Hesiod's Ἐριτίς and Vergil's Labor in the Georgics

DISSERTATION

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ................................................................. ii

**VITA** ......................................................................................... iii

**INTRODUCTION** ......................................................................... 1

**CHAPTER**

| I. | Hesiod’s *Epis* And Vergil’s *Labor* | ......................................... 7 |
| II. | Liquid Imagery | ................................................. 90 |
| III. | Boundaries | ................................................. 138 |

**CONCLUSION** ............................................................................ 193

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** ......................................................................... 216
INTRODUCTION

Some years ago, in a seminar on the Georgics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, I realized that Vergil used the word labor to refer to more than just work, that the meaning of labor was bifurcate, and since this realization I have found no paucity of support from scholars. I have discovered, however, that the duality I found in labor differs from that of others on at least two basic points. First, labor means more than just work and (or) suffering; it represents the natural, yearly cycle of growth and decline as well as the variegated human response to that cycle. The second point is that in forming this duality for labor Vergil has adapted the two etyemes from the mythological complex of Hesiod’s Works and Days. Recognizing this we can not only uncover a Vergilian understanding of the interconnections of the Hesiodic myths but also discern some of the natural mechanisms that drive the Georgics’ world and the human reactions to them.
My argument begins by scrutinizing the two erides and their characteristics. We will find that one of them, the "good" eris, is ultimately recognizable as an expression of the need to work, which defines the state of existence in Zeus' new Iron Age. Likewise the other, "bad" eris ultimately expresses the vicissitudes of nature in response to the first eris. From there I proceed to a discussion of Vergil's creation of the similarly twofold labores, examination of which focuses on Book 1's theodicy. Vergil brackets this theodicy with allusions to telling passages from Works and Days in addition to marking it internally with the more conspicuous and famous references to such staple Hesiodic topics as the ease of life in days gone by and the hiding of fire. Once labor's basic duality--action and reaction--has been sketched out, I turn to a survey of labor in the poem, which explores the two facets of the word's use on a detailed or particularizing level so as to establish the presence of this duality throughout the four books.

The chapter concludes with an argument for reading the development of eris and labor as similarly structured, for both progress from need to excess. In the Golden Age there was no need for competition or strife, because everything desired was abundant and easily obtained. Upon the introduction of difficulty by Zeus or
Jove, that is to say of eris or labor, the farmer must struggle for survival and compete for limited resources. Goods become symbols of success, and the competition escalates to greed and violence and seizing the products of others’ work, that is to say it escalates to the other eris or labor. Thus we see how the one facet of eris or labor leads to the other and furthermore how work is not far from war; in fact they are both reflexes of the primary need to work, which truth Vergil highlights with the seeming duality of Mars. As god of war and of agriculture, he shows how the seeds of violence are available is the everyday struggle for a livelihood.

The next chapter treats Vergil’s use of liquid imagery to describe the natural cycle, the first labor. The cycle encompasses both growth and decay, construction and destruction, and we find not only that liquidity can represent both fertility and destruction, but that there is not always a clear distinction between the two in the Georgics. Indeed, values are not fixed but contextual in this world, and Vergil’s depiction of natural processes conforms to his assessment of them: words’ meanings change and evaluations of phenomena are seldom constant. Cyrene’s underwater realm shows us mythologically that liquids lie at the heart of nature, and while spring rain can embody mythical fecundity in the showers of pater Aether, it also brings
devastation in the storms of Jupiter. Farmers can be as gods eradicating pests or lowly earth-spawn under attack from the sky god.

In the final chapter I turn to the farmer’s efforts to direct his and nature’s energies to goals of his choosing. This entails a treatment of all sorts of boundaries, from animal pens to the cohesiveness of dirt clods. The farmer’s control of these boundaries determines his success or failure in securing a livelihood. As Deucalions introduced new (renewed) shape and variety to a shapeless, post-diluvian world, so the farmer must work with both form and formlessness—expressions of the natural cycle as discussed in Chapter 2. He must delimit his endeavor to manageable proportions and then manipulate the natural cycle within the bounds he set. He must evoke in a bounded place the boundless fertility of non-structure in a way that enhances the natural transition of that non-structure to structure. If he manages successfully to set boundaries on the natural cycle’s liquid potential, he will accomplish his goal and feed his family; we will find that the bugonia of Book 4 provides a paradigm for this method of containing liquids and extracting structure from them. Here we will see how the farmer must manipulate chaos as well as order—polar phases of the natural cycle—in order to gain his chosen
end. Success is not guaranteed, however, and when the boundaries he maintains are penetrated unwantedly, he meets with failure—often in liquid form, again as we have seen previously. Perhaps a storm will cross the termini of his field and devastate his crop, or, as in the grim finale of Book 3, a plague will find its way into his flock and even into individual bodies and destroy them with virulent liquid rot. This is the way of things in Jupiter’s new order.

We will see, then, how Vergil has synthesized Hesiod’s myths to argue directly that the state of Iron-Age existence naturally brings about human aggressiveness. This is expressed most basically in the martial struggle with the soil, which uncovers the inherent belligerence of the Roman farmer-soldier. This strife has moral implications, and farming provides a critique of aggressive greed and praise of contentment and restraint. We will also see how liquid imagery describes the fluctuating natural cycle, and Vergil’s treatment itself will betray a similar un-fixedness as his terms require constant reassessment by the reader; evaluations of things and the meanings of the words used to describe them change along with what they describe. Nothing grows without liquid, but when something dies or is destroyed, that is liquid, too, and this in turn feeds the cycle of growth once more. This is the process that the
farmer tries to control and contain.
CHAPTER I

Hesiod’s ‘Era and Vergil’s Labor

I

That Vergil looked to Hesiod in composing the Georgics, especially its first book, is unmistakable and thus a point of agreement among scholars. Vergil himself states, “Ascraeumque cano Romana per oppida carmen” (G. 2.176). The reference to Hesiod’s home, Ascra,¹ is but one signpost to the Georgics’ obvious generic affiliation with the Works and Days as a didactic poem ostensibly dealing with agriculture.² Other, conspicuous allusions are


² Joseph Farrell explains in the second chapter of Vergil’s Georgics and the Traditions of Ancient Epic (Oxford 1991) that the reference is, in fact, to two “Hesiods”, the poet of the Works and Days as well as the symbolic, Alexandrian Hesiod of the Callimachean school of poetry. Henceforth Farrell.
regularly cited as for example the construction of the plow (1.169ff.) from *WD* 427ff., the admonition to plow nude and to sow nude (1.299) from *WD* 391-2, and the claim that *uere sereno i tum pingues aghi et tum mollissima uina* (1.340-1), which recalls Hesiod’s *τήμος πισταται π’ αἵγης καὶ αἵνας ἠμέρως* (*WD* 585) even in word-order and choice in the first half of line 341.

Scholarly opinion varies, however, on the depth and extent of Vergil’s indebtedness to Hesiod. In 1930 Bayet proposed that the *Georgics* were originally restricted to the material of the *Works and Days* and that Book 1 of our poem represents this initial work. Wilkinson, while conceding that the bulk of the specific allusions to Hesiod occur in Book 1, submits that there is evidence for a later date of composition for this book than Bayet claims. In his section on

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Hesiod Wilkinson asserts Vergil's motivation for georgic poetry: "having succeeded in becoming the Roman Theocritus, Virgil aspired to be the Roman Hesiod...partly because Lucretius had shown how great a didactic poem could be as poetry, and partly because Hesiod, so much admired by the Alexandrians of the third century, interested the neo-Callimachean poets of the neoteric movement and yet had not been appropriated." He does not believe, however, that Hesiod provides the primary impetus throughout, as his comment on 2.176 implies: "Virgil is singing a didactic poem which retains throughout something of the Hesiodic spirit;" He notes that Vergil's *quo sidere terram uertere* begins the poem by recalling *WD* 383, the opening of Hesiod's section on agriculture, since both utilize constellations to set proper times; he goes on to discuss the superficial level at which Vergil played with Latinizing Hesiodic phrases, how Vergil wished to "work in enough Hesiodic matter to recall the original," and how "his treatment (of the *Days*) is so perfunctory, that it is clear that he attached no importance to the...

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1 Wilkinson (1969) 56.

subject except as a reminder of Hesiod." He feels that Hesiod's importance was a general one; urging an individual farmer to honest toil was "fundamental to the poem," and the *Works and Days* showed Vergil "that a didactic treatise could be a vehicle for moral, religious, and philosophic ideas." So for Wilkinson the *Works and Days* represent not so much a model for the *Georgics* as an inspiration, a portal to a greater vision.

Of the earlier English commentators, Page and Conington treat the *Works and Days* as agriculturally didactic and give explanations of the origin and purpose of didactic poetry in an era when writing is unknown or seldom used. Page claims that "The 'Works and Days' is a genuinely 'didactic' poem" greatly separated from the *Georgics*' elaborate art, and Conington says likewise, "It may be seen how far removed it [i.e. Hesiod's poem] stands in its rude simplicity from the pomp and circumstance of later didactic poetry...its relation as a whole to the Georgics must still be regarded as one of contrast rather

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10 Page xvii–xix: "Instruction in verse is more easily remembered and less liable to alteration."
11 Page xviii.
than of similarity." But if Page recognizes Vergil’s formal debt to Hesiod, he still feels that “The inspiration of the Georgics was drawn from Lucretius; their professed model was Hesiod,” while Conington believes that the “pervading philosophy...of the Works and Days (is) the philosophy of labour,” which in turn is “the animating soul of the Georgics.” Yet his sense that the poem is tightly bound to its supposed origins in the actual transfer of precepts from one illiterate subsistence-farmer to the next causes him to overlook the obvious. Of the 828 lines in the Works and Days, only 235 (lines 383 to 617 = 28%) deal with agriculture, and the extensive digressions into myth certainly point to more than a passing interest in typically ‘poetic’ concerns, which suggest a smaller distance between the Works and Days and the Georgics than he admits. Neither commentator goes far beyond citing the Hesiodic loci in their notes, and Conington anticipates Wilkinson’s views by suggesting at the end of the introduction to Hesiod that the passage on lucky and unlucky days

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12 Conington 138.

