

recorded as an event of the past in the year 64, and the clear and natural implication of this statement is that Curius was still an ex-senator in 64.

If my arguments are accepted, what has been regarded as a list of senators in 63 contains five non-senators of 64: Autronius, Vargunteius, Lentulus Sura, Cethegus, and Curius. The tally: five non-senators, two senators, four doubtful cases. A proper understanding of Sallust's list unfortunately means losses in the number of known senators, but these losses have been compensated: we have learned enough to deny a second quaestorship to Curius, and we have learned enough to suggest a date at which Cethegus might have been quaestor. If a quaestorship for Cethegus in 63 is not accepted, we must move him from the non-senators to the doubtful cases: our answer to this question determines whether he is the fifth non-senator or the fifth doubtful case in the list.

F. X. RYAN

University of the Witwatersrand

GEORGICS 1.181: *INLUDUNT* AND THE SCOPE OF VERGILIAN PESSIMISM

Matters of textual criticism inevitably entail interpretative consequences. If this were not the case, there would be little at stake in choosing one reading over another and so little reason to value our textual critics as highly as we do. *Georgics* 1.181, however, presents a curious variation on this theme. Editors had seemed to reach a consensus, that *inludant* was the correct reading, until David O. Ross, Jr., intent upon calling our attention to Vergil's abiding pessimism and the inescapable failures recounted within the *Georgics*, argued that the reading was accepted only because the alternative was unacceptably bleak.¹ His sense of Vergil's pessimism allowed him to see what others had resisted and what should not be overlooked in this line. However, that same sense of pessimism has led him, I believe, to misunderstand the wider implications of what Vergil has created here, as elsewhere, in this remarkable poem.² In this short article I will argue that there are good linguistic reasons to agree with Ross' reading and strong literary reasons to modify his interpretation. The literary issues, of course, extend beyond the narrow scope of a strictly textual exercise. But I hope it will be clear that even in a seemingly small textual matter, we cannot avoid larger literary issues: what is the nature of Vergil's poetic composition, how are we to keep in our discussions the poem's many facets, and what is the meaning and value of this poem's extraordinary range.

Just before the end of the first third of *Georgics* 1, Vergil relates some of the *multa veterum praecepta* that apply to the farm. The *area* must be made level and solid, he says, and the standard text continues:

1. D. O. Ross, Jr., *Vergil's Elements: Physics and Poetry in the "Georgics"* (Princeton, 1987), p. 76.

2. I tried to make a similar case for the poetic significance of the details that compose the surface of this poem in W. Batstone, "On the Surface of the *Georgics*," *Arethusa* 21 (1988): 227-45.

ne subeant herbae neu pulvere vita fatiscat,	180
tum variae inludant pestes: saepe exiguus mus	181
sub terris posuitque domos atque horrea fecit. . . .	182

181: inludant M, P, R w; inludunt M¹, P¹, c, Servius; ludunt A.

Textually speaking, there is not much to choose between the readings *inludant* and *inludunt*, except perhaps for the greater weight to be given to the MS authority for *inludant*. Our earliest ms., A, which reads *ludunt*, is corrupt and inconclusive. In summary, the matter cannot be settled on textual grounds alone. It requires attention to matters of both grammar and meaning, but editors have been slow to make explicit their understanding. The reading *inludant* has simply been accepted by most editors: by Mynors, who reprints without comment his OCT text (1969); also without comment and so presumably without doubt, by R. D. Williams, Conington, Page, and Forbiger (1872).³ Ross, however, declared "a textual difficulty of some importance."⁴ Rose thinks that the variant *inludunt*, which has considerable manuscript support, also has strong reasons to recommend it. Thomas is the first editor to follow Ross in both his reading and his arguments.⁵ I would like now to reevaluate both the reasons that support the reading *inludunt* and the arguments that use that reading to support a thoroughly pessimistic interpretation of the *Georgics*.

