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Poetry and the Backward Glance in Virgil's *Georgics* and *Aeneid*[*]

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SUMMARY: This paper explores the implications of parallels between three episodes in Virgil's *Georgics* and *Aeneid*, each of which involves the motif of the hero's backward glance. Orpheus in *Georgics* 4 loses his wife because he looks back too soon; conversely, Aeneas in *Aeneid* 2 and Nisus in *Aeneid* 9 look back too late. An examination of parallels and contrasts between the three episodes sheds light on Virgil's exploration of dichotomies between poetry and politics, individual and community, past and future.

A FREQUENTLY RECURRING THEME OF ROMAN POETRY is the nature and function of poetry itself. From at least the time of Ennius, passages of self-conscious reflection on the relationship between literature and public life, poet and statesman, are common, and Virgil is no exception. In what follows, I will argue that light is shed on Virgil's handling of these themes by tracing parallels and contrasts between three episodes in the *Georgics* and *Aeneid*. Only the first—the Orpheus story at the end of *Georgics* 4—is obviously concerned with the theme of poetry (Orpheus being, of course, the archetypal singer, as well as the lover of Eurydice). I will suggest, however, that the striking parallels between the stories of Orpheus and Eurydice in *Georgics* 4, Aeneas and Creusa

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in *Aeneid* 2, and Nisus and Euryalus in *Aeneid* 9 form part of a nexus of related concerns common to the two poems: the role of the poet in relation to the statesman is linked to dichotomies between passion and reason, individual and community, past and future.

My point of departure is not the Orpheus story itself but the immediately following lines in which the poet signs off at the end of his work. Here the relationship between poet and statesman is most explicitly at issue.

THE *SPHRAGIS* OF THE *GEORGICS* (4.559–66)

> haec super arvorum cultu pecorumque canebam
> et super arboribus, Caesar dum magnus ad altum
> fulminat Euphraten bello victorque volentis
> per populos dat iura viamque adfectat Olympo.
> illo Vergilium me tempore dulcis alebat
> Parthenope studiis florentem ignobilis oti,
> carmina qui lusi pastorum audaxque iuventa,
> Tityre, te patulae cecini sub tegmine fagi.
>
> This song of the cultivation of fields and flocks and of trees I sang while great Caesar thundered in war by the deep Euphrates and, as victor, gave laws to willing subjects, and embarked on the road to Olympus. At that time, sweet Parthenope cared for me, Virgil, as I flourished amidst the pursuits of inglorious ease, I who composed the playful songs of shepherds in the boldness of my youth and sang of you, Tityrus, in the shade of a spreading beech.

Of the three works that make up the Virgilian corpus, the *Georgics* has on one level the strongest and most striking pattern of closure. The concluding signature or *sphragis* with which the poet seals his work closes off the poem with an elegant and satisfying finality. The reference in lines 563–64 to place and time of composition, together with the proprietorial act of naming, clearly designate the four books as a finished artefact. More striking still is the nostalgic tone of the final lines, which further identify the poet of the *Georgics* by retrospective reference to his youthful "shepherds' songs," the *Eclogues*. It is particularly remarkable that Virgil closes his poem by looking back exclusively to the past, given that concluding "signatures" of this kind generally have something to say about the poet's future, whether specifically about his next work, or more generally about the fame and glory that the present work will bring him.[1] The tradition goes back to the transitional formulae that conclude the Homeric Hymns: "I will sing of you again," or "having begun with you, I

[1] E.g., A. R. 4.1773–81, Nic. *Ther.* 957–58 and *Alex.* 629–30, Hor. *Carm.* 2.20 and 3.30, Ov. *Am.* 1.15 and 3.15, *Met.* 15.871–79. For further examples and extensive discussion see Kranz. The *sphragis* is, of course, complemented by the proem to Book 3, where Virgil

will go on to sing another song."[2] Callimachus' *Aetia* ended with a *sphragis* of this pattern (fr. 112 Pfeiffer), and it has been suggested that this passage was itself Virgil's model.[3] Callimachus, like the composers of the Homeric Hymns, looks forward rather than back, anticipating his "descent" from the heights of the *Aetia* to a more "prosaic" genre. It is striking, then, that Virgil makes no mention here of his next project; nor does he say anything of the future glory he will win from the present poem. The significance of this retrospective gesture will be an issue of particular concern in what follows. For now, however, we should note that one effect of the backward reference to the *Eclogues* is further to reinforce the finality of these closing lines, which set the seal not just on the *Georgics* but on Virgil's career to date.[4]

In all these ways, then, the *sphragis* serves to create an emphatic, overdetermined sense of ending, of completeness and finality. It is something of a paradox that this formal closure coexists with a high degree of openness at the level of meaning and interpretation. As Barbara Herrnstein Smith observes in her classic study of poetic closure, "there is a stability of deadlock as well as a stability of repose."[5] Formal closure can serve to emphasize a harmonious resolution of tensions and discords, but it can also function simply as a final restatement of tensions that admit of no resolution.

The juxtaposition of poet and *princeps* in the concluding lines arguably leaves the poem as open in thematic terms as it is closed on the formal level. Octavian's conquests and the composition of the poem are explicitly related to each other only by their contemporaneity, but the reader is surely invited to make other connections between them. Should we, then, assume that the relationship is one of interdependence (the poet's *otium* depends on the peace imposed by Octavian, just as Octavian's "divinity" depends on his immortalization in

does appear to look forward to his next work, though it is striking that his promise to "carry Augustus' name" forward into the distant future (3.47) turns out to rely on a further look back into the past: Augustus, it seems, will be praised by reference to his Trojan ancestry, represented as marble statues in 3.34–36. The stance adopted here is, as will be noted below, nevertheless in tension with the more nostalgic mood of the *sphragis*. The fact that discussion of future projects is *confined* to Book 3 serves to throw the emphasis at the end of the poem onto the juxtaposed figures of backward-looking Orpheus and backward-looking Virgil.

[2] αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ σεῖο καὶ ἄλλης μνήσομ' ἀοιδῆς, *h.Hom.* 2.495, 3.546, 4.580, 6.21, 10.6, etc.; σεῦ δ' ἐγὼ ἀρξάμενος μεταβήσομαι ἄλλον ἐς ὕμνον, *h.Hom.* 5.293, 9.9, 18.11.

[3] See Thomas ad loc., Fowler 1989: 84.

[4] On "supertextual closure" at the end of the *sphragis* see Fowler 1989: 82–88; cf. also Theodorakopoulos.

[5] Smith 251. Smith's entire discussion of anti-closure (234–60, esp. 247–53) is highly germane to my discussion.

Virgil's verse), or one of antagonism (Octavian's ambition and his warlike activities contrast with the poet's seclusion and peaceful repose)?

The way we answer these questions will depend in part on how seriously we take the poet's overt self-depreciation in line 564.[6] Does the (mock-)modesty of the phrase *ignobilis oti* magnify Virgil's praise of Octavian in the preceding lines, or ironize and so undermine it? The former interpretation is no doubt the more obvious of the two, yet the Epicurean connotations of the phrase (which might be taken to suggest the well known precept "live unknown") should perhaps bring to mind such passages as the proem to *de Rerum Natura* 2, where Lucretius condemns the uphill struggle of the politically ambitious (cf. 562 *viam ... adfectat Olympo*) as the cause of unnecessary suffering, while privileging the retired and carefree life of the Epicurean disciple. Virgil himself contrasted the greedy and violent lives of those who seek to hold civic power with the *latis otia fundis* (2.468) enjoyed by the unambitious country-dweller in the finale to *Georgics* 2.[7]

The poetic pseudonym Parthenope, used here to refer to the city of Naples where, Virgil tells us, he composed the poem, carries a similarly complex and ambiguous series of associations. In combination with the verbs *alebat* and *florentem* the name hints at a personification: the poet is nursed or cultivated like a flower in Parthenope's garden. Such metaphors are commonly applied to the virginal seclusion of young girls or brides (as in Catullus' epithalamia and in poem 64, where Ariadne is likened to myrtles by the Eurotas or spring flowers).[8] The association is perhaps strengthened here by the etymological

[6] Kyriakidis argues (543) that the phrase *ignobilis oti* need not imply self-depreciation: *ignobilis* is sometimes used simply as a synonym for *ignotus*, and should be translated as "unknown" rather than "inglorious." The citations in *TLL* 7.298.61ff. do not support Kyriakidis' interpretation, however: the sense *memoratu non dignus, vilis, inglorius* (§IIA) is considerably more common, and the editors note that this sense is more or less interchangeable with their §I (*non nobilis, non notus*). In any case, for a *poet* to depict himself as "living unknown," particularly in such a marked context, would inevitably be taken to suggest self-depreciation: even the hard-line Epicurean Lucretius claims to be fired by *laudis spes magna* (Lucr. 1.923). Cf. Morgan 214: "Virgil's belittlement of himself in the *sphragis* serves above all to magnify Octavian."