13 Page xx-xxi and also ix, “Vergil in his Eclogues professedly imitates Theocritus, in his Georgics Hesiod, and in the Aeneid Homer.”

14 Conington 138.

15 Indeed Hesiod himself distinguishes the value of poetry. (γλαύωμα ἐν ἀληθινῷ πλῆθῷ ἐξ ὑμῖν κατὰ μέτρον θέουσιν (ΜΩ 720).
was included solely in deference to Hesiod's example and that the
Hesiodic material in the Georgics is necessarily confined "almost
entirely" to the first two-thirds of book one.14

Brooks Otis may recognize this two-thirds division, but he sees it
as a purposeful structural division that consciously leads to the
book's climax and thus Vergil's use of Hesiod becomes something
more than perfunctory.17 In fact, he feels that "it is quite clear that
Vergil was really going back to Hesiod...for a model and that he was
most heavily influenced by the didactic of Lucretius...In other words:
he has something to say and summons the seriousness of Hesiod and
Lucretius in order to say it."18 But for Otis the substance of Hesiod
seems secondary to the pieces Vergil could cull from him to forward
"symbolic meaning of the poem,"19 which is perhaps only tangential
to the meaning of Hesiod's poem.

R. A. B. Mynors' erudite commentary unfortunately does not
contain a formal introduction wherein one might have found

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14 Conington 139-40.
18 Brooks Otis, "Virgil: A Study in Civilized Poetry" (Oxford 1964)
19 Otis (1972) 42 (and passim).
valuable insights into Vergil's use of his sources. Nisbet's preface, however, provides an illustrative quotation from Mynors' drafts: "All his material, things read, things seen, things felt, goes into the cauldron of his mind, perhaps below the level of consciousness; and thence it emerges as the spirit wills, sometimes just as it went in, sometimes combined and changed beyond recognition." The reader must cull further information from the learned and, indeed, copious notes, but there is little analysis of Hesiodic sources. He feels that Vergil was compelled to treat Hesiodic material at 1.118-59 and says, "This V. could not omit here, because the declension of Man through the 'ages' from gold to iron was famous in Hesiod, op. 106-201..." and at 1.169-75 he notes, "The plough in Hesiod (op. 427-36) was well known, and an 'Asraean' poem might be expected to provide something of the sort," but beyond this his comments are meager. Thomas, in his commentary, is wholly on the side of the Callimachean Hesiod. "Hesiod is more of a notional model, important for Virgil because of his importance to the Alexandrians" and reference to Hesiod is limited to "minor reminiscence."\(^\text{10}\)

\(^{10}\) Mynors vi.

\(^{11}\) Thomas (1988), introduction p. 6.
Dorothea Wender has suggested in a recent article⁵² that Vergil's uneven distribution of sources in the Georgics' four books discloses an intentional progression from Hesiod to Lucretius to Homer. In this scheme Hesiodic allusions, concentrated in book 1 as we have noted, represent the "peasant...the grim superstitious Greek tradition, pessimistically rooted in the past" from which farmers (and readers of the Georgics) make the necessary transition to the "scientist...to forward-looking, rational, clear-thinking Roman practicality" as exemplified in Lucretian allusions, concentrated in books 2 and 3.⁵³ After experiencing the "darker side of Lucretius" in book 3, where we see Homeric influence increase, Homeric references dominate in book 4.⁵⁴ These signal a move away from a too passive and too pessimistic Epicureanism and a return to a more old-fashioned toughness and simplicity, but "not to the grim personal view of the peasant Hesiod; it is to the bright, tough-minded impersonal one of the more aristocratic Homer."⁵⁵ Wender's conclusions lack


⁵³ Wender 62.

⁵⁴ Wender 63.

⁵⁵ Wender 63-4.
unshakable support, but we see here a recognition of Vergil's use of Hesiod to develop large-scale thematic movements in the poem beyond the occasional line or panel used to invoke the ambience of the didactic tradition in poetry or simply as a source for a motif. She investigates, albeit briefly, how and to what end Vergil uses or does not use Hesiod in particular as a source.

A larger study that examines Hesiodic influence on the Georgics, and on Vergil's poetry in general, is Patricia A. Johnston's Vergil's Agricultural Golden Age. In this monograph she traces the motif of the Golden Age and the (declining) ages of humanity from their origins in Hesiod, through such intermediaries as Theognis, Empedocles, Aratus, Lucretius, and Catullus, to Vergil. Her concern is to show how Vergil modifies his received tradition from one of inevitable, linear human decline to a non-determined, cyclical fluctuation that allows for a recurrence of the Golden Age. Vergil accomplishes this, she says, by manipulating the myth's chronology, its rulers' characters, and the characters of the races themselves. For

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3. She asks "And why should Hesiod not contribute any ideas or turns of phrase to the discussion of bees or the lists of nymphs, or the various parts of the work in which rivers are described, or the section on sheep? (61)"

example, in *Eclogue* 6 Pyrrha’s (and thus Deucalion’s) stones precede the *Saturnia regna* (l. 41), and they precede the theft of Prometheus (l. 42), while in Hesiod, on the other hand, the sequence is the reverse and Deucalion is the son of Prometheus. Elsewhere Vergil merges the ancient Roman agricultural deity, Saturnus, with the Greek Kronos, who ruled during Hesiod’s golden age; the result is an agricultural golden age presided over by Saturnus. This borrows from Aratus, as well, who, in a conflation of Hesiod’s Golden Age and his state of just men, presents Dike as a farmer who provides all human needs in the *Golden Age* (*Phaen.* 112-3):

*άλλα βόες καὶ δρομὲς καὶ αὐτή, ποίησα λαῆν, μνῆμα πάντα παρέξε χίλια, διότερα δικαιω*.

In sum, the “current consensus...is that Vergil’s source is the myth of the ages found in Hesiod and the tradition that developed from Hesiod.”

Having established the sources and tradition, Johnston works mainly within the Vergilian corpus in the second part of the monograph, where she traces the Golden-Age motif from the *Eclogues* onward. She believes that Vergil “rejects the connotations which Hesiod’s metallic myth had assigned to these metals, and

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*Johnston 15.*
instead establishes morally neutral connotations for them. This is particularly true of iron and gold..." and notes "ferrum is used most frequently in the Georgics to denote the tool used by the farmer." She feels that the version of the Golden Age in the Georgics was harmful for men, and that "when used in an agricultural context... iron acquires a completely neutral connotation. Iron tools are useful implements which aid the farmer in achieving his goal." Her arguments, however, lead one to the conclusion that she does, in fact, find a scheme of valuation for the metals in Vergil. She goes on to examine the golden nature of the bees and their relationship to the Golden Age in light of their pursuit of labor, as opposed to the workless state of men in the former Golden Age, which returns her to her proposition of a golden age through agriculture, which earlier she had connected to Hesiod's state of just men, who practiced farming.

Her thesis that the Golden Age can recur and that labor has become not a symbol of the loss of the Golden Age but a means to

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" Johnston 60.
" Johnston 58.
" G. 1.121ff.
" Johnston 61.
" MD 275ff.
recapture it compels her to overlook or downplay negative aspects of the farmer and his war on nature. Joseph Fontenrose, in contrast, argues against there being human decline in Hesiod's Myth of Ages in the first place. Instead he urges a synchronous understanding of the myth as a paradigm or exemplum merely presented diachronically—the qualities of the ages, he says, can be found in various people at any time. Nevertheless, Johnston’s examination of the topos of the Golden Age is a useful tool in assessing the Georgics, and again it demonstrates, as did Wender’s article, a recognition of Vergil’s use of Hesiod on the thematic level rather than merely on a formal level.

Heinrich Altevogt, in his study of labor improbus, also views Works and Days as Vergil’s source for the myth of the Golden Age: “Dami sind die vielfältigen Erscheinungsformen des Unheils, das sich im eisernen Zeitalter ausbreitete, auf ein Schema gebracht, das in

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54 Joseph Fontenrose, “Work, Justice, and Hesiod’s Five Ages,” CP 69 (1974): 1-16. For instance: “The second, third, and fourth genes are not descendants of the previous genes; his sequence does not plainly show a progressive degeneration of mankind’s morals and conditions of life from one age to the next” (p. 4). “Hesiod, however, did not interpret the successive ages as a sequence of degeneration...But if one reads Hesiod’s lines carefully, he will see no decline aside from the contrast between the golden age and the later ages” (p. 8). “There is little to choose among the three: the iron age is only different in its emphasis from the silver and bronze, hardly worse than they” (p. 11). Henceforth Fontenrose.

Hesiod's Erga, dem erklärten Vorbild Vergils, die berühmte Schilderung der Segnungen des goldenen Zeitalters regelt. He goes further to say that this model has basic implications for our reading of Vergil's poem: "Des hesiodischen Gedankens, daß sorgende Mächte das Glück der schöneren Vergangenheit in dieser harten Welt zu erneuern vermögen, werden wir uns noch erinnern, sobald klar geworden ist, was die vergilische Erzählung im Zusammenhang der Vorschriften bedeutet." Ultimately we see that this is nothing less than the farmer's role: "Indem also der Bauer in unablängiger Mühsal seine Pflanzen schütz und nährt, stellt er durch seine Pflege den einst gottgeschenkten Frieden und die einst gottgeschenkte Fülle des goldenen Zeitalters in der kleinen Welt wieder her." Yet even though he and Johnston agree that the farmer's work provides humans some recourse to the loss of the Golden Age, his understanding of labor itself is at severe odds with Johnston's. Labor, he says, is not work but difficulty, a significant point to which we will return momentarily.