The problem with *inludant* is mainly its inelegance. Ross argues that taking *inludant* as parallel with *subeant* and *fatiscat* creates an awkward inconcinnity (*ne . . . neu . . . tum* [= *neu*] . . .).⁶ Varro makes it clear that in the real agricultural world *pestes inludant* does not refer to a third action, parallel to the prevention of weeds and cracks, but rather to a further consequence of cracks in the floor. In fact, the three items cited by Vergil are part of a causal chain in which the *pestes* are the ultimate threat and the ultimate object of prevention: "solida terra pavita, maxime si est argilla, ne, aestu peminosa si sit, in rimis eius grana oblitescant et recipient aquam et ostia aperiant muribus ac formicis. Itaque amurca solent perfundere, ea enim herbarum et formicarum et talparum venenum" (Varro, *Rust.* 1.51.1).⁷ Vergil has selected his details and perhaps has obscured the process, but the three actions he says must be prevented are not discrete items. They are related in a causal and temporal sequence to the general precept: level and treat the floor to prevent weeds and to prevent cracks, cracks let in the pests. This means that *tum inludant* should not be taken as a third discrete item (since it is a direct consequence of the second item). It is, moreover, distinct from the first two items as the final consequence to be prevented, and *tum* marks this distinction.

3. R. A. B. Mynors, ed., *Virgil: "Georgics"* (Oxford, 1990); R. D. Williams, ed., *Virgil, The "Eclogues" and "Georgics"* (New York, 1979); J. Conington and H. Nettleship, revised ed. by F. Haverfield, *The Works of Virgil with a commentary*⁵, vol. 1 (London, 1898); T. E. Page, ed., *P. Vergili Maronis "Bucolica" et "Georgica"* (London, 1898); A. Forbiger, ed., *P. Vergili Maronis Opera*⁴, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1872).

4. *Vergil's Elements*, p. 76.

5. R. F. Thomas, ed., *Virgil: "Georgics,"* vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1988), p. 99.

6. Ross, *Vergil's Elements*, p. 76. He refers to "the inconcinnity of *tum* correlative with *ne . . . neu . . .*" and the "blandness and syntactical impropriety" of the usual reading.

7. Cato's description of how to make a threshing floor confirms this view: the two results which need to be prevented are the intrusions of animals and weeds. "Si ita feceris, neque formicae nocebunt neque herbae nascentur" (*Agr.* 91). At *Agr.* 129 the two dangers to be prevented are ants and mud.

The evidence, then, leads to the conclusion that *tum* marking the final consequence is not simply equal to "and also" nor simply equal to "and lest." The question, then, is: If we read *inludant*, can *ne . . . neu . . . tum . . .* mean "[to act] lest X and lest Y [and lest] then Z"? This seems difficult and is, in fact, unparalleled in Vergil, Lucretius, Ovid, Catullus, Propertius, Tibullus, and Cicero.⁸ *Tum*, without a correlative of some sort (*primis, alias, tum, cum*) or a coordinating conjunction is usually separative.⁹ It points to a different time, a new orientation, or a transition to the result of a previous action. Without some form of connection, either an overriding structure of temporal connection or a simple connective like *et*, it is difficult both to keep the separative force of *tum* and still to remain within a sequence of prevention or negative purpose clauses. Page in his note makes the problem clear when he translates: "and then plagues of all sorts make sport of you." The "and" that Page supplies is exactly what is needed, but it is also what is lacking.¹⁰ Finally, if we return to the abstract form of the expression given above, we may see that there is either a redundancy or an inaccuracy in "[to act] lest X and lest Y [and lest] then Z": either prevention of Y is the prevention of Z, or *tum* is wrong because prevention of Y still requires one "next to act lest Z happen." While these are not precisely Ross' or Thomas' reasons, they support the claim that "181 starts a new development."¹¹ *Tum* marks a new narrative moment and it moves us away from the prevention clauses. This should lead us to prefer *inludunt*.