[7] Cf. Kyriakidis 539–44. Kyriakidis further draws attention to the strong Epicurean associations of first-century Naples, and suggests that we should see an implicit, punning reference to the philosopher Siro in the allusion to the Siren Parthenope. For reasons that will become clear, however, I cannot fully accept Kyriakidis' conclusion, that Virgil implicitly but definitively privileges Epicurean quietism over the glorious deeds of Octavian here. For Virgil's highly critical response to Epicurean ideas throughout the *Georgics* see Gale 2000 *passim*.

[8] Catullus 61.21–25, 62.39–47, 64.86–90 (cf. esp. 64.87–88 *suavis expirans … odores / lectulus … alebat* with Virgil's *dulcis alebat / Parthenope* (*alebat* in the same *sedes* at the

connection of Parthenope with the Greek πάρθενος. The poet thus appears as a modest, gentle figure, safely enclosed in the *hortus conclusus* of his Epicurean *otium*.[9] The reader may, on the other hand, recall that the city was so named for one of the Sirens, who was said to be buried there.[10] The allusion might then be taken as an assertion of the Siren-like power of song inspired by this "Muse," even as the poet overtly belittles his own importance in comparison with the "thunder" of Octavian's wars. The image of the poet as Siren (or Siren's nursling) might equally conjure up negative associations, however: Parthenope and her sisters were deadly, seductive temptresses, who used the power and beauty of their song to destroy their victims. Perhaps, then, Virgil's *otium* in Naples should be seen as something negative, like the *gravis veternus* averted by Jupiter in 1.124, and his poetry as the product of an unpredictable and perhaps dangerous *furor poeticus*, while Octavian's active engagement in the world imposes, by contrast, order and peace.[11]

A final series of conflicting associations is called up by the characterization of Octavian in 560–62. The verb *fulminat* suggests an association with Jupiter, but the *princeps*' attempt on Olympus (562 *viam … adfectat Olympo*) perhaps aligns him rather with Jupiter's foes, the Giants.[12] The contradictory associations hinted at by these two mythical models are further underlined by the two literary intertexts identified for the lines: on the one hand, we may be put in mind of Callimachus' βροντᾶν οὐκ ἐμόν, ἀλλὰ Διός (*Aet.* fr. 1.20

line-end). Greek parallels are listed by Kroll *ad* 61.21. Note too the prominence of flowers and gardens in the earlier part of Book 4, where they are associated with the "virginal" purity of the bees (see especially 30–32, 109–15, and 200–201) and the secluded, quasi-Epicurean self-sufficiency of the Corycian gardener (4.130–33).

[9] This reading receives further support from the ancient tradition (recorded by Donatus, *Vita* 11) that Virgil's "maidenly" modesty earned him the nickname *Parthenias*; cf. Korenjak, O'Hara 289.

[10] See Plin. *Nat.* 3.62; note, too, that the Sirens are connected with Orpheus via their role in the Argonautic legend (see, e.g., A. R. 4.903–11). According to some versions of the story, they committed suicide when they proved unable to entice Odysseus with their song. This detail may suggest yet another level of meaning in the *sphragis* (the poet's power, like that of the Sirens, is circumscribed by his audience's willingness to listen). For a rather different interpretation of Parthenope's role as Virgil's "Muse" see Miles 293.

[11] It is perhaps not coincidental that a similar ambivalence with regard to the lures of *otium* is betrayed by Catullus: compare the opening of poem 50 with the final stanza of 51, with Segal 1970.

[12] Cf. Ov. *Met.* 1.152 *adfectasse ferunt regnum caeleste gigantas.* Virgil's ambiguous portrayal of Octavian here resembles the "confusion of Heaven and Hell" that Hardie sees as characteristic both of the *Aeneid* and of post-Virgilian epic (1993: 73–87). On gigantomachy in the *Aeneid* see also Hardie 1986: 85–156, esp. 154–56 on Aeneas and Aegaeon in Book 10.

Pfeiffer);[13] on the other, we might recall Rhianus' damning portrayal of the wealthy and ambitious as hybristic, Giant-like figures: ὃς δέ κεν εὐοχθῆισι ... / ἶσα Διὶ βρομέει ... / ἠέ τιν' ἀτραπιτὸν τεκμαίρεται Οὔλυμπόνδε (fr. 1.9–15 Powell).[14] The Callimachean intertext suggests no more than a respectful distance between poet and godlike ruler, while the allusion to Rhianus seems to point rather to stern criticism of the *princeps*' arrogance and excessive ambition.[15]

Despite its apparent finality, then, the *sphragis* functions as a bald restatement rather than a resolution of tensions that, as we shall see, pervade the poem as a whole. The high degree of formal closure achieved in these lines serves, if anything, to point up the work's resistance to closure on the thematic level and, more specifically, the open-endedness of the series of passages scattered through the poem that foreground the problematic issue of the relationship between poet and *princeps*.

POET AND STATESMAN IN THE *GEORGICS*

It has been plausibly argued that the agricultural advice that the poet purports to offer to the reader of the *Georgics* has broader, and specifically political, implications.[16] Farming is presented as a constant struggle against entropy: while the natural world is endlessly fertile, its unruly productivity needs to be restrained and ordered by the shaping hand of the farmer, who also has to fight against the more destructive forces of nature, particularly pests, bad weather, disease, and the disturbing power of sexual attraction. There are hints in various parts of the poem, especially at the end of Book 1, that this view of things also has political implications: human beings, like the crops, trees, and animals that are the overt subjects of Virgil's poem, are unruly and subject to violent passions; they need to be governed with a firm hand in order to pre-

[13] Cf. Thomas ad loc., Morgan 215. As both Thomas and Morgan point out, the reference to the Euphrates, placed six lines from the end of the poem, reinforces the connection, in that it recalls the programmatic ending of Callimachus, *Hymn* 2 (where 108 "the great stream of the Assyrian river," again six lines from the end, symbolizes the style of poetry rejected by Callimachus).

[14] Cf. Hollis, Kyriakidis 538. Hopkinson suggests ad loc. that line 15 alludes to the story of Otus and Ephialtes, "who piled up mountains in order to scale heaven and fight with the gods (*Od.* 11.305–20)."

[15] For the possibility that the Rhianus fragment represents a covert attack on Hellenistic ruler-cult see Hopkinson 227. Callimachus' eschewal of Zeus' thunder, on the other hand, seems (*pace* Kyriakidis) rather to express a cautious respect for the divine Homer and/or the ruling dynasty, in contrast to the poet's own, self-consciously restricted ambitions.

[16] See, e.g., Boyle 1979, Wilhelm, Tarrant 175–77, Gale 2000: 34–45 and 187–95.

vent these destructive passions from wreaking havoc. But the part played in all this by the poet himself is highly ambiguous. As we shall see, Virgil depicts himself and his relationship with the "great world" of power and public life in quite different ways in different parts of the poem. Similarly, poetry itself is portrayed now as an embodiment of restraint and order, now as the product of passion and frenzy. Is the poet, then, to be seen as a supporter or ally of the political strongman? Or as a representative of independent and perhaps critical individualism? Or even as an advocate of quasi-Epicurean political disengagement?

A comparison between the finales of the first two books most clearly suggests a sharp contrast between poet and politician. The charioteer—Virgil himself—in the closing lines of Book 2 is fully in control of his vehicle, and well able to rein in his weary horses at journey's end.[17] Like the *sphragis* at the end of the final book, the image is one of harmony and repose, imposing a strong sense of closure before the new beginning constituted by the proem to Book 3. There is thus a very strong contrast with the charioteer at the end of Book 1, who must surely be identified, as Servius implies, with Octavian.[18] The car of state here runs on out of control, while the driver struggles to govern his plunging horses (*G.* 1.512–14):

> ut cum carceribus sese effudere quadrigae,
> addunt in spatia,[19] et frustra retinacula tendens
> fertur equis auriga neque audit currus habenas.
>
> Just as when chariots burst forth from the starting-gate and gather speed from lap to lap: the driver is carried away by his horses, tugging helplessly at the reins, nor does the chariot respond to his control.

[17] The chariot of poetry is of course a common metaphor in programmatic contexts (e.g., Pi. *O.* 9.81, *P.* 10.65, *I.* 8.62; Call. *Aet.* fr. 1.25–28; Prop. 2.10.2, 3.1.9–14; cf. Becker 68–85). Particularly germane to the present argument is Ov. *Ars* 1.3–4, where the charioteer's skillful *control* of his vehicle is the point of comparison (see further Citroni). We might contrast the equally common images of the poem as sea voyage or the poet as a bee, which suggest a less predictable and orderly method of proceeding. Within the *Georgics* itself, chariot-imagery is associated with the imposition of order and civilization (see esp. 3.113–17 and note also the metaphorical designation of the plough as *currus* in 1.174; see further Farrell 202–4 and Wilhelm). Elsewhere in Greek and Roman literature, the chariot is used as an image for (lack of) psychological or political control (e.g., Anacr. fr. 360 Page; A. *Ch.* 1021–24; Eur. *El.* 1253, *Or.* 36, *IT* 82–83.; Pl. *Phdr.* 246a–57a; Cic. *Rep.* 2.68; Luc. 1.316; Sil. It. 8.279–83; Claudian *Stil.* 3.9–10).