*Altevogt 12; he then quotes 10 112ff.
*Altevogt 13.
*Altevogt 29.
Joseph Farrell, however, provides us with a sweeping treatment of Vergil’s use of Hesiod in the previously noted *Vergil’s Georgics* and the *Traditions of Ancient Epic*. In arguing that Vergil was weaving a statement of generic affinity among seemingly different exemplars of the ancient epic tradition, such as Hesiod and Homer, he spends a great amount of time investigating the ways in which *Works and Days* influenced the *Georgics*. For example he describes the two aspects of Hesiod, the poet of the *Works and Days* and the Alexandrian symbol, the structural and thematic correspondence of *Georgic* 1 to Hesiod’s poem, and how Vergil marks the formal close of the Hesiodic allusive program at 2.176, *Ascraeum carmen*, but continues conspicuous references to *Works and Days* even in the close of Book 2.39

I would suggest a significant thematic borrowing by Vergil from the *Works and Days* beyond what Farrell has included in his discussion, that of ἔρας. In a famous passage Hesiod lays out the origins of strife in the world:

Oδι εν χρόνον ἤν ἔρεμων γένος, ἃδι καὶ γαῖαν ἔλει ἄν, τίν πείνεσθε νόμοις, ἥ ἢ ἐπιμυκτὴ διὸ καὶ δάκτυλοι θυμῶν καί, ἢ μέν γὰρ πόλεμόν τε κακὸν καὶ δίκαιαν διάλεγεν, ῥειμέλιον ὡς τοῖς τῆς γε φιλέτρον, ἄλλο ὡς διάγεσθαι 15 ἰθανάτων βουλήσαν "Εραν τιμᾶτο βαρβαρίαν, τίν θεά ευρέον προτέραν μὲν ζεύγεσιν Νόες ἱπεφθενη."
There are two types of *eris*, one described as praiseworthy and the other as blameworthy. Night bore both but the place of honor as firstborn falls to the praiseworthy *eris*, whose associations are with the earth where Zeus--labeled son of Kronos as a reminder of his usurpation--placed her, and from the earth she urges men to work by arousing competition. The other, blameworthy *eris* is associated with and cultivates war, and men honor it because the gods force them to do so for reasons unstated.

If we recall Johnston’s characterization of Hesiod’s Golden Age and its features, we find that it was free from work: “At the heart of the metallic myth of the golden age is an attitude which places a high value upon freedom from toil and, conversely, which regards toil, particularly agricultural toil, as an inevitable burden for the human race.”\(^{40}\) We note as well that the Golden Age, and indeed the Silver Age, were free from war, for the men of those ages died as if overcome by sleep (δυνάσκον οὐς θάνατον δεξιάπέρον, 116) or at Zeus’ hands (Zeús, ξέρωμε, 138), which is in clear contrast with the race of bronze (οίσιν Ἀρεόπολις ἐρείπον, 145-6; τείροντι ύπο οφειρόθαι δαμέστε, 32. Johnston 62.
152). These folk plainly enjoyed carefree hearts (ἀνήθε τῇ μῶν 112).

When, therefore, we consider the character of the Golden Age as Hesiod portrays it in the Myth of Ages and, indirectly in the alternative aetiological myth of Prometheus and Pandora, the introduction of εἰρις to the world takes on a special significance. For in this myth, the son of the Golden-Age ruler Kronos (Κρονίαν, 18) has introduced those very elements—war and work—that signal or even cause the end of the Golden Age41 and thus has incorporated εἰρις into a multi-part aetiology of the world’s present (Iron-Age) condition. Strictly speaking, of course, praiseworthy Εἰρις rouses humans to work (ἐν ζυγῷ, 20) by creating jealousy (or perhaps emulation), rivalry, and a hunger for wealth (21-26). That, however, does not in any way obscure the thematic continuity among the Myth of Ages, the myth of Prometheus and Pandora, and tale of εἰρις.42 Hesiod has made εἰρις an integral part of the fabric of the world that requires work to live; this is a time of seasons and the natural cycle, and this, as we saw, is as antithetical to the static bounty of the Golden Age as

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41 Fontenrose p. 6, "When Zeus came to power he brought the golden age to an end, as [WD 121-23] surely imply."

42 Farrell adds δίκη to the list and goes on to say, "Through this succession of myths Hesiod develops at great length the idea that work is humankind’s most authentic response to and participation in the cosmic forces that shape his world" (p. 143).
war, for which other aspect of eris as well Zeus bears responsibility.

In the absence of an explanation for its arrival, we must assume that Zeus has introduced the blameworthy eris to the world along with her sister or, at the very least, that she accompanies Zeus' rule. After stating that there are two types of eris on earth Hesiod relates their birth-order by reference to only the second-mentioned of the two, the firstborn; the reader must apply that information retrospectively to incorporate the other eris into the genealogy. This blueprint suggests an account for the presence of blameworthy Eris in human life as well. As children of Night, the Erîdes are of a generation prior to Zeus—they are of Kronos' generation. Yet they did not affect human life at first, for both work and war were absent from the Golden Age of Kronos, so although they preexisted Zeus, they did not burden human life until Zeus' rule. We are told explicitly that at that time Zeus introduced the one, and so, as the other could hardly have intruded against Zeus' wishes, by action or at the least by acquiescence Zeus has become responsible for the presence of the war-eris in human life also. Lines 15-16 imply as much, for we find divine sanction or even patronage for blameworthy Eris: men honor it under divine compulsion (ὅν ἀνέχειν θανάτων βουλήν).
It is worth recognizing the relationship of this story of *eris* to the motif of the Golden Age in order to shed light on Vergil's use of the passage in his own theodicy (*G. 1.121ff.*: *pater ipse coledi...*), where he, too, sketches out the circumstances of the habits and realities of Jupiter's age as they supplant those of Saturn's. The effects of Jupiter's ending the Golden Age form the major theme of the *Georgics*, that life is struggle, so recognizing the connection of that theme to Hesiod's *eris* will provide some insight into the *Georgics*.

Let us turn now to the Vergilian theodicy to examine its relationship to the *Works and Days* and the *eris*-section in particular. In the three and one-half lines that precede the theodicy Vergil introduces the possibility that, despite the farmer's efforts to the contrary, he could still meet with failure.

Nec tamen, haec cum sint hominumque bounque labores uersando terram experti, nihil improbus anser Strymoniaque grus et amaris intiba fbris officiunt aut umbra nocet.

We find an allusion to *WD. 46* (*ιγγα βούν* in line 118, *boumque*)

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"Thoman (1984) ed 1.118-46, "The spontaneously beneficent world of the Fourth Elogium has gone, replaced by the reality of toil and by the possibility of failure, and it is that reality which concerns Virgil throughout the *Georgics."

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labores, which the commentators regularly note. The context of the reference requires more attention, however, for it comes from one of the Works and Days’ theodicy-myths, the Prometheus-Pandora myth:

Within this piece of his theodicy Hesiod has placed a glimpse at the world as it would be had the gods (Zeus in particular) not chosen to change it, and within this glimpse lie the ἔργα ἑων. Both the Georgic and Hesiodic passages refer to the ruin of the bulls’ work, but in the Works and Days their lost labor would result from its being unnecessary in the felicity of a golden age. Vergil inverts this by making the bulls’ labor fail due to the injurious actions of Iron-Age pests. Not only does Vergil make their labor necessary, as the preceding 75 lines make clear, but potentially fruitless as well. So while Vergil zerts his audience to his theodicy by reference to Hesiod’s, he simultaneously colors it by turning the image of

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41 In addition, the hominumque...labores may recall the Homeric ἔργα ἑων. See Thomas (1988) ad 1.118.
Golden-Age ease to one of Iron-Age frustration.

It is worth noting the balance that this theodicy-passage attains by concluding with an allusion to Hesiod as well. Commentators remark on the section's symmetry: "The paragraph is framed with care. In 119-21, birds, weeds, shade are the trouble; in 155-7 weeding, bird-scaring, leaf-stripping (frondatio) are the cure" (Mynors ad 118-59): "Virgil now returns to the problems mentioned in 119f. (weeds, birds, shade), thus symmetrically rounding off this section of the work" (Williams ad 155f.): "These threats are recapitulated from 119-21" (Thomas ad 155-7). Further, none miss the fact that 158 recalls WD 394-5 (μη γὰρ κατέληψεν πτώσεις ἔλοτρόνοις οἶκους καὶ μηδὲν ἀνάφοραν), but they do not note the further symmetry lent to the passage by its being flanked by allusions to Works and Days. While 118 was marked by an allusion to the Hesiodic account of the origins of Iron-Age difficulty, 158 alludes to the consequences of that Iron Age and the new requirement of work. More generally, the latter Works and Days passage is a pronouncement of the law

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I am treating 118-159 as a unit. Mynors, Ribbeck, and Conington print 1.118-59 as a single paragraph in their texts, while Williams and Thomas divide these lines into two paragraphs (118-46, 147-59). Mynors, F. Klingner, Vergilis Georgica (Zürich and Stuttgart 1943) 34ff. (Henceforth Klingner), and Wilkinson (1963, 1969) treat it as a single section in their discussions; the others discuss it in two parts. All of them but Conington, however, remark on the response of 119-21 and 155-7.
and thus Vergil concludes his account of the Iron Age's origins and presence with an exceptionally appropriate allusion to the state of Iron-Age existence in the *Works and Days*. We see, then, that Vergil has bounded his theodicy with references to Hesiod's discussions of the Iron Age--first its origins and then its realities. A look at *G. 1.159* will round out this picture.