Textual decisions are not, however, innocent of more general interpretative concerns. Ross believes that the strongest arguments for *inludunt* involve the interpretation of the poem as a whole: "It is perhaps the unexpected bleakness of this

8. Search conducted with IBYCUS on PHI CD-ROM #5.3.

9. On the rarity of *tum* meaning "and also," see A. S. Wilkins, ed., *M. Tulli Ciceronis "De Oratore"* (Oxford, 1892), ad 1.201. His examples, however, do not support the claim that *tum* may be devoid of all separative and temporal content: *publica quoque iura . . . tum monumenta rerum gestarum . . .* opposes public and private as the next sentence shows: *nam ut in rerum purivatarum . . . sic in causis publicis . . .* See also H. A. Holden, ed., *M. T. Ciceronis "De Officiis"* (Cambridge, 1879), ad 1.71: *Quorum iudicium in eo, quod gloriam contemnant et pro nihilo putent, difficile factu est non probare, sed videntur labores et molestias, tum offensionum et repulsarum quasi quandam ignominiam timere et infamiam*. Here, again, *tum* is not simply "and also": Cicero describes men who seem to fear [first] the toil and trouble of election, and then [after they undertake the trouble] the ignominy of failure. *Tum* marks the shift to the further object of fear in the event that one survives or undertakes the work and trouble of electioneering—that is why the emphasis in the construction shifts from actions one takes in the accusative (*labores*) to the feared result of those actions (*offensionum*).

10. The closest parallels I can find are all in Cic. *Off.* 1.42 "Videndum est enim, primum ne obsit benignitas et iis ipsis, quibus benigne videbitur fieri, et ceteris, deinde ne maior benignitas sit, quam facultates, tum ut pro dignitate cuique tribuatur." Here, *tum* is part of a list based on the adverbs, "first," "next," and "then," which are not necessarily temporal, but which help the reader keep track of the list, and these adverbs are supplemented by *ne* and *ut*, which return the reader to the controlling verbal structure, *videndum est*. *Off.* 1.14 "quam similitudinem natura ratioque ab oculis ad animum transferens multo etiam magis pulchritudinem, constantiam, ordinem in consiliis factisque conservandam putat cavetque ne quid indecore effeminateve faciat, tum in omnibus et opinionibus et factis ne quid libidinosae aut faciat aut cogitet." Again, the repeated *ne in ne quid . . . tum . . . ne quid* is essential to help the reader keep place; furthermore, connection is also maintained by way of parallel prepositional clauses; finally, the thought in Cicero is: "[the mind] is wary of indecorous and unmanly plans and actions, then [having succeeded in that] in everything, in both opinions and deeds, it is wary neither to do nor to think anything intemperate." Edinger's translation makes the point explicit: ". . . eventually, in every thought and deed it is careful neither to do nor to think of anything dishonorable" (Cicero, "De Officiis: On Duties" [Indianapolis and New York, 1974], p. 10). This is quite the opposite of Vergil's meaning, which would be paraphraseable as "beware lest the floor crack, then [having failed at that, beware lest] the mice come in." If the *tum* clause belongs within the preventions clause sequence, something is needed to hold it there.

11. Thomas, "Georgics", p. 99.

statement that has driven most editors to prefer blandness and syntactical impropriety. . . ." Ross then defends his reading as one that supports the "characteristic pessimism" of the *Georgics*. His paraphrase of the text summarizes his view: "work to the point of exhaustion on your floor, to guard against weeds and cracking: then come insect and animal plagues to ruin it anyway." "Anyway" marks the bleakness of Ross' reading; and it is this pessimism, as Ross admits, that is at stake here.¹² For this reason I would like to review now the arguments that he cites to support his view of an unrelenting Vergilian pessimism. Those arguments are three: 1) *tum variae inludunt pestes* recalls a pessimistic *leitmotif*, sounded in *tum variae venere artes* (1.145); 2) *terra* here looks forward to *Terra* at 1.278–80: "the earth still producing *monstra*, its agents of destruction"; 3) the movement of the passage parallels that of the next passage, where man's labor in collecting seeds is nevertheless followed by failure: *degenerare tamen* (1.198).

These arguments for pessimism are both individually and collectively far from conclusive. In fact, the general objection is that Ross does not pursue his parallels rigorously enough. In the first instance, one must question whether the *leitmotif* is best characterized by pessimism. The power of the phrase *tum variae venere artes* (1.145) derives not from its inherent pessimism, but from its duplicity. The poem's movement here depends upon a momentary deception and a change in both the reader's and the farmer's expectations.¹³ At *Georgics* 1.145, for instance, *tum variae venere artes* marks the moment when the Jovian farmer thought *artes* meant progress. The second hemistich, however, at least raises doubts about this hopeful expectation as *labor* appears; then, the first word of the next line, *improbis*, goes further to defeat those expectations; and finally *egestas* completes the movement as it dramatically and denotatively takes away any promised satisfaction.