[18] Servius ad *G.* 1.512; cf. Lyne 65, Dewar 1988 and 1990. Silius Italicus seems also to have read the Virgilian passage in this way: in his reworking at *Punica* 8.279–83 the charioteer clearly stands for the rash consul Varro.

[19] Contrast 2.541 *immensum spatiis confecimus aequor.*

The image implies, at the very least, some doubt that the prayer of lines 488–501 will be fulfilled, and that the hoped-for savior—Octavian, the *iuvenis* of line 500—will prove capable of controlling the chaos that is enveloping the Roman world. At the end of Book 2, the poet seems to turn his back altogether on any hope of a political solution to the problems of civil strife, and, like Lucretius,[20] to advocate instead a withdrawal into a private world of self-sufficient calm, embodied here in the just and peaceful life of the farmer. Here, poet and statesman stand at furthest remove from each other, the latter associated with the violence and corruption of urban life, the former with the self-control and carefree tranquillity of the humble farmer or the Epicurean sage.

It is, then, something of a surprise when Virgil re-opens the question of the relationship between poetry and politics at the beginning of Book 3. The chariot of poetry is once again in evidence here, but it now appears as a triumphal chariot in which the poet celebrates a victory directly associated with Octavian's victories over foreign enemies. The triumphal procession of lines 10–12 culminates in the dedication of a temple that is at once a celebration of Virgil's poetic and of Octavian's literal victories (depicted on the temple doors in 26–33). The dedication is celebrated in turn with chariot races, directed by the poet, who once again appears firmly in control of his material.

But by the midpoint of Book 3, marked by a second proem or "proem in the middle," the situation is very different. Here, Virgil depicts himself once again as a charioteer, steering his vehicle down the narrow pathways of Callimachean poetry (3.291–93):[21]

> sed me Parnassi deserta per ardua dulcis
> raptat amor; iuvat ire iugis, qua nulla priorum
> Castaliam molli devertitur orbita clivo.
>
> But sweet love hales me through the deserted heights of Parnassus; how pleasant to travel over ridges whence no predecessor's wheel-track winds down the gentle slope to Castalia!

Given the importance of technical elegance and polish in Callimachean poetics, we might expect the emphasis to fall once again on order and control. But in fact, the opposite is true: the image of the poet as captivated and dragged over the heights of Parnassus by love of his theme suggests *ingenium* rather than *ars*, irrational and uncontrollable divine inspiration rather than self-conscious artifice. Particularly striking in this connection is the use of the word

[20] Cf. esp. the parallel syntactic structures of lines 461–67 and Lucr. 2.24–29; other Lucretian echoes include 510 ~ Lucr. 3.72 and 527–31 ~ Lucr. 2.29–33. For further details and discussion see Gale 2000: 38–43.

[21] Cf. Call. *Aet.* fr. 1.25–28 Pfeiffer.

amor in 285 and 292. In the immediately preceding lines, the poet has been inveighing against the destructive power of the sexual instinct and the impossibility of wholly counteracting its effects, but he now suggests that he, too, like the animals of lines 242–83, is "possessed" by love. Like them, he is irresistibly drawn by his passion over mountain ridges and through the deserted wilderness.[22] The notion that the inspired poet is, as it were, "taken over" by the inspiring deity, and thus composes in a state of "madness" or frenzy not subject to rational control, is, of course, an old one, going back to Plato and beyond.[23] In this particular context, however, the image of divine possession has a distinctly unsettling effect. As we have noted, Virgil is deeply concerned throughout the poem with the conflict between, on the one hand, order and control, and, on the other, the unruly forces of passion, unreason, and uncultivated nature. To suggest, then, that poetic composition is itself analogous to the overwhelming, irrational, and destructive force of sexual attraction calls into question the poet's role as teacher (both in the narrow sphere of agriculture, and in the broader sphere of social and political life). Having previously associated poetry with calm, peace, and order and contrasted it with the violence and passion of the political realm, Virgil now turns the contrast on its head: the poet is overwhelmed by the *furor* of inspiration, whereas the farmer, like the statesman in the *sphragis*, attempts to impose order and control on his "subjects."

Throughout the poem, then, Virgil offers us a series of different and conflicting models for the relationship between poet and *princeps*, or between the active and the contemplative life. Sometimes it is suggested that the two can cooperate harmoniously, sometimes they are mutually opposed. The statesman is represented in some parts of the poem as the source of political violence, but portrayed elsewhere as a restraining force that, like the shaping hand of the farmer, will impose order on the unruly passions of his subjects. Similarly, the poet is linked now with order, now with disorderly passion.

These tensions are played out most fully in the Aristaeus epyllion, where the contrasting figures of Aristaeus and Orpheus can be interpreted, at one

[22] Compare esp. 3.291–92 *me Parnassi deserta per ardua ... raptat amor* with 3.269–70 *illas ducit amor ... superant montis*. A second important intertext is Lucretius: cf. especially Lucr. 1.922–30, where the poet, drawing, like Virgil, on Callimachean programmatic language, depicts himself as inspired by love of the Muses to wander in "pathless places of the Pierides" (for a detailed discussion of parallels between the two passages see Gale 2000: 191–92).

[23] See esp. *Ion* 534a–b, *Phdr.* 245a, *Apol.* 22b–c, and cf. Democrit. frs. 17 and 18. See further Murray and Schiesaro (who finds in the tragedies and the philosophical works of Seneca a tension, similar to that discussed here, between the conceptions of the poet as teacher and as *poeta furiosus*).

level, as representatives of the active and the contemplative life.[24] Aristaeus is above all a practical figure, a farmer and "first inventor"; like Octavian in the *sphragis*, he hopes to win immortality by virtue both of his divine parentage and, by implication, of the agricultural discoveries that he has bequeathed to the human race (4.325–28, and cf. 315–16 on the *bougonia*). Unlike the self-reliant Orpheus, he receives didactic instruction from his mother, Cyrene, which he carries out to the letter, and also consults the prophet Proteus.[25] Orpheus, on the other hand, is a solitary, non-practical figure. Grief for his beloved Eurydice absorbs him completely, both after his initial loss (4.465–66) and still more after her second and irrevocable death (4.506–27). His sorrow hardens, at this stage, into a sterile obsession: the frozen, northern landscape in which he sings reflects the barrenness of his devotion, and it is his refusal to accept any substitute for his lost wife that ultimately brings about his death at the hands of the *spretae Ciconum ... matres* (4.520). It is significant, too, that, once his attempt to recover Eurydice has failed, he puts the power of his song to no practical end. In the allegorical tradition represented, for example, in Horace's *Ars poetica*, Orpheus was sometimes regarded as a culture-hero or law-giver; his power to tame trees and ferocious animals represents the civilizing influence of music and the arts.[26] Virgil's Orpheus, in contrast, seems almost unaware of, and certainly indifferent to, the magical effects of his song (4.510). Eurydice is his only theme while he lives (4.465–66, 507–9), and his severed head continues to call her name even after he has been torn limb from limb by the Thracian Bacchants.

Virgil's portrayal of Orpheus, like the series of passages discussed above, suggests a highly ambivalent attitude towards the nature of poetry and the poet's role in society. The archetypal poet is both immensely powerful (he very nearly succeeds in bringing Eurydice back from the dead, not to mention the casual reference in 510 to his taming of tigers and animation of oak-trees) and entirely helpless in the face of his own passion, the *furor* (495) that motivates his fatal backward glance. We should perhaps recall at this point the strong link forged in Book 3 between sexual love and *amor Musarum*. Again, as we have noted, Orpheus performs no service to his fellow human beings, but lives a life of solipsistic isolation. Yet he has the power to preserve the memory of his beloved Eurydice even after both he and she are dead.[27] The

[24] See esp. Conte 138–40.

[25] For analogies between Aristaeus and Virgil's didactic addressee see Conte 133–35.

[26] *Ars* 391–93; cf. *A.* 6.645–47.

