination *sinus . . . flexos*, "twisted curves" (*Arat.* fr. 8). Virgil more or less approved but went one better, inverting noun and adjective: *flexu sinuoso*, "curving twists," in the process, it would appear, coining an adjective in *-osus.*

None of this is idle, accidental, or casual; in two distinct movements Virgil has overlaid a primary "translation" of technical Hellenistic sources with reference to the Homeric original as well as to

[59] The adjective is apparently Hellenistic in origin.

[60] On which cf. above, 175–176.

[61] This instance also constitutes an example of "window reference," involving correction of Aratus against his Homeric original; on this see above, 188–189.

previous Roman translations of that technical material. Archaic, Hellenistic, and Roman are again conflated into a single version, not just as an exercise in cleverness or erudition (and this is perhaps what, apart from its greater complexity, distinguishes Virgilian from Alexandrian reference), but rather as a demonstration of the eclectic and comprehensive nature, and perhaps of the superiority, of the new version: the tradition has become incorporated into a new version.

This, then, is the range of reference in Virgil, and it is a system which could be applied to much other Latin poetry. I hope it is clear that little in the way of reminiscence in Virgil, down to the level of apparently ornamental proper names, is casual or random but that such reminiscence goes to the very heart of his vision of poetry. The function varies, and I have tried to indicate the purposes of different types of reference, but if there is a single purpose, it is that of subsuming or appropriating an entire literary tradition, extending across 800 years and two languages. In the proem to *Georgics* 3, in the description of the temple he will build, Virgil states that all Greece will come to the banks of his native Mincius and compete for him in a new Italian setting, as he supervises the games as *uictor*:

> cuncta mihi Alpheum linquens lucosque Molorchi
> cursibus et crudo decernet Graecia caestu.
>
> (3.19–20)

It is, at least in part, the process that I have been tracing that justifies such a claim: all of Greece, and all of Rome for that matter, has been conflated, corrected, or renovated by this complex process of reference. I have mentioned in passing the opening of Catullus 64, which provides Virgil with a model for this process.[62] Critics have justly found those lines artificial or baroque, and much of the artificiality can be shown to be a result of the strained attempt to accommodate the inherited tradition to a new context: at times the seams show. It is a mark of the Virgilian genius that the inherited tradition, although incorporated with far greater complexity and in a far more sustained fashion, never seems to intrude or create artificiality, but becomes a consummate part of the new setting. In this difference lies the essential distinction between a poetry which is still formative and a poetry which, however rooted in the intellectual basis provided by Alexandria, has nevertheless matured and become master of its tradition.

UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI

---

[62] The epyllia of Calvus and Cinna doubtless contributed also.