Ross sees the parallel between the two passages in terms of the very pessimistic implications he wants to demonstrate. He does not really consider the consequences of a more strictly formal parallelism. By that process, if *tum variae venere artes* is deceptive, then the parallel *tum variae inludunt pestes* should suggest another deceptive poetic movement. It then follows that the *pestes*, like the *artes* before them, should turn out to be something other than what they first seem, "plagues of all sorts." If, however, these *pestes* are not simply "plagues of all sorts," if they are *variae pestes*, the movement of the passage will be contrary to the point Ross wants to make. And yet, when we do examine this formal parallel, we discover that in its own playful way *variae pestes* is deceptive. From the ominous mockery of *variae*

12. Ross, *Vergil's Elements*, p. 76.

13. See C. G. Perkell, "Vergil's Theodicy Reconsidered," in *Vergil at 2000: Commemorative Essays on the Poet and His Influence*, ed. by J. D. Bernard (New York, 1986), pp. 67–83. I wrestled with similar issues in my dissertation, *Vergil's "Georgics" I: Studies in Meaning and Criticism* (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1984), on *labor improbus* pp. 328–69. There I tried to elucidate how "what it [*labor omnia vicit / improbus*] does not mean, what it cannot mean, is the very experience it imposes on us by its flirtation with our hopes and its teasing denial of the adequacy of the stoic or epigrammatic manner. . . . [I]t is the gathering in of the reader into a process of continual reevaluation" (p. 364) and "to gather together this essentially human complexity and then to return to weeding, shooting off birds, pruning overgrowth and prayer is an extraordinary evocation of the human condition, and for the reader, any reader, to be able to do it in the space and time of these verses is, for the human spirit, a valuable achievement. It may, however, be something we can only do within the confines and given luxuries of art. That makes it no less valuable than the charity we have only in prayer" (p. 367).

inludunt pestes we descend to *exiguus mus*: "... the effect is humorous, the emphatic position in which *mus* is placed giving a dignity which is amusingly in contrast with the size of the creature."¹⁴

One would do better to argue that the *leitmotif* in these lines is *variae*, a term that often suggests duplicity and danger in Vergil,¹⁵ but does not necessarily mean failure.¹⁶ For instance, at *Georgics* 4.406 we have another echo of this half line: *tum variae eludent species*.¹⁷ Here, *species* does not carry with it either the potential optimism of *artes* or the potential dangers of *pestes*, and so neither a firm optimism nor a firm pessimism can be undermined. *Variatio*, however, and shifting expectations still inform the passage. The whole line, "*tum variae eludent species atque ora ferarum*," suggests that Aristaeus will confront *species atque ora ferarum*, and at first he does: "*fiet enim subito sus horridus atraque tigris / squamosusque draco et fulva cervica leaena*" (407–8). But then, without warning, Proteus abandons *ora ferarum*, and we are left with *variae species: acrem flammae sonitum* (409) and *aquas tenuis* (410). Furthermore, with regard to the assumption of pessimism in these parallels, we must note that here *vis* and *labor* will create success (4.412–14):

tam tu, nate, magis contende tenacia vincla,
donec talis erit mutato corpore qualem
videris incepto tegeret cum lumina somno.

Ross' second argument similarly adduces a passage that does not in itself lend to the conclusion that these *monstra* must necessarily and under all circumstances ("anyway") mock the farmer's efforts. For, if the *pestes* that the earth produces recall the Titans, *monstra* that the earth also produces, we are not thereby led to a bleak rejection of the farmer's efforts. In fact, the very analogy Ross offers leads to the argument that these *pestes*, like the Titans, may be controlled by Jovian *labor*, the very thing Ross wants to deny: "*ter pater exstructos disiecit fulmine montis*" (1.283). One may also wonder if there is not an implied *a fortiori* argument in the relative dimensions of the two problems: if Titans piling mountain upon mountain may be controlled by Jovian *vis*, then *a fortiori* the *exiguus mus* may be excluded and controlled by agrarian *labor*.