[27] For this interpretation of the end of the Orpheus story, in which the cry of the severed head, taken up and re-echoed by the banks of the Hebrus, is taken to symbolize the power of poetry to preserve the memory of the dead, see Griffin 177, Perkell 82–87, Henry 1992: 157–59.

juxtaposition of the Aristaeus and Orpheus stories is thus analogous to the juxtaposition of *princeps* and poet in the *sphragis*. I suggested above that Virgil both depicts himself as an isolated figure, disengaged from Octavian's world of conquest and imperial rule, and at the same time hints that his poetry has great—if wayward and even dangerous—power. We might infer, too, that it is Virgil's poetry that has the power to guarantee the immortality sought by Octavian in 4.562, just as Orpheus ensures that Eurydice's name will live forever, even if he cannot bring her back physically from the dead.[28]

THE BACKWARD GLANCE MOTIF IN THE *GEORGICS*

A further feature shared by Orpheus and the Virgil of the *sphragis* is their tendency to look back to the past. Both Aristaeus and Octavian are oriented, in their common quest for immortality, toward the future; Virgil and Orpheus, by contrast, face backward. I have already noted the exceptional lack of any reference to the future in Virgil's *sphragis*; the *Zukunftstopos* (to use Kranz' phrase)[29] is in fact displaced from the poet himself to his dedicatee, Octavian. Orpheus, similarly, lives entirely in the past after Eurydice's death.[30] In this sense, the backward glance that causes him to lose her forever seems symbolically appropriate.

It is worth noting, in this connection, that Virgil's version of the Orpheus story is unlikely to have been canonical at the time of the composition of the *Georgics* (though it appears that it rapidly became so). Such evidence as is available seems on the whole to suggest that most, if not all, pre-Virgilian accounts of Orpheus' *catabasis* ended with the successful restoration of Eurydice to life.[31] In portraying Orpheus as failing at the eleventh hour, Virgil

[28] We should also note, in this connection, that it is precisely Octavian's *name* that the poet promises to "carry forward as many years into the future as Caesar is from the first origin of Tithonus" (3.47–48). The confident assurance of the proem to Book 3 is, once again, undercut by the more negative (or at least ambiguous) picture presented in Book 4. Compare also the "epitaph" for Nisus and Euryalus (*A.* 9.446–49), discussed below.

[29] Kranz 26.

[30] These thematic links are reinforced by a verbal echo: the apostrophe *te ... cecini*, addressed by Virgil to his character Tityrus in the final line of the poem, picks up Proteus' apostrophe of the dead Eurydice, 4.465–66 *te, dulcis coniunx, te ... canebat.*

[31] Cf. Eur. *Alc.* 357–62, Isoc. *Bus.* 8, Hermesian. *Leon.* 3, *Epitaph. Bionis* 122–25, D. S. 4.25.4. A third version, in which Orpheus is fobbed off with a "phantom" Eurydice, occurs in Pl. *Symp.* 179d. The earliest reference to Orpheus' failure other than the passage under discussion is in the mythographer Conon (*Diegeseis* 45.2), who was probably writing at about the same time as Virgil. Pre-Virgilian references to the myth are discussed in detail by Heurgon 1932 and Bowra; Heath offers a comprehensive reassessment of the evidence, and concludes that there is no compelling reason to accept the view that any of the above

seems to be following a little-known variant of the myth, if not rewriting the story completely. The details of the condition imposed by Proserpina and of the hero's fatal backward look may very well be Virgil's own invention; it certainly seems justifiable to regard this element of the story as a particularly significant one in the context of the Aristaeus epyllion and the *Georgics* as a whole.[32]

Why, then, does Orpheus look back? In part, of course, because he is overwhelmed by his irresistible desire for Eurydice. But also, perhaps, because poets in general face backward towards the past whence they derive their inspiration. We should bear in mind that the crucial verb *respicio* can mean "look back in time" as well as "look back in space."[33] It is employed in the former sense, specifically in connection with the role of poetry in preserving the memory of past events, by Lucretius, who links the transition from the prehistoric to the historical period with the invention of writing (Lucr. 5.1444–47[34]):

> carminibus … res gestas coepere poetae
> tradere; nec multo priu' sunt elementa reperta.
> propterea quid sit prius actum *respicere* aetas
> nostra nequit, nisi qua ratio vestigia monstrat.

passages implies a version of the story in which Orpheus was successful in restoring his wife to life (as opposed to securing a temporary reprieve before losing her a second time). It is not possible to respond in detail here to Heath's impressive article; in spite of the care he takes to interpret each of the six passages in context, however, I remain unconvinced that the references in the *Alcestis*, *Symposium*, and *Epitaphium Bionis*, in particular, make much sense if the standard version of the myth represented Orpheus as—ultimately—failing in his quest. Cf. also Guthrie 30–39, Dronke, Wilkinson 116–18, Segal 1989 esp. 1–10, Henry 1992: 11–17, Lee 1996: 1–13.

[32] The notion that one should not look at the spirits of the dead (or at items connected with their cult) is a common folkloric motif, to which many references can be found in Greek and Roman literature (e.g., Hom. *Od.* 10.528, A. *Ch.* 97, S. *OC* 490, Theoc. 24.94, A. R. 3.1038–41, Pl. *Mos.* 523, Virg. *Ecl.* 8.102, Ov. *Fast.* 5.439). Bettini 1991: 124 suggests that the prohibition derives from the notion that to turn around and look at someone establishes a connection with them; cf. also Rohde 298 and n. 104.

[33] On the complex issue of the spatial representation of time in Latin literature see Bettini 1991: 113–93, especially 115–33, where it is persuasively argued that the past is conceived as *ahead* of the present when events are thought of independently from the speaking subject, but *behind* in relation to the speaking subject.

[34] Cf. also Cic. *Arch.* 1, *Tusc.* 5.6; Ov. *Tr.* 2.148; Sen. *Dial.* 7.6.1, 10.10.2–5, *Ben.* 3.2.3, *Ep.* 49.2. Elsewhere in Virgil, the verb often has connotations of regret for or attachment to the past (e.g., *A.* 5.3, 10.666, 12.671), though it is also used frequently in the neutral sense "consider," "take note of" (e.g., *Ecl.* 1.27–29, *G.* 1.425, *A.* 2.615, 4.225, 7.454). On the relationship between these two senses of the verb see Bettini 1991: 123–24.

> The poets began to record heroic exploits in song; for not long before this was writing invented. That is why our age cannot look back on the events of earlier times, except where reason reveals their traces.

For Lucretius, then, an important function of poetry is to *look back* in time and preserve the memory of the past. The idea is a common one: in the *pro Archia*, for example, Cicero similarly emphasizes the role of poetry in commemorating the heroic achievements of Rome's past, while parallels can be found in Horace, Tibullus, and others for the notion that the exploits of legendary heroes are only remembered because they were enshrined in verse.[35] The poet "look[s] back over the whole infinite expanse of time past" (Lucr. 3.854–55), and so enables his audience to "see" the past events that lie behind them. We can thus posit a symbolic connection between Orpheus' fateful backward look and the characteristic stance of the poet, as well as the lover's inability to face the future after the loss of his beloved.

This interpretation receives further support from the way another poet-figure, the seer Proteus, is portrayed in the epyllion, and serves in turn to explain a puzzling feature of Virgil's narrative. Aristaeus is sent to Proteus by Cyrene in order to find out why he has lost his hive of bees and what to do about the loss (4.396–97). In the event, however, though Cyrene tells her son that the seer has knowledge of past, present, and future (392–93), Proteus fulfills only the first half of Aristaeus' request. It is Cyrene who eventually tells her son how he should go about ensuring the "rebirth" of his hive.[36] What Proteus offers is neither prophecy nor advice, but an *aetiology* of the disease. In this respect, he acts as a *vates* in the Augustan sense of the word, as a poet rather than a prophet. Despite the overtly practical aspect of the *Georgics*, Virgil, too, has been concerned with aetiology throughout the poem, often looking back to the distant past, whether the end of the Golden Age (1.121–46, 2.473–74, 536–40), the beginning of the world (2.336–45), or the foundation of Rome

[35] Cic. *Arch.* 14, 20–30; cf. Lucr. 5.324–29, Hor. *Carm.* 4.9.25–28, Tib. 1.4.63–66 (with Murgatroyd, who gives further examples ad loc.).

[36] Segal 1989: 74–75 suggests an alternative explanation for the anomaly, which points in his view to an intertextual relationship between Cyrene/Aristaeus and Circe/Odysseus in *Odyssey* 10–12 (Circe, like Cyrene, sends the hero off in search of information that she ultimately provides herself: though she promises Odysseus at 10.539–40 that Tiresias will reveal "your route and the stages of your journey and how you may find your way home over the fishy sea," in the event the prophet takes the voyage as far as Thrinacia as read, and deals mainly with Odysseus' homecoming and its consequences). It is worth noting, however, that Tiresias, unlike Proteus, *does* give Odysseus information about the future, even if it is not quite the information that we had been led to expect. In any case, Segal's interpretation and my own may be seen as complementary, rather than mutually exclusive.