Vergil concludes the passage with another, parallel line of difficulties for Hesiod's needy (and indolent) man, who will be forced to seek out acorns, and recourse to such fodder represents the man's desperation brought on by failure to work in the present time."

consequasse famem in siluis solabere quercu. 159

Formerly a symbol of pre-agricultural bounty, the decline of the acorns and arbutes in the sacred wood (148-9) had signaled the demise of the Golden Age. Acorns, "the traditional food of primitive

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17 WD 388-91:

οἵτινες τις θεῶν πέλται νόμοι, οἱ τ' ἔθνεσσι
έχθεσαν ναυμάκχου, ὁ τ' ἰδία ἐπιτεύκτην,
πέτυμα πνεύμων δέας ἑσπέρας, οἶνον χύον
νέοντος.

Farrell discusses this passage, but not this point, on p. 148.

18 Thomas (1988) comments ad 159, "not a happy fate in the age of Jupiter."
Man,“betoken a golden age for the “just state” in WD 232-3,30 οὐραν ο ἐ ἄρα / ἁρμί μὲν τε φέρει βαλάνους, μέση γὰρ μελίον. Here again Vergil has inverted an image of Golden-Age felicity, acorns as spontaneous produce, to mark a contrast to the Iron-Age present, acorns as a last resort. This suggests another example of responsion between the opening and closing of the theodicy, based this time on treatment of sources rather than on their content. Both in the reference to the ἄργα βοῶν (bouque labores, 18) and to the βαλάνους (concus saque quercu, 159) Vergil has chosen to invert Hesiod’s immediate Golden-Age context in order to highlight the theme of labor in the Iron Age.

Pater ipse colendi begins the theodicy proper (1.121),31 and so Jupiter impresses the reader first as the originator of the potentially unsuccessful agricultural system of labor from the preceding lines.

30 Mynors ad 148-9 points out Lucretius 6.965 for support and ad 159 notes WD 232-3; also Thomas (1988), “ glandes atque arbuta: the unappetizing pair recurs at 2.520, also with golden-age overtones.

31 Johnston demonstrates on pp. 20ff that this state enjoys a golden age.

31 Ipsi pater of Jupiter also at 1.328 and 353. Farrell notes that pater ipse here alludes to Zeus καὶ μετὰ in WD 143, and so (along with e.g. G 1.177-8 = WD 117-8) marks a distinct recollection specifically of the Hesiodic myth.
Indeed he does have intimate associations there, but we recognize that the syntax of _colendi_ expands with the addition of the following line (_haud facilem esse uiam uoluit_, 122); in addition to associating Jove with agricultural _labor_, _colendi_ functions as an appositive to _uiam_. Language and context here again evoke the Hesiodic theodicy. Zeus purposely hid _θημ_ (42) from humans so that obtaining necessities would not be easy (_κριθής _[i.e. _θημ_], 43) just as Jupiter ordained (_colendi / haud facilem...uiam_, 121-2). Zeus contrived difficulties for mortals (_αὐθαυτοὶ τοῖς ἐνῷ καθέσα χαρά, 49; _γαλεύει...νομίμας_, 178) as does Vergil's Jove (_curis acuens mortalia corda_, 123), and in both cases he causes the lazy to be roused to work (_nec torpere graui passus sua regna uetera_, 124; _ίμες καὶ_ _ἀπαλαμὼν περ ὤμοι τῷ ἐγγον ἐγερεν_, 20; _βελὸν/γῆς_, 113-4) and stimulates competition (_ante luum... in medium quaerebant_, 125-7; _κατά...οποία... ἥθελε_, 21-3). The earth once produced freely in both accounts (_ipsaque tellus _/ omnia liberius, nullo poscente, ferebat_,

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13 Sinclair, T. A., _et al._, _Works and Days_, by Hesiod (London 1932) ad _c_ 3, "Supply ἄλως: that _is, _d _θημ_."

14 Farrell notes the similarity and difference between _graui uetera_ and _βελὸν/γῆς_ (p. 145).
127-8; ὁρνὼν ἐφερε ἐκώρος ἀρνωρα / αὐτομάτη παλλόν τε καὶ ἀρθνόν. 117-8), but ceaseless toil rules the Iron Age (adsiduis... rastris, 155; οὐδὲ ποτ’ ἦμαρ / ταῦτα δέντε καιμένον, 176-7). Vergil alludes also to Hesiod’s advice on sailing (cf. G.1.138 to WD 615), and, of course, to the theft of fire (ignemque remouit, 131; abstrusum... ignem, 135; κρύψε κε νῦ, 50). To this list of sometimes-cited examples I would add improbus (1.146), which Thomas calls “the most difficult, and perhaps the most important, word in the poem.” Mynors states in his note ad 1.145-5, “improbos: in emphatic position, like Hesiod’s ἔχελη (op. 15).” I would suggest, however, that it is not merely “like Hesiod’s ἔχελη;” rather it is Hesiod’s ἔχελη, which modifies eris as improbus modifies labor. This returns us to Works and Days 11.20, quoted above.

Eris is a two-headed beast in Hesiod, and the same can be said of Vergil’s labor. I cite Perkell at length:

As the reader comes to verse 145 he reads: labor omnia vicit. Making a closure here, taking the words as they stand, the reader conceives an initial interpretation of the meaning of this verse as: labor or work conquered all things, that is, made all things tractable (cf. the “victory of human effort,” cited above). As he reads on to 146, however, improbus et durisurgens in

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Thomas (1988), Mynors, Klingner, and Farrell, e.g., all note the allusion to WD 117-8 in G. 1.127-8 (the productive earth) and to WD 50 in G. 1.131, 135 (the theft of fire).

rebus egestas, he must make a new sense, realizing that his initial understanding of the words must comprehend a different, even an opposite, meaning. The translation now becomes: "Relentless toil/suffering and need, pressing in harsh circumstances, have dominated all things." Here labor, modified as it is by improbus and in conjunction with egestas, calls forth the common meaning of labor as "suffering" rather than "toil." The significant effect of these opposing senses, is that Vergil makes two opposing views present in the reader's mind: the one that technology is man's universal solution to problems, the other that technology epitomizes the suffering of a material age."

I would add to this. Hesiod made of eris a force that demanded human effort as well as caused (and, perhaps to a lesser extent, was) a form of forceful imposition (war); this seems to be a viable expression of what labor is for Vergil, who has poised both possibilities in labor improbus. By its affinity with auctio improbus reveals aspects of labor, Vergil makes it a military imposition, which uicit reinforces immediately and which will find explicit affiliation with agriculture a few lines hence (duris agrestibus arma, 160). In its association with the ansor that destroyed the hominumque boumque labores (118-9), however, improbus points to the other

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7 Forkeil (1996) 69-70. On pp. 364-5 of his dissertation (William W. Batstone, *Georgics* I: Studies in Meaning and Criticism, dis., Berkeley, 1984; henceforth Batstone (1984) Professor Batstone had already noted that these evocative lines gather in the reader "a process of continual reevaluation", and he claims further that improbus does not involve "the reversal of a complete, clear and reasonable sense" but rather purues us more quickly than we wanted to a resolution we expected all along.
aspect of labor, that which unceasingly expects humans to expend (more) effort in order to survive. The rest of line 146, *duris urgens in rebus egestas*, underlines this meaning, which, in fact, evokes a second sense of ὀχύρως, ‘much-enduring’. This latter significance is largely as Altevogt’s exacting analysis showed, although he did not link *labor-egestas* to Hesiod’s ἡμι or to πεινίν, which, we note, in addition to strife, is yet another principle of human existence that Hesiod attributed to Zeus (πεινίν, τῷ Ζεύς εὐφρασία δἰώκει, *WD* 638)\(^{19}\) and that forces humans to work. We should also note that the duality of labor finds a correspondence in 1.121-2, whose double meaning was discussed above. There we saw that Vergil established Jupiter simultaneously as *pater colendi*, the instigator of military agriculture, and as the god who necessitated effort in the first place by making survival difficult (*colendi / haud facilem esse uiam*

\(^{18}\) It is in his first section (pp. 5-12) that Altevogt sets out to define labor (and egestas) as forces that compel humans to work (and develop skills) to survive: "Wie egestas der ‘Mangel’ ist, diesen Wirken man in der Natur überall verspürt, seitdem Jupiter die einzig Fülle hat versiegeln lassen, so erkennt man in labor leicht die Unheiligewalt, die sich überall dort auswirkt, wo man unter Plagen und Gefährdungen zu leiden hat, wieGiftschlägen, Raubtiere und übarmen Meer sie verursachen" (9): "Labor, das Prinzip des Unfriedens (my emphasis) und der Unmüh, hat dem otium des goldenen Zeitalters ein Gewaltiges Ende bereitet, indem er die Menschen zu notvoller Selbstbehauptung zwang...Weil aber egestas das gleiche bewirkte, wird man sagen dürfen, daß dies Urteil auch sie trifft" (10-11).

\(^{19}\) Thomas (1999) ad 145-6 notes Theocritus 21.1 (ὁ πεινίν, Διόκτυντι, μόνον τὰς τέχνας ἐγείρει).
These potential meanings of labor reflect defining Iron-Age realities just as does Hesiod’s eris, as we saw above, but duality in the meaning of labor is not restricted to these “famous verses.” Vergil employs wide parameters in his use of labor to describe the natural (and cyclical) interaction of construction and destruction. Neither does imposition need always to be violent nor the impulse to action beneficial. Vergil openly brings the two aspects into focus simultaneously as noted above for labor improbus and in any number of other instances where he makes evident that the tools of the one kind labor become the vehicles of the other. For example the farmer uses (agricultural) arma to answer the need of doing work, and in so doing he readies the foundations for the constructive process of growth by means of tilling--destructuring--the soil. Vergil’s treatment reveals an almost Newtonian mechanism of action and reaction and of tendency toward entropy; there are no static

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60 Thomas (1988) states ad 145–6, “the realities of labor and its susceptibility to failure provide the major theme of the poem.”