The third argument, based on a parallel movement in the passage that follows, also fails to convince. While it is true that human effort in the selection of seeds

14. Page, "*Georgica*", p. 206. Thomas, "*Georgics*", p. 99, canny of the problem, must deny that there is any humor here: "would commentators be so amused, if we did not have the subsequent and famous line of Horace? ... mice may be amusing to generations which experience them as cartoon figures, but if it is allowed that they pose a grave threat to the precarious world which is V.'s subject, then the seriousness of this reference will also be allowed." There is no telling readers how to read, but one may note that commentators found the line humorous long before there was any Walt Disney—perhaps as far back as Horace himself whose rewriting of the line could easily be a gloss on Vergil: *ridiculus mus*. Furthermore, the rhythm of the cadence is at least odd and requires interpretative attention.

15. On Vergil's use of *varius* to stress "complexity and confusion," see W. R. Johnson, *Darkness Visible: A Study of Vergil's "Aeneid"* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1976), pp. 68–69, and p. 165, n. 60.

16. The further observation that, as the *variae pestes* are here specified, so above the *variae artes* are specified, and that, therefore, the *variae artes* are *labor improbus* and *egestas* seems to me wrong. I understand how mouse, mole, toad, weevil, and ant can be *pestes*, but I do not understand how *labor* and *egestas* can be *artes*. Further, it seems to be a dubious procedure to argue backward from line 181 to clarify line 145 with an extraordinary κατάχρησις.

17. The parallel is cited by Mynors, "*Georgics*", p. 41 and Thomas, "*Georgics*", p. 99.

may nevertheless lead to a degeneration in the stock, Vergil makes it clear that this degeneration is not inevitable. It is held in check by human *vis* and *labor*. “vidi lecta diu et multo spectata labore / degenerare tamen, ni vis humana . . .” (1.197–98). Again, if we follow the parallel strictly, we must conclude that labor in building an *area* may likewise be the very *vis humana* that can protect human efforts. All these parallels point away from Ross’ conclusions to the more reasonable and realistic view that, given sufficient care, an *area* can usually be protected against *pestes*.

What, then, is the meaning of *tum variae inludunt pestes*? Thomas, who follows Ross’ interpretation, may unintentionally point us in the right direction. I say “unintentionally” because, while he claims that there is “a strong break at the end of 180” and that “181 starts a new movement,” his translation can suggest something different, namely that Vergil’s reference to *pestes* in 181 is logically connected with the precepts: “Pack the floor well, lest weeds spring up or it gape open crumbling with dust. That is when a multitude of plagues mock you. . . .”¹⁸ Here, in the English designed to support Thomas’ case, it is possible to see that *tum* does not start an entirely new movement. It breaks from the prevention clauses and initiates a narrative whose beginning lies in the earlier failure to prevent weeds and crumbling ground. In other words, *tum* refers explicitly to the fact that certain events follow if you do not pack and level the floor.¹⁹ Put another way, *tum* stands for *nam tum*; explanatory asyndeton after the equivalent of a negative command. It explains why the command must be given: “Strengthen the floor with chalk, lest the weeds break it up and the floor crumble and crack. [For] that is the time (*tum*) the pests attack.”

Not only does this make good sense, but it gives point to *exiguus*: the mouse must be tiny to take advantage of the cracks. This agrees with Varro’s view, cited above. If the floor cracks, there’s a passageway, at first for a tiny mouse, and ants to get into the cracks and make their homes. The indicative represents a present general apodosis with an ellipsis of the protasis. Pests do generally come in, and generally it is *then* when the farmer has been careless. This movement is directly parallel to the famous image of the rower that ends the first third of *Georgics* 1:

sic omnia fatis
in peius ruere ac retro sublapsa referri,
non aliter quam qui adverso vix flumine lembum
remigiis subigit, si brachia forte remisit,
atque illum in praeceps prono rapit alveus amni.
[1.199–203]

The advantages of reading *inludunt* are that it is realistic, it agrees with the agricultural tradition as represented by Varro, it avoids inconcinnity and impropriety, and it has parallels in Vergil’s handling of success and failure elsewhere in the poem. Most important, however, this reading arises from a view of *poiesis* that ultimately

18. Thomas, “*Georgics*”, p. 99; cf. Ross, *Vergil’s Elements*, p. 76: “a present indicative not parallel with the preceding subjunctives and thus, with *tum*, introducing a new movement. . . .”