(2.532–35), as well as providing aetiological explanations of a more specific kind such as the catalogue of divine benefactions in the proem (1.7–20), the references in Book 3 to discoveries relating to horsemanship (3.113–17) and to the myth of Glaucus' mares (3.267–68), and of course the epyllion itself, which is explicitly introduced in order to provide an *aetion* for the practice of *bougonia* (4.315–16).[37] Virgil's portrayal of Proteus resembles his self-depiction in the *sphragis* and elsewhere in other ways, too. Like both the poet himself and his counterpart Orpheus, Proteus is a detached figure. He is depicted as a shepherd enjoying his noonday *otium*,[38] as a prophet whose knowledge must be extorted from him and is not bestowed willingly on those who require it. Proteus delivers his "prophecy" to Aristaeus in a state of ecstasy, with rolling eyes and gnashing teeth (4.450–52); it is perhaps not stretching a point to see parallels here with the amatory *furor* of Orpheus and the *furor poeticus* hinted at in the second proem of Book 3.

Cyrene, on the other hand, issues a brisk set of practical instructions. Intriguingly, the purpose of the sacrifices that Aristaeus is to perform is to induce Orpheus to *forget* his anger (note 4.545 the "poppies of Lethe"). Thus, Cyrene and Proteus form a third contrasting pair: the polar opposition (or, perhaps, complementary relation) between poetic aetiology and pragmatic advice can be mapped onto the polarities represented by Orpheus and Aristaeus and by Virgil and Octavian in the *sphragis*.

In none of the three cases, however, is one of the two poles unambiguously privileged over the other. Both Orpheus' literal backward look and his obsession with the past are clearly marked as negative by the course of the narrative itself.[39] Conversely, Virgil lays some emphasis at the beginning of the epyllion on Aristaeus' beneficent role as "first inventor," and his success in "resurrecting" his swarm of bees is evidently to be contrasted with Orpheus' failure to obey divine commands and consequently to bring Eurydice back. On the other hand, as many readers have intuitively felt, the poet seems to go out of his way to make Orpheus the more sympathetic of the two characters (notably, through the use of the "subjective" style in Proteus' narrative, by

[37] On the aetiological aspect of the poem see Schechter, Ross esp. 157–67, and Thomas index s.v. "aetiology."

[38] On the significance of the portrayal of Proteus as a pastoral figure see esp. Segal 1989: 76–77.

[39] Cf. Miles 272–81, where the Orpheus story is interpreted as "a dramatic warning that we must not attempt to live in the past" (281). Contrast Perkell 67–89 and 183–89: Perkell's reading, according to which "the *Georgics* preserves and values the memory of a retrospective ideal" (89), has many points of similarity with my own.

contrast with the more impersonal mode in which Aristaeus' story is related). Proteus' song, though of little help to Aristaeus in itself, appears to be regarded as complementary to Cyrene's practical advice: she needs, it seems, to *know* about the past in order to give advice about the future (note in this connection the repeated phrase *morbi causa*, which recurs in Cyrene's two speeches at 4.397 and 532). Just as the relationship between the juxtaposed figures of Octavian and Virgil in the *sphragis* is left as an open question for the reader, so we are given no explicit indication how we are to interpret the contrasting fates of the backward-looking Orpheus and the forward-looking Aristaeus, or the relative value of Proteus' emotive, poetic aetiology and Cyrene's practical advice.

POETRY AND THE BACKWARD GLANCE IN THE *AENEID*

The complex of themes that I have been tracing through the *Georgics* (looking back and looking forward, remembering and forgetting, poetry and politics) is developed more extensively and indeed somewhat more explicitly in the *Aeneid*. An obvious starting point is the departure from Troy near the end of Book 2: Aeneas' flight and subsequent return in search of the lost Creusa are closely and, I will argue, significantly modeled on the *catabasis* and return of Orpheus in the Aristaeus epyllion.[40]

Aeneas is leaving the darkened city, with Creusa following behind, when he is startled by a sudden noise (*A.* 2.730–32):

> *iamque* propinquabam portis omnemque videbar
> *evasisse* viam, subito *cum* creber ad auris
> visus adesse pedum sonitus …

[40] With what follows cf. Heurgon 1931, Putnam 1965: 41–48, Briggs, Lee 1979: 45 and n. 13, Gall 40–41, Petrini 37–47. Nadeau integrates the parallels between the two episodes into a much more elaborate web of correspondences between Aeneas, Aristaeus, and Augustus (not all of them equally convincing: the parallels highlighted at section II.10 (64–65), for example, would seem to link Orpheus with *Juno* rather than Antony or Paris, and a number of characters besides Cleopatra and Eurydice are connected with snakes). While the first part of Nadeau's argument is very striking, I find his conclusion—that Aristaeus, Orpheus, and Eurydice are allegorical figures for Augustus, Antony, and Cleopatra—altogether too schematic. The rather colorless Eurydice bears little resemblance to the Egyptian queen, while the identification of Orpheus with Antony fails to account, as Nadeau admits, for the considerable emphasis laid by Virgil on the power of his music. We might rather see both couples, Orpheus-Eurydice *and* Antony-Cleopatra (as well as Paris-Helen, Aeneas-Dido, Nisus-Euryalus, Turnus-Lavinia, and Leander-Hero in *G.* 3.258–63), as representatives of a recurring pattern in Virgil's work, whereby excessive passion leads to destruction. Aeneas narrowly escapes a similar fate in the case of Creusa.

> And now I was drawing near to the gates and seemed to have evaded all the dangers of the journey, when suddenly I thought I heard the sound of many feet.

The hero is overcome by confusion and takes to his heels, not looking back (2.741 *nec … respexi*) until he reaches the prearranged rendezvous and realizes that Creusa is missing. There are strong verbal echoes here of Orpheus' ascent from the underworld, with Eurydice, like Creusa, following behind.[41] Aeneas' subsequent return into the "hell" of burning Troy[42] in search of his wife further recalls the Orpheus story. Both Eurydice and Creusa, finally, address a speech of farewell to their husbands before vanishing like smoke into thin air (*A.* 2.791–94 ~ *G.* 4.499–500).[43]

The similarity between the two episodes also serves, however, to point up some significant differences. Most obviously, the *nec … respexi* of *A.* 2.741 inverts the *respexit* of *G.* 4.491: Orpheus loses his wife because he looks back at her too soon, Aeneas because he does not look back until too late. Related to this difference is the contrast in tone between Eurydice's and Creusa's farewell speeches: whereas Eurydice reproaches her husband with the *furor* that caused him to disobey Proserpina's command and so to bring about her second death, Creusa tries to comfort Aeneas by explaining that Jupiter's plans for the birth of the Roman race require that she be left behind in Troy, in order to free her husband for the "royal wife" awaiting him in Hesperia. Aeneas, then, is both like and unlike Orpheus. He is tempted at first to turn back, to devote himself like Orpheus to the past—the lost glories of Troy—but gradually learns to look instead to the future.[44]

The process of separation is, nonetheless, a gradual and painful one. Aeneas is notably reluctant to leave Troy: the exchange with Creusa's ghost is the last

[41] *iamque … evasisse* (with *cum-inversum* construction) ~ *iamque … evaserat … cum*, *G.* 4.485–89; cf. also *A.* 2.725 *pone subit* with *G.* 4.487 *pone sequens*, and the enjambed *A.* 2.739 *substitit* with the crucial *restitit* in the same *sedes* at *G.* 4.490. Further verbal parallels between the two episodes are noted by Austin 277–78, 285–86.

[42] For the assimilation of Troy to Hades in Book 2 see Putnam 1965: 31–32.

[43] It is worth noting too that, as in the case of Orpheus and Eurydice, Virgil seems to have made major structural alterations to the traditional story of Aeneas' flight from Troy: according to the majority of earlier accounts, Aeneas' wife (who is sometimes, significantly, given the name Eurydice) goes with him into exile, but dies on the voyage to Italy. See further Austin 286–90, Heurgon 1984.

[44] For the notion that Aeneas combines aspects of Orpheus and Aristaeus in a single character, or that he begins as an Orpheus figure, but develops into an Aristaeus, see Nadeau 68; it is not clear to me, however, that Aristaeus is made to "see, admire, *but reject* 'Orpheus'" (italics mine).

in a series of three exhortations to abandon the city (compare the speeches of Hector in Aeneas' dream at 2.289–95 and Venus in 2.619–20), and Anchises' reluctance to join the refugees further delays their departure. Even after Troy is physically left behind, the hero's thoughts still dwell on the past: the startling lack of tact he shows in assuring Dido that, were he free to act as he pleased, he would have stayed in the Troad (4.340–44) mirrors the nostalgic tone of his first speech (1.94–101), and we find him in the opening lines of Book 5 still literally looking back (5.3 *respiciens*), this time at the shores of Carthage and the smoke rising from Dido's pyre. It is significant, too, that Anchises dies before the Trojans arrive in Italy: like Creusa, he is a representative of the old order that must give way to the new.[45] Yet his father's death is a source of anguish to the hero (3.708–13): the return to Sicily and celebration of commemorative games in Book 5, as well as the final interview between father and son in the Underworld, reinforce the sense that Aeneas is still clinging to the past.