61 Ferkell (1986) 47.

62 Johnson (1972) notes similarly, “the civilization by which he conquers the evils of nature is both a moral reaction to natural hardship and a thing that can itself corrupt all good values, can reduce the farmer to misery and the world to violence and chaos (57).
spots in his world, only perpetual tensions whose evaluations depend upon the evaluator’s perspective. As we will see, frequently the word will refer to the farmer’s efforts on the farm, his forceful imposition on nature, where perhaps it is most concretely available to the reader, but “the reader remembers that opus, not labor, is the usual word for farmwork in Cato and Varro.” But as we have noted, the term encompasses the tendency toward dissolution as well, which mandates eternal vigilance by farmers in


45 Perkell (1986) 70.
their agricultural pursuits as well as by politicians in their governance.

Vergil uses *labor* for the first time at 1.79 (*facilis labor*), where it refers to the farmer's toil. Whether we take the fields' perspective and view the planting as a burden made light here by alternation ("the farmer's efforts are easy to bear...") or the farmer's perspective and view the *labor* as "the task of growing them (crops)"68 made easier by alternation, the term clearly represents the farmer's imposition on the land. Mynors (*ad* 79) would have us read *labor* as "strain on the soil": "Rotation of crops does not reduce the farmer's work, so *labor* here must be the strain on the soil (cf. 2.343, 372), not, as seems perhaps more natural in 150, on the husbandman." A few points militate against this version and favor reading *labor* strictly as the farmer's toil. Firstly the *alternis* of 79 picks up the *alternis* that began the paragraph (71) and thus indicates that Vergil has resumed instructing the farmer on what actions to take, in this case on leaving fields fallow,69 which certainly is a reduction in the farmer's toil. Furthermore *sed tamen* (79) indicates this resumption, too, after the digression into what crops...

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68 Page *ad* 79.

69 Thomas (1928), "71, *alternis*: adverbial: 'with alternation', here 'every other year'."
not to rotate; "flax, oats and poppies exhaust (uro) the soil (and therefore should not be rotated with wheat: this is the implication of exim)." But while sed tamen is in part retrospective, since it resumes the discussion of leaving fields fallow, it is also prospective because it marks the other half of the contrast indicated in tanium ine (79-80): "But for all the ease of labor in leaving fields fallow (alternis), still don't be embarrassed to..." Here already Vergil introduces the theme of never-ending labor by the farmer in conjunction with what would seem to be facilis, namely not farming a field. The thought in 79, then, is not a continuation from 77-8 of the land's condition when farmers rotate crops but an ironic consideration of what work is still necessary even when leaving a field fallow. Lines 82-3 also speak against Mynors' reading:

sic quoque mutatis requiescent fettibus arva
nec nulla interea est inanatae gratia terrae.

They recapitulate the methods treated in the previous eleven lines and bring the section to a close; one might well mark the end of the paragraph here, for what follows—a discussion of burning the fields—does not pertain to crop rotation or fallow fields. Mutatis, not alternis, describes the ease on the soil via crop rotation that Mynors...
sought in 79 but which was not there. Vergil has alternated his discussion between leaving fields fallow and rotating crops, and readers have misplaced labor in this sequence. Recognition of Vergil's alternation of methods should now clarify how labor fits into the passage and therefore what its character is.

We have already encountered the second and third appearances of labor. The hominumque boumque labores (118) are the efforts of humans and their associated minions in turning the soil (uersando terram, 119). The movement of natural forces—pests—counter to the human efforts continues the theme of never-ending work that we saw marked by a facilis labor in 79. Again work is seeded when it appeared already to be done. The third instance of labor marks the close of the first movement of the theodicy (labor omnia uicit improbus..., 145-6). The two examples of labor that the reader has encountered prior to 145 both indicate a reading of the word as farmer's toil or effort, but here Vergil has expanded the scope of the word to encompass not only the farmer's toil but also the very forces that have compelled him to work more or harder. Egestas (146)

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99 Fallow 71-2, rotation 73-78, fallow 79-81, rotation 82, fallow 83; The editors' readings, and here we can include Klingner pp. 28-9, produce an unwieldy imbalance: 10 lines on rotation, 3 on leaving fallow.
reinforces this latter meaning as it implies the failure of work-labor or, perhaps, not so much its total failure as its (perpetual) insufficiency and thus the need for further effort in order to survive (duris ursens in rebus egestas). And it is worth re-emphasizing here the circular interconnectedness of Vergil's active and reactive forces and their relationship to their Hesiodic origins: the farmer responds to the need for doing work--Hesiod's good eris--by imposing (military) force (uicri 145; agricultral arma, 160)--Hesiod's bad eris--and thus Vergil informs the prominent metaphor of Book 1, farming is war. In so doing the farmer readies the foundations for the constructive process of growth by means of tilling--destructuring--the soil. In this statement of Iron-Age reality, then, our understanding of labor comprehends both human conquest of nature and its inseparable companion, the difficulty and endless demands that humans experience in trying to confront the adversity spawned by nature in the Jovian world.

9 Thomas (1988) ad 145-6, "need or want (egestas) prevails when labor does not succeed (duris...in rebus"). Batstone (1984) notes, "the positive and negative forces are inextricably intertwined" (367).

10 Wilkinson (1969) forwards what he names the "Military Theme" at pp. 9ff. Thomas (1988), for another example, discusses ad 160-75 "the farmer's weapons and describes the plow-section as "the equivalent of the Homeric arming scene". Batstone (1984) notes this circularity: "Have we come somewhere or not? The effort that ceased has returned to effort" (365). He also notes that this is "a world of movement" (365).
Line 150 presents the reader with the first example of labor where it is definitely not the actual toil of the farmer. Thomas suggests that frumentis labor addiuit means that 'distress' or 'trouble' was added to grain12 in the sense that the crops themselves suffered, but I think rather the labor looks forward to the work that will be required of the farmer; it is a new quality added to the grain—the need to do work to make it productive. Such is clearly the implication of the rest of the sentence wherein, for example, labor results in weeds (vegetal "pests") in the field—weeds that will require further effort from the farmer for removal if his fields are to be productive of the plants he wants to thrive. The effort needed is spelled out at 155ff.: quod nisi et adsiduis herbam insectabere rastris... So we can say in this case that labor is the need for labor in the accustomed sense of work.13 Separately now labor has shown its complementary meanings, the obverse and reverse: the work itself and the need for that work. Furthermore, Vergil has now told us explicitly that labor, specifically the need for work, represents a

12 Thomas (1988) ad 150; he adds that the conventional sense is also felt, "distress and the toil which must follow."

13 Patstone (1984) p. 366; "Just as before the success of the artes seemed always promised but not in hand, so here the failure is imminent but only imagined (quod nisi)."
feature added (additus) to the Jovian world, which infected even Ceres’ gift of agriculture, which she offered due to the difficulty (egestas) arising from Jove’s new order (cum...deficerent, 148-9).

The last three instances of labor in Book 1 (197, 293, 325) all fall under the rubric of human effort. 293 presents a picture of nighttime and winter work. Both are times that one might expect a respite (as Vergil implies in 297-8: harvesting is done in hot weather, and in 300ff.: winter is a time for enjoyment), but here the work is longum. This, of course, follows the theme of never-ending work that we have seen above.

The poet’s personal observation lends emphasis to the contexts of labor at 197 (labore) and 325 (labores). As Thomas (1988) points out (ad 193), “uidi: with 197 (resumptive) and 318 the only instance of this form of the verb in the poem...this is not autobiographical, but didactic, emphatically asserting the veracity of the detail which follows.” Vidi lecta diu et multo spectata labore / degenerare tamen... (197-8) clearly expresses again the theme of

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Note the other afflications that Jupiter has added, namely venom to snakes (malum virus serpentinibus addidit atris, 1.129) and their nature to the bees (naturas apibus quae Jupiter ipse / addidit, 4.149-50), which is violent and results in poisoning (illis igitur modo super est, laesaque venenum / moribus inspirant, 4.236-7). Note as well the emphasis on Jupiter in these contexts: ipse pater (1.121) and Jupiter ipse (4.149). See again Altevogt’s first section (pp. 5ff.) and Thomas (1988) ad 1.129.
never-ending work to achieve and maintain goals, while *uis humana* (198) and *manu* (199) maintain the violent aspect of human work;\(^{13}\) this leads into perhaps the most famous declaration in the poem of the theme of perpetual struggle, the metaphor of the boatman rowing against the stream (199-203). Line 325 returns us to the *boumque labores* and their failure against the hardships endemic to the Jovian age, here the great storm. *Saepe ego...uidi* (316-8) makes more vivid the military assault on nature by the farmer,\(^ {14}\) and in response Jupiter himself (*ipse pater*, 328) participates in the reduction of human efforts and accomplishments and thus exemplifies his new world-order.\(^ {17}\)

The first use of *labor* in Book 2 refers to poetry. Vergil asks Maecenas to travel with him the path of his *inceptum laborem* (39) and couches the request in nautical metaphor (*pelagoque uolans da uela patenti, 41; primi lege litoris oram, 44*). He returns to this same nautical metaphor and use of *labor* at 4.116ff. where he

\(^{13}\) The *uis humana* answers the *multo labore* of the previous line. For *manu* in the sense of force see *Thomas* (1988) ad 2.156-7.

\(^{14}\) So *Thomas* (1988) and *Mynors* ad 316.

\(^{17}\) In reference to 1.328ff. and 2.419 David O. Ross, Jr. says in *Vergil's Elements, Physics and Poetry in the Georgics* (Princeton, NJ 1987) p. 142, "Jupiter, to whom we owe the very existence of labor, is as well the power that destroys the products of that labor" (henceforth *Ross*).Cf. my earlier discussion of *pater colendi*. 
describes drawing the poem to a close (*iam sub fine laborum* / *uela traham...*). *Labor* as poetry or, perhaps more accurately, the process of writing poetry introduces a twist to the meanings we have encountered thus far, for it is not the physical effort (nor the need for it) that characterizes the farmer's existence. The question may well be asked, then, whether or not we are to view this *labor* in the same light as the farmer's, or is it of a completely different nature?