19. This is not the same as saying that *tum* means “if you don’t level the floor.” *Tum* means “then”; the question is: what time is referred to by this temporal demonstrative? A further question is: how does Vergil expect us to see the three temporally contingent actions within the verbal structure of “*area solidanda . . . ne subeant herbae, neu [area] . . . fatiscat, tum . . . pestes*”? Ross and Thomas have helped us to see that this is not a simple textual matter.

allows the many elements of Vergil's poem to come into play.²⁰ While rejecting the *merely* bleak and pessimistic reading, it does not reject the threat of great damage that this tiny mouse with its companions, the moles, toad, weevil, and ants, can do. The threat is still there, and it is conceived in a present general statement, not because it always and inexorably happens, but because (as *saepe* confirms) it often happens. The challenge presented by Vergil's lines is to see simultaneously the potential disaster and the labor expended to avoid that disaster. The expression Vergil has chosen says neither that the mouse will enter "anyway" nor that mice never enter. The language, rather, shapes the moment when the potential and the sometimes²¹ preventable failure seems the present condition of our lives.

This, too, is consistent with Vergil's practice elsewhere. He likes to blur the lines between what can happen or did happen and what will happen. In the passage on the Titans referred to above, my argument depended upon the fact that the tale of the Titans was a tale of Jovian success; in other words, that the perfect tense ("ter pater exstructos disiecit fulmine montis," 1.283) was historical and important. Vergil, however, had introduced this very story with the present tense: "fuge quintam [diem] . . . tum²² partu Terra nefando / Coeumque Iapetumque creat saevumque Typhoea . . ." (1.277–79). Some commentators treat *creat* here as an example of the present used with verbs of giving birth and used when a permanent relationship is established.²³ Greek usage with verbs like τίκτει is cited as parallel. However, two factors work against dismissing *creat* as a common idiom. First, Vergil has paralleled *creat* with the periphrastic perfect *satae* [*sunt*] in the previous line: *pallidus Orcus / Eumenidesque satae* (277–78), and this verb, whose meaning is synonymous with *creat*, has already moved the reference of the passage into the past. Second, the statement that Earth bore Coeus, etc. on the fifth day is secured in the past by the adverb *tum*. In other words, if the idiom requires that the present be used to specify a permanent character, *tum* works against that reference: one cannot easily parallel "he is my sire" with "then, he is my sire."²⁴

20. In today's climate of theoretical debate, it is important, I believe, for me to insist here that I am not arguing or assuming that a many faceted poem is *ipso facto* better than a single faceted poem. I am claiming that the *Georgics* is a many faceted poem and that these passages glint in many directions. Ross himself both agrees with this general principle and has made his book an eloquent plea for his own view of how the poem's pieces and patterns are related. He says (*Vergil's Elements*, p. 234), echoing Klingner ("Über das Lob des Landlebens in Virgils *Georgica*," *Hermes* 66 [1931]: 159) and reproving Wilkinson (*The "Georgics" of Virgil: A Critical Study* [Cambridge, 1969], p. 73): "The process could continue indefinitely, for every part is related in some way to every other." I, however, see other pieces and patterns as well, and believe that the "profoundly pessimistic" reading that Ross discovers, and that is there, also blinds him to other things that are there: the wit and elegance, the proportion and ease of the *Georgics*.

21. Sometimes the most difficult interpretative task is to get the adverb right. I am not happy with "sometimes," although the literal sense seems right. It does sometimes happen that mice and other failures undermine our labor; and when it does happen, it as often feels as if it was or should have been preventable as it feels inevitable. *Tum* plus the indicative gets both: for it can carry both the meaning "Prevent x and y; for then z happens" and "Prevent x and y. Then z happens."

22. A good example of *tum = nam tum*, although here the substantive content of the *tum* clause is not something that can be prevented, but something that, Vergil says, happens anyway.

23. See, for instance, Mynors, "*Georgics*," ad loc.; Page, "*Georgica*," ad loc.; Conington, *Works of Vergil*, ad *Ecl.* 8.45.