One episode in particular suggests that the tendency displayed by Aeneas in the early books of the poem to turn back and to live in the past is to be viewed in a negative light.[46] In Buthrotum, the refugees find that Andromache and Helenus have built a kind of miniature replica of the original Troy. Though Aeneas himself envies them their good-fortune, the terms in which the settlement is described—with its "imitation" citadel (3.349–50 *simulataque magnis / Pergama*) and dry brook standing in for great Xanthus—suggest that this is merely a pale shadow of the real thing. Andromache, in particular, seems obsessed with the past: she regards herself still as the wife of Hector and pays honor, with pathetic devotion, to his empty tomb.[47] Like Orpheus' devotion to the lost Eurydice, Andromache's attachment to the past seems sterile and deathly.[48] Significantly, her union with Helenus seems not to have produced a child.

[45] Cf. Quint 60–62.

[46] On the Buthrotum episode see especially Grimm, Saylor, West, Henry 1989: 51–53, Bettini 1997.

[47] For Andromache as *coniunx Hectorea* see 3.488. Bettini 1997: 10–11 notes in this connection that Helenus, too, is depicted as an inferior substitute for a lost "original": the phrase *patrio ... iterum cessisse marito* (3.297) already hints at the idea that "Andromache ... is still entirely defined by her Trojan role as 'Hector's wife,'" while Helenus is "at best ... a stand-in, and not a very brilliant one at that." Also striking are Andromache's identification of Ascanius as the *imago* of her own dead son (489), and her wish, echoing Aeneas' similar words at 1.94–101, that she had died, like Polyxena, "beneath the lofty walls of Troy" (3.321–24).

[48] The atmosphere of the whole episode is curiously funereal. Note in particular the *dona extrema* given by Andromache to Ascanius (486–89), which recall the *tristia dona*

Helenus, in contrast, does offer Aeneas advice for the future, and again, as at the end of Book 2, we can see the hero beginning to look forward here. He leaves Buthrotum with the wish that his descendants may maintain an alliance with the cities of Epirus (3.500–505). As we have seen, however, the lure of past continues to exert its fascination over him, and it is not until the *catabasis* in Book 6 that the last links are definitively severed.[49]

It has often been pointed out that Book 6 recapitulates the events of the first half of the poem in reverse order: in the Underworld, Aeneas says his last farewells to Palinurus, who died at the end of Book 5, then to Dido, and finally to his Trojan comrades, before he meets with the spirit of Anchises, who "fires him with love for the glory to come" (6.889). It is at this point that Aeneas finally makes his choice between personal ties and public duty, turning from the individuals who made up his past to dedicate himself to a largely unknown future. It is striking and perhaps not coincidental that neither Dido nor Creusa is mentioned by Aeneas after he leaves the Underworld. In the whole of the second half of the poem, Creusa's name occurs only once (9.297, in the mouth of her son Ascanius) and Dido's twice (both times, significantly, in a context where a gift of hers is being given away, to the doomed Nisus and Euryalus in 9.266, and to the dead Pallas in 11.74). Equally suggestive is Aeneas' reaction in the closing lines of Book 8 to the scenes depicted on his divinely-made shield: the wonder and delight that he shows here (in spite of his incomprehension) contrast sharply with the tears he sheds as he surveys the scenes depicted on Dido's temple in Book 1. The future is harder to understand than the past, but Aeneas is now ready to accept it with joy.

offered at Hector's cenotaph in 301. (Cf. also 11.25–26 *supremis muneribus*; Catullus similarly bestows the *postremo … munere mortis* on his dead brother in 101.3. For *extremum munus* as the gift bequeathed by a dying person cf. *Ecl.* 8.60.) In his parting *makarismos*, where Aeneas envies the couple's hard-won *quies*, his phrasing hints that the tranquillity of Buthrotum resembles the peace of the grave (cf. *quibus est fortuna peracta / iam sua* with Dido's *vixi et quem dederat cursum Fortuna peregi* at 4.653; for *quies* as the peace of death see, e.g., *A.* 10.745, Lucr. 3.211, Prop. 2.28.25; Lattimore 70–73, 82–83).

[49] It is not the case, however, that Aeneas *never* backslides after the end of Book 6. As *TAPA*'s anonymous reader has pointed out to me, the hero is still anxious and uncertain at the beginning of Book 8 (18–30, and cf. 520–23), and his speech in 12.435–40, almost the last in the poem, closes with a striking echo of the backward-looking Andromache (440 = 3.343; cf. Petrini 108). For a rather different interpretation of Aeneas' experience in the underworld see Bleisch, who argues that the hero is in effect *denied* any choice in the matter: the Sibyl's impatience and Deiphobus' self-abnegation combine to exclude the possibility that he might continue to dwell on the past. Bleisch's highly perceptive and thought-provoking discussion of the Deiphobus episode overlaps in several ways with my own analysis, though she does not distinguish as sharply as I would wish to do between the *hero's* need to forget and the *poet's* need to remember.

Aeneas, then, initially resembles Orpheus in his nostalgia and his unwillingness to make a decisive break with his past happiness in Troy, but the poet makes it clear that the hero's gradual separation—his reorientation, from backward-looking Trojan refugee to forward-looking founder of the Roman race—is necessary, if painful. David Quint, in a suggestive discussion of the themes of memory and repetition in the *Aeneid*, links the hero's need to forget his past with the political situation of Virgil's own day: the antagonisms and rivalries of the civil wars are to be forgotten, and Rome is rather to look to a glorious future under Augustus.[50] Similarly, Juno must "forget" her unrelenting anger if peace is ever to be established in Italy.[51] Yet the traditional role of the epic poet is, as Lucretius suggests in the passage quoted above, to memorialize the great deeds of the past and prevent them from being forgotten.[52] It may be no coincidence, then, that the speech of Anchises that fires Aeneas with love of the future is also the speech in which artistic endeavor is rejected in favor of Rome's true destiny of conquest and government.

The Parade of Heroes, and the great prophetic speech in which the deeds of Rome's *summi viri* are catalogued, reach a climax in the famous exhortation to "spare the conquered and crush the proud" (6.853). As he looks forward to the imperial destiny of his descendants, Anchises contrasts the arts

[50] Quint esp. 53–65; Cf. Zetzel esp. 282–84, and Bleisch. For Octavian's "reinvention" of his image—in particular, the new slant given to his relationship with Julius Caesar, and the increased emphasis on *clementia* as opposed to just vengeance—after Actium see, e.g., Syme 314–21 (esp. 317: "Caesar's heir forswore the memory of Caesar: in the official conception, the Dictatorship and the Triumvirate were blotted from the record") and Southern 100–14 (esp. 102–4); cf. also Zanker 33–100, Gurval 282–84 (on the "recasting" of the temple of Mars Ultor), Galinsky 1996: 371–74. We might also think of such discreditable acts as the sack of Perugia, to which many critics have seen an allusion in Aeneas' actions after the death of Pallas (for references see Harrison *ad* 10.517–20; Harrison himself is sceptical). As J. P. Sullivan suggests (57–58) in connection with Propertius 2.1, Octavian would no doubt have preferred such episodes swept quietly under the carpet of history. It is of course also true that the new image created by the *princeps* relied heavily on the notion of continuity with or restoration of the (more distant) past (see, e.g., *Res gestae* 6.1, 8.5); this element of Augustan propaganda too is mirrored in the *Aeneid*, in the conception of the new Trojan settlement in Italy as in some sense a refoundation, a return to the "ancient mother" of Aeneas' distant ancestors (3.94–98, 163–68).

[51] Compare Juno's speech in 12.808–28 with her *memor … ira* in 1.4. Bettini 1997: 30–31 connects the goddess' new-found willingness to forget the past with her demand that Aeneas and his followers "suffer a lack of identity ... [and] forget their own selves, losing contact with the very city that gave them birth, abandoning their language and their customs," in order to merge their identity into that of the new race of Italians/Romans.

[52] Cf. Bleisch 221: "for the poet, to be without memory is to be without song, like the bard Thamyris in *Il.* 2.595–600."

of government with those arts in which "others" (and clearly he means the Greeks) will reign supreme. The artistic activities catalogued here do not specifically include the composition of poetry, yet the Greeks were commonly held to rival or even surpass the Romans in literature as in the other arts, and Anchises' words clearly reflect the traditional Roman ambivalence, if not downright hostility, towards Hellenic culture as a whole displayed, for example, in many of the works of Cicero.[53] In its immediate context, then, Anchises' exhortation turns on a contrast between Roman and Greek, action and contemplation, the practical and the liberal arts. But the part played by these lines within the broader pattern that I have been tracing—the movement from nostalgia to forgetfulness of the past and anticipation of the future—suggests a further dichotomy, between the man of action, who must look forward, and the artist or poet, whose role is to preserve the past. Hence, poetry must be left to "others" along with the arts of oratory, sculpture, and astronomy.