While it is clear that the concept of *labor* must expand somehow beyond the meanings we have encountered so far if it is to include poetry, I would offer that the presentation of poetry as *labor* suggests a strong affinity for the Iron-Age. The nautical metaphor just mentioned returns immediately to mind as a link to the difficult, modern age. Hesiod, in speaking of his father's *πειρην*, felt the seafaring life to be an unpleasant one and one to which humans were driven by Iron-Age necessity (*προτυλής δοκομημὸλος* / *WD* 618; *πειρηνεὶς ἐν ναυσί, βίου κενχρήμενος ἐσθάλοι, *WD* 634), while Vergil places it in his theology as one of the emblems of the new Iron Age (1.136-8, 141-2). Indeed the sailor's naming of the constellations looks conspicuously like poetry: *nauta tum stellis...nomina fecit* / *Pleiadas, Hyadas, claramque Lycaonis Arcton* (137-8). Also, as noted above, Vergil uses the metaphor of rowing a boat to characterize the
demanding nature of Iron-Age existence (1.199-203).

The nautical motif is shared by Vergil's contemporaries as well. Horace's propempton of Vergil, Ode 1.3, exhibits a similarly harsh view of seafaring:

Ilī robur et aes triplex
circa pectus erat, qui fragilēm truci
commisit pelago ratem
primus...

...impiae
non tangenda rates transiliunt uada (9-12)

which introduces a more general treatment of the Iron Age and its hazards, based on the Hesiodic account:

Audax omnia perpeti
gens humana ruuit per utitum nefas.
Audax lapeti genus
ignem fraude mala gentibus intulit.
Post ignem acheeria domo
subduciam macies et nova febrium
terris incubuit cohort (25-31)

Clearly, then, the nautical metaphor brings the poetic labor well within the pale of Iron-Age endeavors.

Vergil elsewhere describes his poetry in terms utilized for Iron-Age pursuits other than sailing. The preem to Book 4 includes a further reference to poetry-writing as labor: in tenui labor; at tenuis non gloria (6), which parallels the treatment of the farmer's
concerns at 3.286ff.:

superat pars altera curae,
lanigeros agitare greges hirtasque capellas.
hic labor, hinc laudem fortes sperate coloni.
nec sum animi dubius, uerbis ea uincere magnum
quam sit et angustis hunc addere rebus honorem. 290

For the farmer and the poet, then, renown comes from labor, and, despite their differing media (herds and words), both struggle to win their rewards from agriculture.† Likewise, as we have noted elsewhere for the farmer, a vocabulary of military conquest characterizes the poet’s task (uincere, 3.289), †† and from 4.3 to 5 Vergil dares the military theme of duces and proelia; this theme is, of course, the very one on which he will expend his poetic labor in 4.6. †††

We see then, that Vergil has bound his efforts closely to those of the farmer and more generally has identified his poetic labor with Iron-Age work. Whether this work is the sailor’s or the poet’s or the farmer’s, it involves an imposition on the given environment. For

† Fraise is also the goal of the warhorse, the signaturum member of the Iron Age (tensus amor laudum, 3.112). Mynors ad 4.6 cite Aratus 761, “μύχος μὲν τ’ ἥλιος, τὸ ἄριστον αὖθις ἤλιος,” while Thomas (1988) ad 4.6 notes “the Callimachean language, and the programmatic sense of the line.”

†† Cf. victor (3.9, 17) of the poet.

††† His subject is tenuis also at 1.177 and angustus at 3.290.
example the farmer orders his plants in rows, as exemplified by the laying out of the vineyard at 2.273ff. and especially line 277: *indulge ordinibus.*¹¹ The sailor groups his stars, the poet his words.¹² This notion of imposing structure or order is already familiar to us from Book 1’s theodicy, the genesis of *labor,* where Jupiter imposed his new order on the world, and what was once undifferentiated literally became defined:

antelove nulli subigeant arva coloni;
ne signare quidem aut partiri limite campum
fas erat; in medium quaerebant...

So we see how Vergil has associated the poet’s effort with other work in the Iron Age, and we recognize that more broadly speaking poetry represents an extension and refinement of the process of imposing order and boundaries on material.

Turning back to the *labor* of farming, next we come to lines 2.61-2:

scilicet omnibus est labor impendendus et omnes
cogendae in sulcum ac multa mercede domandae.

where *labor* means again the farmer’s efforts to shape nature, which

¹¹ Note here, too, the military imagery for the farmer’s task.

¹² Again, the Callimachean stylistics implied by the line emphasize the element of control and order. Thomas (1988) explains ad 1.50 the close connection between sailing and farming as Iron-Age pursuits.
must be applied--ostensibly to all of the trees under discussion, implicitly to all things in nature--to ensure the desired result. Again we see the theme of never-ending work, reinforced here by the three gerundives in two lines.\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Multa mercede} shows the cost, perhaps, as Thomas contends here, "the cost of great effort," and the familiar military imagery characterizes the farmer's \textit{labor}, felt especially in \textit{domandae}.\textsuperscript{84}

The \textit{labor} that follows (\textit{operumque laborem}, 2.155) appears in the so-called "Praises of Italy" section, where it represents the completed process of human toil, the cities and their fortifications sitting in defensible positions upon crags and behind rivers. But despite the apparently effulgent praise of Italy, "these towns belong to the age of Jupiter and toil (hence the designation \textit{operumque laborem}), and their construction is a product of exertion, possibly even of force (the most common implication of \textit{manu})... Most importantly, V. presents them in a special way, as walled... The detail again belies the claim at 173 (\textit{salue...Saturnia tellus})."\textsuperscript{85} Conington

\textsuperscript{83} See Ross pp. 75, 103-4, 137, 139 for gerundives in tricola, "always to emphasize the \textit{labor} that began with Jupiter's reign" (139).

\textsuperscript{84} Conington \textit{ad} 62 suggests also that \textit{cogendae in sulcum} is analogous to "'cogere in ordinem,' and gives the notion of training and discipline. 'Drilled into trenches.'"

\textsuperscript{85} Thomas (1988) \textit{ad} 155-7. See also Ross on this "lie" (109-19).
notes (ad 156) that "manu’ here implies labour, as elsewhere violence (3.22), or care (3.395)." This is, then, another example of human effort and implied is its associated martial violence.

The two instances of labor that follow at 2.343 and 372 refer to plants’, specifically the vine’s,\(^{86}\) ability to endure forces of breakdown or ruin that lead to failure (and thus require more work) in this most carefully cultivated plant. This is reminiscent of the plight of the hominumque boumque labores of 1.118, but while there the labor was the work done, here labor represents the complementary, deteriorating force that attacks the work. The tenerae would not be able to tolerate the demands of Iron-Age existence (hunc laborem) if not for the spring-like (which is to say Golden-Age-like) respite from its harshness.\(^{87}\) At 372 Vergil describes the tenerae as imprudens laborum, for they have not yet encountered the destructive labor of the Iron Age, characterized in 373 by winters that are "cruel" (indignas) and a potent sun (potentem) and in the following lines by

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\(^{86}\) While "Virgil purposely uses language applicable to all living beings" (Page ad 343), we recognize that res tenerae (343) refers to the vine primarily, as is unambiguously the case when the word is repeated 20 lines later (teneris, 363).

\(^{87}\) Thomas (1988) ad 343 explains, "The phrase hunc...laborem is deliberately vague, referring to the trial not only from heat and cold, but from all the toil and threats which assail the young plant in the age of Jupiter."
unending (adsidue) assaults by animals; against these the farmer has taken and will take prophylactic measures. Previously he erected barriers to protect the plants from rain and heat (351-3; hiemes solemque, 373) and now against animals both wild (silvestres uri...capraeaeque sequaces / inludunt, 374-5; ferae, 342) and domesticated (pascuntur oues auidaegae iuuencae, 375; pecudes, 340). These examples of labores, then, typify the reverse of the labor-coin as did the labor in 1.150.

While the labores stand out in these lines, Vergil maintains the theme of an interactive, dual labor by tracing the same involuted circle with other vocabulary that experiences an inversion of its meaning. The second instance of durus and caput paired in a single line, only fourteen lines after the first invites us to compare the two sets. Where once a caput (2.341--here meaning ‘head’) grew up from the hard ground (duris aruis, 341), now the farmer’s effort involves using hard tools (duros bidentis, 355) to break up that ground down to the capita (355--now meaning ‘roots’). This double pairing of vocabulary reveals the same complementary duality that we saw in labor. The hard thing that breaks complements the hard thing broken just as the top complements the bottom; they are inseparable and imply each other as they operate in the cycle of
structure and destruction.

The labor alter of 2.397 deals with care of the grown vine, once the farmer has nurtured it successfully. Thomas and Page both hint at the aspect of labor meaning "need for work" but stop short of giving it clear enunciation. Thomas begins, "The lines are carefully arranged to stress the formidable nature of labor, and the resultant need for force," while Page describes the syntax, "The namque picks it [ille] up and explains--'there is this further task required..., for (=that is to say)."" The labor is the work required of the farmer, for it is a need, not an action, that requires satisfaction (cui numquam exhausti satis est, 398), while the gerundives that follow stand in apposition to labor and indicate that it is the need for effort.

The thought and the force of the gerundives continue in 2.401, reedit agricolis labor actus in orbem. This certainly does not mean that the farmer's efforts return to him, especially when we recognize

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88 Thomas (1988) ad 397-419 and Page ad 397.