24. The terms of this discussion recall the note of Jebb in *The "Oedipus Tyrannus"* (Cambridge, 1887), ad 437, which is often cited as a Greek parallel. See also R. D. Dawe, ed., "*Oedipus Rex*" (Cambridge, 1982), ad 437. This example from Sophocles does not have a temporal adverb locating the action in the past. Neither do any of the other examples from Vergil, *Ecl.* 8.46, *Aen.* 8.141 and 10.518.

Vergil shifts tense here and does so for an effect. It is *as if* the Titans might reappear on any fifth day of the month. Surely, they do not, but whereas the mythology, the phrase *tum partu Terra nefando*, and the tenses *conati sunt* and *disiecit* all pull the narrative in the direction of the secure past and mythological history, the “very bold”²⁵ *creat* pulls the mythological event and its potential into the present.²⁶ This passage, then, composes the feeling of immanent and present danger in a prescriptive and didactic context.²⁷ Something similar happens in our passage: the preventable danger is momentarily set free from the conditions that control it. Those conditions, however, are present; and, if we overemphasize the immanence of the danger, not only do we create an unrealistic didaxis,²⁸ but we cannot see other aspects of the composition. In this case, those aspects include humor and restraint, and the elegance and grace that Quintilian saw in Vergil’s *elocutio*: “At Virgili miramur illud ‘saepe exiguus mus’; nam epitheton ‘exiguus’ aptum <et> proprium effectit ne plus expectaremus, et casus singularis magis decuit, et clausula ipsa unius syllabae non usitata addidit gratiam” (*Inst.* 7.3.20). Perhaps the greatest difficulty we face in discussing the brilliance and power of Vergil’s *Georgics* is to see and express Vergil’s tenacious fullness of reference. As critics we are almost compelled to reductive terms and polarities: preventable or inevitable, humorous or serious, filled with pathos or gleaming with elegance, pessimistic or optimistic. However, in the passage I have been discussing I believe the case must be made that the mouse is both humorous and dangerous, that the danger is both present and preventable. This excess of meaning is typical of Vergil’s didaxis, which always resists our reductive paraphrases and where we continually discover that our lives remain precarious and full.²⁹

WILLIAM W. BATSTONE
The Ohio State University

25. So Page, “*Georgica*”, ad loc.; he continues, “Vergil seems blending [*sic*] the two thoughts—‘then Earth produced’ and ‘that is the birthday of. . . .’” Page, and others, overlook the implication (which is part of the “feel” of the passage) that you had better watch out because it does happen even now.

26. The possibility that *creat* is a syncopated form for *creavit*, on analogy with *audit*, is not discussed by the standard commentators. Such a form is, however, possible, even if unlikely. The syncopated 3rd. sg. perf. of *-avit* is an unusual and late formation; see Lucretius 1.70 and 6.587. Servius, however, thought that Vergil used it at least once; see Servius *ad Aen.* 3.3, on *fumat*. Even if the possibility cannot be dismissed, Vergil has nevertheless constructed a situation in which a danger is apparently present and must by an act of the reader be secured in the past. That such moments are part of the meaning of poetry was argued in my “Surface of the *Georgics*,” pp. 227–45.

27. For some sense of what is at stake in this view of *poiesis*, see S. K. Langer’s discussion of art, symbol, and feeling in *Feeling and Form* (New York, 1953), esp. pp. 208–35. By “composes” I mean both that Vergil composes these responses in a poetic composition and that the responses themselves attain a peculiar composure. By referring to the prescriptive and didactic context I wish to suggest that Vergil’s lyricism, his emphasis on emotional response rather than logical argument, brings into didaxis elements usually kept at bay or, at most, on the margins of didaxis. For the typical lyricism and the atypical composure of the *Georgics* see W. R. Johnson, “The Broken World: Virgil and His Augustus,” *Arethusa* 14 (1981): 49–56.

28. When such a lack of realism informs optimistic scenarios in the *Georgics*, Ross calls the didactic persona a “liar”: see *Vergil’s Elements*, 109–44. We should be wary of a reading in which unrealistic happiness is a “lie,” while equally unrealistic pessimism is profound.

29. I would like to thank the Editor for her careful attention to the details of my argument and for those questions that have provoked me into making what is I hope a stronger case.