Anchises' exhortation is thus of a piece with the negative value assigned throughout the poem to nostalgic attachment to the past. Yet this dismissive attitude stands in obvious tension not only with the fact that Anchises' statement is itself set within an epic poem, but with more favorable assessments of poetry and its preservation of the past implicit in other parts of the poem. References to the poet's calling are, of course, much less prominent in the *Aeneid* than in the *Georgics*. Indeed, as Harry Hine notes in his discussion of Anchises' words in Book 6, poetry and song are rarely mentioned at all in the later poem.[54] If, however, we put the few such references together with the ecphrases of works of art in Books 1, 6, and 8, and the narratives about the past inset within the larger narrative of the poem itself, it is possible to trace a set of attitudes that correspond quite closely to the characteristic ambivalence toward poetry and poetic inspiration displayed in the *Georgics*.

Of the passages where music or poetry is mentioned explicitly, several appear to set a relatively high value on these arts, counteracting to a certain extent Anchises' dismissiveness. Most notably, *pii vates* share the blessings of Elysium with warriors who fell fighting for their country (6.662; cf. 645–47). The only character whose song is extensively reported in the poem, the bard Iopas, is heartily applauded by both Carthaginians and Trojans, though it may be, as Hine suggests, that Virgil's phrasing in 1.747 (*ingeminant plausu Tyrii, Troesque sequuntur*) hints at slightly less enthusiasm on the part of the latter.

[53] See, e.g., Cic. *Tusc.* 1.1–5, *Brut.* 254–55, *Leg.* 1.5–7, *Cael.* 40–41, *Verr.* 2.4.132; cf. also Cato Maior *ap.* Plin. *Nat.* 29.13–14; Sal. *Cat.* 8; see further Gruen 223–71, Wardman 1–24.

[54] Hine 182; cf. also Johnson 99–114 and Bartsch.

Cycnus is described in 10.191 as, like Orpheus,[55] seeking consolation in song for the loss of a loved one. A less optimistic image of the power of poetry is presented in 9.774–77, where Cretheus, "beloved of the Muses," is slain by Turnus.[56] Cretheus, whose favorite subjects include *arma virum*, seems to function, again rather like Orpheus, as an avatar of the poet: his summary despatch is reminiscent of Moeris' gloomy sentiment at *Ecl.* 9.11–13 *carmina tantum / nostra valent ... tela inter Martia, quantum / Chaonias dicunt aquila veniente columbas.* Another minor character who may be relevant here is Messapus—claimed as an ancestor, Servius tells us, by the poet Ennius—whose followers march to battle singing like swans. Like Cretheus, he is mercilessly slain (by Nisus and Euryalus: 9.351–65), but his memory is preserved, along with that of his killers, by the poetic heir of his distant descendant.[57] The dangerous seductiveness of song, finally, is represented by Circe, who sings at her loom amidst the growls of the unwary victims whom she has transformed into wild beasts (7.10–20).[58]

The connection between art, memory, and consolation is implicitly explored in two passages in Book 1. The scenes from the Trojan War depicted on Dido's temple move Aeneas to wonder (1.456 *miratur*; cf. 1.494 *miranda videntur*), as well as tears. The famous, and somewhat cryptic, apophthegm *sunt lacrimae rerum* here seems not only to express the pain of human life, but also the consolation of sharing that pain with others through the medium of art.[59] The idea that "recollection in tranquillity" may even be a source of

[55] Compare *maestum Musa solatur amorem* with *G.* 4.464 *solans aegrum testudine amorem.*

[56] Cf. Hine 182.

[57] On Messapus and Cycnus see further the brilliant recent article by Martha Malamud, whose argument is too complex and subtle to summarize in full here.

[58] For the role of Circe in Book 7 as an emblem of *furor* see Gale 1997 with further bibliography at n. 17.

[59] The same idea is perhaps hinted at in the ecphrasis of the temple doors at the beginning of Book 6, though it is more difficult in this instance to know exactly what to make of the episode, given that neither Aeneas' reaction to the reliefs nor Daedalus' purpose in sculpting them is explicitly described. Virgil's selective account of the story of the Minotaur and Daedalus' flight from Crete, as depicted on the doors, emphasizes Daedalus' feelings of pity for Ariadne and grief for his son. There are strong parallels with Aeneas' similar feelings for Dido and Anchises, described later in the book (compare 6.32–33 *bis conatus … bis … cecidere manus* with 6.700–701 *ter conatus … ter… manus effugit imago*, and 6.28 *magnum reginae … miseratus amorem* with 6.475–76 *casu percussus iniquo … miseratur*), and these echoes might suggest a retrospective interpretation of the ecphrasis as strongly focalized through Aeneas' eyes (the reading of the story as a tale of pity and grief would then be the hero's own, and would indicate a sense on his part of empathy with the artist). The Sibyl's brisk summons in 6.37–39 (*non hoc ista sibi tempus spectacula*

pleasure has already been put forward by Aeneas earlier in the book, when attempting to encourage his followers after the storm that wrecked several of their ships and washed them up on the unknown shores of North Africa. "One day, perhaps," he tells them, "it will be a pleasure to remember even these trials" (1.203). The two episodes together may suggest the enduring paradox (hinted at already in the *Odyssey*)[60] that narratives of pain and misery can bring pleasure to an audience. The same idea is represented on a larger scale by Aeneas' narrative of his adventures in Books 2 and 3: while the hero himself finds the memory of his trials intensely painful (2.3–13), his audience are rapt (2.1 *intenti*, 3.716 *intentis*); Dido herself is spellbound by his words, and demands to hear the story again and again (4.77–79).

The preservation of the past in the form of poetry or visual art may, then, give pleasure and consolation: the agonies of the past become meaningful when presented to the reader or viewer in artistic form. Elsewhere in the poem, it is hinted that narratives of past events can also teach lessons relevant to the present and future. Most notably, Evander's story in Book 8 of Hercules and Cacus (8.185–275) and his brief prehistory of Italy (8.314–36) clearly have implications both for Aeneas' present situation and for the distant future of Augustus and the poem's original audience. History repeats itself: Hercules is a type for both Aeneas and Augustus, and Evander's narrative could even be seen as a kind of *mise en abyme*: just as the Hercules/Cacus conflict repeats itself within the poem, so the events of the poem repeat themselves in the contemporary world of Virgil and his original audience, with Augustus "replaying" the role of Aeneas.[61]

In the *Aeneid*, as in the *Georgics*, then, the poet seems to hint at different ways of understanding the value and nature of poetry (and the visual arts) and different models for the relationship between poet and statesman in different parts of the poem. Anchises' dismissive attitude must be weighed against the recurrent notion that poetry can not only bring consolation and pleasure,

poscit …) might also be taken to anticipate the deep antagonism between the world of art and the world of action posited explicitly in Anchises' speech later in the book. For a slightly different interpretation of Daedalus' role as artist and his relationship with Aeneas see W. Fitzgerald; on the ecphrasis see also Pöschl, Dubois 35–41, Putnam 1998: 75–96 (= Putnam 1987), Bartsch.

[60] *Od.* 15.399–400; cf. also 8.90–92, 9.1–15, and 23.301–8, Gorg. *Helen* 9–10, Pl. *Rep.* 605c–606b, Cic. *Fam.* 5.12.4–5; Macleod 3–8.

[61] On typology in the *Aeneid* see especially Thompson 151–52 and Gransden 14–20 (but cf. also Griffin 183–97). On Hercules as a type of Aeneas and Augustus see Galinsky 1966, Gransden 17–20, Hardie 1993: 66–67.

but also, by preserving the memory of the past, help us to make sense of the present. The poet is both powerless in the face of physical violence and possessed of a magical art like that of Circe (or Orpheus). Furthermore, as we shall see, the notion that the poet's backward glance enables him to transcend death itself, by immortalizing his own name and those of his subjects, recurs in the *Aeneid*, and serves at least partly to counterbalance the emphasis on the artist's vulnerability both to his own passions and to those who would silence his voice.

A final episode that brings together the backward glance motif with the themes of poetry and the preservation of memory is the night expedition of Nisus and Euryalus in *Aeneid* 9. It is clear from the range of critical reactions to the deaths of these two characters, which seem both tragic and peculiarly pointless, that this part of the poem is exceptionally difficult to interpret.[62] Should we read the Nisus and Euryalus story as a celebration of homosexual love or friendship, and a condemnation of the futility of war? Or should we assume that the young warriors, thanks to their blood-lust and greed for spoils, bear the responsibility for their own deaths? Is Nisus' romantic self-sacrifice to be seen as an admirable act of devotion to his beloved, as a futile gesture, or even as a culpable privileging of personal ties over public duty? The mission is, after all, a failure: potential disaster is averted only by the metamorphosis of the Trojan ships, which, in their new form as sea-nymphs, bring warning to Aeneas of the Latin siege.