89 Thomas (1988) ad 398 recognizes that exhausti satis is the 'effort expended'.

90 There are two tricola of gerundives: scindendum, frangenda, leuandum (399-400) and sollicitanda, mouendus, metuendus (418-9). See note 63. Note also the gerundives (365-6 in tricolon), imperatives, and the use of superest in 344ff. that lead up to our present statement: Est etiam ille labor curandis uitibus alter...; these serve to heighten the sense of necessity I suggest here.
that Vergil here discusses "the theme of unremitting toil"91 or 'never-ending work' as I have called it. Rather we see again that labor means the need for work, which circles around with the year in its never-ending pattern, and the farmer no sooner ends one season than he must take care for the next (403-7).

_Durus uterque labor: laudato ingentia rura,/ exiguum colito._

(2.412-3) returns us to Iron-Age work or effort. Page (ad 410, 412) says the labores are pampinatio and runcatio; these are to be supplied from lines 410f. and represent the never-ending work theme, emphasized by bis...bis. If we read uterque labor as prospective and not only as a recapitulation, we will detect as well an association of farming and poetry, Iron-Age endeavors whose association was discussed earlier in relation to the proem of Book 4 and 3.286ff. In this case Vergil will be characterizing both farming and praising (laudato, 417; colito, 418) as duri labores. The difficulty in providing the poetic laus and honor to the fields that Vergil claims at 3.286ff. would be present already here, ornamented with a Hesiodic allusion (νηγ δλιγην ανειν, μεγαλη δ ενι φορτια θεοθαι, _WD_ 643) and suggesting a Callimachean poetic stance.92

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91 Thomas (1988) ad 397-419.

Opinion is divided on the meaning of *lunaeque labores* (2.478); one camp believes that they are the phases of the moon, while the other contends that they are eclipses. The latter cites *Aeneid* 1.742 to support its definition (*hic canit errantem lunam solisque labores*), "where *solis labores* is exactly = *defectus solis* " (Page), but the former supports its reading by adducing the line’s model, Lucretius 5.751 (*solis item quoque defectus lunaeque latebras*). Thomas adds that Vergil does not otherwise use *defectus* which, we are to understand, secures the allusion to Lucretius and with it the sun’s and moon’s respective conditions. Mynors cites Silius Italicus 14.348 in support of ‘phases’ since that poet associates the moon’s *labores* with the tides, which, of course, are not dependent upon eclipses but go through regular, cyclical sequences as do phases.

While I accept the meaning ‘phases’ for *labores*, for, as I explain below, I think that it suits Vergil’s purposes better, I am not so ready to accept with the editors the meaning ‘eclipses’ for *defectus solis*. In *De Natura Deorum* 2.19 Cicero employs *defectus* to mean not

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93 Phases: e.g. Thomas (1938); eclipses: e.g. Page, Williams.

94 Conington cites Lucretius as well, and then he refers to A. 1.740 (sic; *hic canit errantem*...) for the meaning of *labores*, but he does not translate it. Mynors seems to be responding to Page’s statement that "*defectus* and *labores* both describe exactly the same phenomenon" when he says, "'Phases would do well here: it does not duplicate *defectus.*"
eclipses but phases of the moon,\textsuperscript{95} and of the sun he says \textit{inflectens autem sol cursum tum ad septem triones, tum ad meridiem aestates et hiemes efficit}... One might recognize in \textit{defectus solis}, then, the ‘phases’ of its own that the sun experiences, similar to the moon’s. It rises further to the north in summer, which gives longer days, further to the south in winter, which gives shorter days, and then works back in a regular cycle.\textsuperscript{96} So rather than seeking from the Muses some arcane knowledge of lunar or solar eclipses, the benefit of which for agriculture would be at best obscure, in these lines Vergil seeks understanding of basic, natural patterns that determine the cycle of life in agrarian society.\textsuperscript{97}

Once we understand ‘phases’ for \textit{lunaeque labores}, we must still account for the choice of this key word to replace Lucretius’ \textit{latebras} in this context. Vergil has stayed very close to his source in borrowing \textit{solis, defectus,} and \textit{lunaeque}, the last remaining in the

\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Neque solum eius (sc. lunae) species ac forma mutatur tum crescendo, tum defectibus in initia recurrendo}...

\textsuperscript{96} In Mithraism, of course, this was seen in terms of a growing or dying Sun.

\textsuperscript{97} I must thank Professor Babcock for directing me to the passage from \textit{De Nat. Deorum}. Also, I would hold out the possibility that the associated \textit{solis labores} of A. 1.742 may intimate something of this cyclical process beyond just eclipses. Professor Batstone reminds me, however, that eclipses would bring in the political context germane to the end of Book 1, and so the debate continues.
same metrical position as in the original. Furthermore, as Conington notes *ad 478*, *uarius* explains *pluribus e causis* from *DRN 5.752*. With so much the same as in Lucretius and with no metrical exigency for exchanging one noun for another, the poet’s selection of *labores* becomes conspicuous. I suggest that Vergil calls the phases *labores* here because he wants to draw attention to the fact that they mirror the nature of *labor* that we have seen so far. The moon works its way towards full, but no sooner does it achieve full than it begins to “degenerate” to crescent then new moon. The cycle parallels wonderfully what Vergil has intimated so far; as the sun’s *defectus* so the moon’s *labores* embrace both aspects of Jovian *labor*—the effort spent building toward a goal and the constant, ultimately inescapable pull away from completion—in endless interplay with each other.98 In this passage, then, Vergil asks the Muses for an understanding of the greater context of what he has experienced and has been describing on a detailed level.99

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98 I might note here in passing that the “wandering moon” of A. 1.742 reflects the *labor* of decay, the result of which is the phases we witness. Its changing position in the sky results from its rising later each day—its pace is one of constant degeneration in relation to the days.

99 Thomas (1988) *ad 475-94* thinks similarly, “The passage as a whole is best understood as applying to Virgil and his career...and in that the *Georgics* may be seen as a poem which attempts to understand the workings of nature, these lines (i.e. 477-82), along with 490-2, appear to express a wish for the success of the poem.”
The last appearance of labor in Book 2, at 514, is straightforward, but the reading of its line is not. Mynors prints hic anni labor, hinc patriam..., while Conington and others print hinc anni labor, hinc patriam... in keeping with the manuscript tradition and maintaining the “typical tricolon”\textsuperscript{100} thus rendered. In no case, however, does any sense arise other than “the farmer’s work,” its cyclical nature underscored by anni. The reference is to plowing, and whether we understand hic as a demonstrative (“this is his year’s work) or an adverb (herein lies his year’s work) or read hinc (this is the source of his year’s work), the labor remains the farmer’s never-ending effort.

We have seen in the first two books how labor, perhaps predictably, refers to farmwork and how, less predictably, labor also refers to a tendency towards disorder or degeneration which bring about a corresponding need for work. Related concepts of order and disorder have also appeared under the rubric of labor and in its context as, for example, in the case of poetic labor. Books 3 and 4 present an ever-widening scope for labor that nevertheless is comprehensible in the same terms of order and disorder established in Books 1 and 2.

\textsuperscript{100} So Thomas (1988) who contends as well that the sense produced is more vivid.
In Book 3, line 68, labor accompanies sickness, old age, and the harshness of death upon the early departure of life’s “best days” (66-8):

optima quaeque dies miseris mortalibus aequi
prima fugit; subeunt morbi tristisque senectus
et labor, et durae rapit inclementia mortis.

This same company reappears with Egestas at the gates of Hell at Aeneid 6.274ff. (Morbi tristisque Senectus, 275; Egestas, 276; Letumque Labosque, 277), but originally it issued from Pandora’s jar to end the Golden Age as a reprisal for the theft of fire (WD 90-95):

Πρὶν μὲν γὰρ ᾽Ωσικοῦ ἐπὶ χθονὶ φυλ’ ἄνθρωποιν
νόσον τε κακὼν καὶ ἀτρόχειον πόνοιον
νοῦσων τ’ ἄργαλεν, αὕτ’ ἄνθρωποι κηρὰς ἔδωκαν.
[ἄφα γὰρ ἐν κακότητι βροτοί καταγερακοῦσιν.]
ἀλλὰ γυνὴ χεῖρεσι πίθου μέγα πῦρ’ ἀφελούσα
ἐσκέδαιον ἄθρωποιοι δ’ ἐμῆσατο κηρὰ λυγρά. 101

Labor here is one of a group of degenerative, Iron-Age forces that break things down and render them ineffective. Earlier (1.150) we saw that labor served in this capacity for plants, frumentis labor additus, where disease and pests disrupted the fields soon after it and egestas (1.146) arrived in the world. The three lines on disruptive forces here (66-8) interrupt a passage on breeding, which

101 The bracketed line = Odyssey 19.360, but there is no reason to suppose that Vergil discounted it for that or any other reason. He assembles the same forces: morbi = νοῦσων; senectus = καταγερακοῦσιν; labor = πόνοιο; which result in inclementia mortis = κηρὰς.
resumes with commands to counteract the disruption; these exemplify the familiar never-ending work theme: *semper enim refice* (70), *ante ueni et...sortire quotannis* (71).\(^{102}\)

The effort that Vergil urges for the care of young horses at 3.74 (*iam inde a teneris impende laborem*) recalls through vocabulary the *labor* of 2.61 (*omnibus est labor impendendus*), where the poet urged the farmer to expend effort on his plants.\(^{103}\) This example of *labor* as effort, then, in conjunction with the *labor* in line 68, which represented the demanding and persistent force of degeneration, links the *labor*-theme from the first two plant-based books to the concerns of the animal-based third book. Vergil has indicated these two aspects of *labor* in slightly more than the first tenth of the book.

In lines 3.95ff. we encounter an old horse that suffers from the forces of degeneration found previously in 67-8:

> Hunc quoque, ubi aut *morbo* grauis aut iam segnior annis deficit, abde domo, nec turpi ignosce *senectae*. 96 frigidus in Venerem senior, frustraque *laborem* ingratum trahit.