The difficulty of the episode stems in large part from the conflicting implications of the inter- and intratextual echoes that permeate it, pointing the reader to such disparate models as the Homeric *Doloneia*, Euripides' *Rhesus*, and the poems of Catullus.[63] From our point of view, parallels with Aeneas' flight from Troy in Book 2, and, again, with Orpheus will be particularly significant. Nisus, like Aeneas, has almost reached safety when he realizes that Euryalus is no longer with him. Like Orpheus, he stops and looks back (9.386–89):

> Nisus abit; *iamque* imprudens *evaserat* hostis
> atque locos qui post Albae de nomine dicti
> Albani (tum rex stabula alta Latinus habebat),
> *ut* stetit et frustra absentem *respexit* amicum.

[62] For a range of views see, e.g., Duckworth, G. J. Fitzgerald, Lennox, Boyle 1986: 89–92 and 120–21, Makowski, Farron 2–30 and 155–64. Pavlock, Hardie 1994: 23–34, and Fowler 2000 offer more nuanced readings, which emphasize the complexity of the authorial judgement suggested by the epitaph and the episode as a whole.

[63] On these intertexts see especially Johnson 59–66 and Pavlock. On Catullan echoes in *Aeneid* 2 and 9 cf. also Petrini 40–47.

> Nisus was clear away; and now, with no other thought in his mind, he had evaded the enemy and come through the region later called Alban, after Alba Longa (at that time King Latinus had his tall cattle-pens there), when he stopped, and looked back in vain for his missing friend.

Rather than abandon his beloved comrade, Nisus retraces his steps, and the pair perish together. There are strong verbal echoes here of the key passages from *Georgics* 4 and *Aeneid* 2 quoted above,[64] which serve, once again, to underline contrasts as well as similarities in the three heroes' behavior. Whereas Aeneas was persuaded to leave Troy, Nisus sacrifices his mission and dies for nothing. Once again, looking back proves futile and potentially disastrous. And yet, rather than condemn Nisus' pointless self-sacrifice, the narrator intervenes to pronounce a surprisingly positive epitaph, and he promises to ensure that both heroes will be remembered as long as Rome's dominion lasts (9.446–49):

> Fortunati ambo! si quid mea carmina possunt,
> nulla dies umquam memori vos eximet aevo,
> dum domus Aeneae Capitoli immobile saxum
> accolet imperiumque pater Romanus habebit.
>
> Fortunate pair! If my songs have any power, no day will ever wipe away your memory from time's keeping, so long as the house of Aeneas dwells on the Capitol's immovable rock and a Roman elder still holds power.

Again the backward glance is indirectly linked with the poet's memorialization of the past, but this time it appears not only to be accorded positive value, but to be connected, as in the proem to *Georgics* 3, with the imperial rule of Rome herself.

The ambiguities surrounding Nisus and Euryalus thus strongly resemble those surrounding Orpheus. Like Aeneas' dilemma in Book 2, the choice of Nisus—should he go on and complete his mission, or should he turn back for Euryalus?—pits him between the ideal of dutiful obedience embodied in Aristaeus and the wilful passion of Orpheus. Like Orpheus, Nisus succumbs to passion and goes back. The ultimate result is that both he and his beloved perish, yet earn immortal fame. Whereas in the proem to *Georgics* 3 it is the statesman, Octavian, whose glory will be carried forward into the future, here it is the *lover*, Nisus, whose death will bring him glory destined to last as long as that of Rome. Though the parallel between poet and lover is less overt in this instance than in the earlier poem (where Orpheus combines the two roles), the narrator's direct intervention at this point in the narrative suggests a strong element of empathy or even identification with his hero.

[64] For further parallels, in addition to those highlighted above, see Hardie 1994: 26–27.

The Nisus and Euryalus story, then, seems to blur the simple opposition I posited in connection with the development of Aeneas' character, between looking back and looking forward, between the ties of blood and affection and the ties of impersonal duty to the state, or Fate, or the future. Nisus seems to straddle the gap between the backward-looking poet and the forward-looking hero or statesman, his story at once confirms and undercuts the negative value assigned elsewhere in the *Aeneid* to the backward look. We might see him, like Orpheus, as a sympathetic failure, who is both the victim of his own *furor* and yet able to transcend, through the emotive power of poetry, the finality of death.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

Both the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid*, I have argued, display a highly ambivalent set of attitudes toward poetry and the memory of the past, and to the relationship between poet and statesman. The "open" ending of the *Georgics* acts as focus for a set of unresolved tensions that run through the poem and recur in the later epic. Octavian is presented here as an active, forward-looking figure, the poet as isolated, inactive, and backward-looking. How are we to evaluate their respective qualities, and to understand the relationship between them?

The motif of the backward glance, which unites Orpheus, the Virgil of the *sphragis*, Aeneas, and Nisus, suggests one way of answering these questions. The motif seems essentially to convey the idea that excessive attachment to the past is dangerous and sterile: Orpheus and Nisus die because they look back, Aeneas is ultimately compelled to turn around and face the future. On the other hand, the *poet's* backward glance has more complex associations: the importance of aetiology and typology in the two poems, as well as the explicit suggestion that poetry and the other arts can bring pleasure and consolation, implies that remembering the past may be important, even essential, if we are to understand our present. Furthermore, the end of the Orpheus story, the juxtaposition of poet and statesman in the *sphragis*, and the epitaph for Nisus and Euryalus all suggest more or less explicitly that the poet alone can ensure the immortality of his subjects. If we want to reconcile these two perspectives, we could say that Virgil's ideal is to strike a balance between the preservation of memory and a readiness to let go and forget the past. Yet the complexity of the various passages in which these themes are developed seems to suggest a rather less tidy picture. *Both* remembering the past *and* forgetting the past are important; the poet's function is both complementary and antagonistic to that of the statesman.

The backward look also suggests strong or even excessive attachment to an individual, in contrast to impersonal duty or the future. Here, its value its

perhaps still more ambiguous. We have seen that both Orpheus and Nisus are presented as sympathetic if not heroic characters, whose love inspires them to perform great and memorable, though ultimately futile acts; yet both the lover and the poet are associated with the forces of *furor*, as opposed to reason, self-control, and *pietas*. The connection between poetry and *furor* is explored most fully in the *Georgics*, though the precise role played by the poet in negotiating the polarities of reason and passion, violence and peace, remains problematic to the end of the poem. In the Aristaeus epyllion and again in the *Aeneid*, the backward look is connected both with the conflict between reason and passion (or *pietas* and *furor*) and with the unresolved issue of the relative importance of individual (Eurydice, Creusa, Euryalus) and state (the impersonal community of bees successfully resurrected by Aristaeus, the new city to be founded by Aeneas' descendants).[65]

The question, finally, of the power and the political function (or lack of it) assigned to poetry is handled differently in different parts of the two poems. The poet's *otium* in the *sphragis* of the *Georgics* can be linked either with the finale to Book 2, which seems to advance an ideal of quasi-Epicurean withdrawal and political disengagement, or with the proem to Book 3. In the former case, we might see Virgil as distancing himself from Octavian, or even criticizing the *princeps*' excessive ambition; in the latter, their activities might be seen as complementary (Octavian ensures the peace that makes *otium* possible; Virgil guarantees the *princeps*' immortality). Orpheus, as poet, is at once immensely powerful and defenceless in the face both of his own passion and of the physical violence that he suffers at the hands of the Bacchants; again, he immortalizes Eurydice, but otherwise puts his power to no practical end. In the *Aeneid*, the fate of the poet Cretheus suggests the powerlessness of Virgilian poetry, as against the explicit assertion in the epitaph for Nisus and Euryalus that the poet can confer immortality. Other references in the epic to poetry or the arts imply both that the poet has a positive function (whether interpretative or consolatory) to play in society, and that poetry is inferior to the arts of government, or even dangerously seductive. The poet, Virgil seems to imply, can be a powerful and independent voice, though whether this voice speaks for itself alone or for the good of society at large, whether it should be critical or supportive of the Augustan establishment, are issues never fully resolved in either poem. At the same time, the fates of Orpheus and Cretheus hint at the vulnerability of the artist. Virgil's own backward glance from the final line of the *Georgics* to the Tityrus of the *Eclogues*

[65] On the theme of individual versus community in the Aristaeus epyllion see further Gale 2000: 51–56. The classic discussion of the theme in the *Aeneid* is Parry.

leaves us with a tantalizing sense of ambivalent nostalgia. The almost Horatian mixture of relief and regret with which the poet looks back on his youthful *audacia* does nothing, finally, to resolve the problematic question of his public role. Is Tityrus to be regarded, in his pastoral *otium*, as an ideal or as a dead end? Like so much else in the *Georgics*, this is a question to which two different responses have been suggested, yet one that remains, finally, unanswered.

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