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\(^{102}\) Wilkinson (1969, p. 94) and G. Miles, *Virgil’s Georgics* (Berkeley 1980) 185 (henceforth Miles), note the similarity of this selection to the yearly selection of seeds (1.197-9) to contend with nature’s tendency towards degeneration.

\(^{103}\) *Impendere* occurs rarely—only four times—in the *Georgics*; these two are associated with *labor* while at 2.433 (bracketed by Thomas [1988]) and 3.124 the related *curas* (see Altevogt) is its object.
But *laborem* here\textsuperscript{104} differs from that in line 68, for this is the work that the horse cannot perform successfully due to disease and age. The question is: what kind of work is it? Vergil tells us that horses are for war or its facsimile (3.49-51):

\begin{quote}
Seu quis Olympiaceae miratus praemia palmae
pascit equos, seu quis fortis ad aratra iuuencos, 50
corpora praecipue matrum legat.
\end{quote}

Yet the context (*frigidus in Venerem*) implies that *labor* here is the sexual act, the creation of another organism, at which the stallion cannot succeed due to infertility (*frigidus*).\textsuperscript{103} Conington and others recognize *proelia* (98) as a metaphorical battle of love; Ross, however, emphasizes that:\textsuperscript{106}

Horses are raised and trained only for war or—what amounts to the same thing—racing, and, as we shall see, cattle in this book share the same associations. *Arma* are never far from *armenta*. Sheep and goats, on the other hand, are not so much a complement as a contrast: the pastoral was there, a literary abstraction ready to hand. War and peace thus become the two most obvious subjects of the book, the realities of epic and pastoral...The pastoral is, in fact, only a setting for its one concern, love—a cool setting for reflection upon the heat of passion. War is fire itself, the prime destructiveness, represented in epic by Achilles becoming fire in his battle with the Scamander.

\textsuperscript{104} I cannot account for Thomas' (1988) statement *ad* 97-8, "the first appearance of labor in the third book."

\textsuperscript{103} I treat the infertility of cold in the next chapter; see Ross 153.

\textsuperscript{106} Ross p. 150.
Here we have that fire that means war and love both (*magnus...ignis*, 99), for the present *amor* is inextricably bound to the clearly military language that contains it (*proelia*, 98; *gloria palmae*, 102; *certamine*, 103; *currus*, 104).\(^{107}\) The *labor ingratus* is the task of impregnating the mare, *ingratus* because it is done in vain. It is depicted as the *labor* of drawing a chariot,\(^ {108}\) which itself is conspicuous in this passage (103ff., 179ff.), an image made more vivid by the verb *trahere*. The association of *labor* and war has become familiar to us from the military imagery that accompanies the farmer’s *labor*, to which Vergil has now added the association with *amor* to give us the *militia amoris*.

The *labor* of 3.118 refers to human effort, whether we understand that this is the task of breeding good chariot-horses and racers or, more likely, that it is the task of driving the chariot or riding the horse.\(^ {109}\) The context of *labor* seems clear enough: the discussion covers driving and riding (113-17) and *aequus...aeque* (118) indicates that the two jobs are comparable and that the trainer

\(^{107}\) Thomas (1988) ad 98 and Mynors ad 97-100 direct us to the world of elegy for the language describing the war of love.

\(^{108}\) See Williams ad 49 and Thomas (1988) ad 49-50.

\(^{109}\) See Page for an example of the former view, for the latter Mynors, who argues vigorously against other readings.
or procurer seeks equally for both jobs a particular type of horse. But the point can safely remain moot, for either reading indicates the subject’s imposition on or control over the horses.

_Blando labori_ (3.127), Williams’ “work of love,” seems at first glance to be a paradoxical use of _labor_. Hesiod uses a similar periphrasis at _WD_ 521, ἐργα Ἀφροδίτης, but in relation to a young girl rather than to any specific farm-concern. Thomas (1988) _ad_ 127 states, “almost an oxymoron, well conveying V.’s view of _amor_; the adjective belongs to the world of elegy.” This term helps to convey something of Vergil’s dual view of _labor_ as well.

_Blandus labor_ indicates an action by the horse, namely intercourse (as at 3.97), for which we would expect a word like _amor_. Sex is a natural function of the beast and one that has a specific allure that Vergil will discuss at length. _Omne adeo genus in terris..._in furias ignemque ruunt:_ _amor omnibus idem_ (242-4) and _carpit enim uiris paulatim uritque uidendo i femina_ (215-6), for example, indicate that _amor_ is a force of disorder, fertile and fundamental to creating new order (foals), but dangerous as well in its potential for destruction.\(^\text{110}\) On the other hand, _labor_ can be seen from the horse-farmer’s perspective as efforts at order via the horse

\(^{\text{110}}\) Miles 186, 196, 205.
to the same extent that we recognize plowing to be a farmer’s labor although the bulls pull the plow. Not unlike the young girl noted above from the Works and Days, the horse’s sex-life also is under the control of another (again as in 97). For the girl, whose primary task in life is to bear children, her father will select a mate,\textsuperscript{111} and the Vergilian blandus labor is plainly selective breeding for a desired result under the direction of magistri, just as the farmer selected seeds with much effort (\textit{multo labore}) for the best result at 1.197. While this labor may be blandus for a horse—especially in comparison to the labor ingratus, the metaphorical chariot that the horse could not pull (3.97-8)—for the farmer it remains an attempt to control and direct a fertile, natural force of disorder. Labor refers to both perspectives on this single activity of selective breeding—as another example of Vergil’s plastic discussion of a slippery topic. The horse’s perspective evinces a natural tendency toward disorder, chaos if you will, and a fundamental fertility from which new order arises; the farmer’s the imposition of control and direction on the

\textsuperscript{111} The Homeric Hymn to Demeter, roughly contemporary with the Works and Days, shows us how the father was the sole arbiter in questions of “matrimony.” Furthermore the death of the world’s vegetation that accompanies Demeter’s loss of her children (both Persephone and Demophone) demonstrates symbolically the mother’s relationship to her world: when she ceases being a mother she ceases functioning altogether; with her children (when Persephone returns each year) she resumes functioning. The woman’s function is as mother.
process.

At line 3.182 the horse’s first job is to endure the sights, sounds, and weapons of war, then to seek praise (182-6):

primus equi labor est animos atque arma uidere
bellantum lituosque pati, tractuque gementem
ferre rotam et stabulo frenos audire sonantis;
tum magis atque magis blandis gaudere magistri 185
laudibus et plausae sonitum cerucis amare.

Again, while Vergil represents labor as the horse’s action, it is equally the trainer’s action of configuring natural energies to suit human goals, and again labor has its direct association with war. The trainer must gradually align the horse’s tendencies with the military aims of the Jovian world (ad bella...studium turmasque ferocis...louis in luco currus agitare, 179-81) for these are clearly not native to the horse, whose interests are not allowed to turn to the natural blandus labor of sex but are replaced by the blandae laudes that mark Iron-Age competition (185ff.).

In the discussion of training a horse we are told to let it be laboranti similis (3.193) at the fourth year. Context dictates that this mean “similar to one in conflict,” for this is its training for war or

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112 Note Miles p. 194.

113 Conington notes ad 193 what I have said for labor in 182: “'Laboranti similis' implies that he is not to follow his own bent, but to be trained.”
war-games, as we have been told (ad bella...studium turmasque, 179); furthermore the horse’s labor has already been identified as martial (even in sexual matters), and “the horse leads V. to Homer and the world of heroic war.”\footnote{Thomas (1988) ad 196-201. More generally (ad 179-208), "V. stresses only the military aspect of the horse (and the quasi-military--chariot-racing), and makes only passing reference to its only agricultural function, the pulling of carriages."} The proposition that the horse is to be similar to one “‘struggling’...to get free”\footnote{Page ad 193.} misses the point. Vergil tells us to let the horse challenge the winds to a race, that is, let the horse engage in practice competition--a restatement and refinement of sitque laboranti similis. In keeping with this, it will race per aperta (194) rather than cover laps on a marked racecourse. The horse, then, is allowed to run ceu liber habenis (194), which evokes a sense both of his unencumbered natural speed, coaxed from it by the spirit of competition, and of the danger-free and undemanding nature of its practice course where the absence of other, nearby competitors and of metae to negotiate eliminates the need for careful guidance with the habenae by the charioteer.

As labor in line 3.288 has been treated previously (pp. 43ff.), I will proceed to laborum in line 3.452. It has been translated
variously as "ills", "suffering", "troubles", "disease,"\textsuperscript{116} which make it the object of \textit{fortuna} and gives the sense "remedy for laborum." Thomas' terminology is confusing, when he says that "the industria or labores are destined to fail,"\textsuperscript{117} which points out again the difficulty in discussing Vergil's use of the term \textit{labor}. The \textit{labores} in 452--taken as 'ills'--do not "fail," of course; rather they conquer all animal life in the form of the Noric plague introduced only 22 lines later. What fails is the human attempt to overcome those ills. Yet we could also read \textit{fortuna laborum} as 'success of treatment', which would treat \textit{laborum} as a genitive of source and make it the effort and struggle against degenerative forces. We have available here, then, both aspects of \textit{labor}, effort and disorder: the animal kingdom's equivalent to the \textit{robigo} that beset the plant kingdom beginning in 1.151 (\textit{frumentis labor additus}, 1.150)--used synonymously with the \textit{morborum} in line 440 and recalling as well the \textit{labor} of 3.68--and the struggle exacted by that degenerative force. Forces of disorder demand human attention and effort to ward them off in order to achieve a desired result, while the efforts expended in defense against the disease wage a battle soon to be lost.

\textsuperscript{116} Respectively Page, Thomas (1988), and the Loeb; Williams; Mynors; Conington. This is in keeping with Altevogt's assessment noted earlier.

\textsuperscript{117} Thomas (1988) \textit{ad} 452.
The last occurrence of labor in Book 3 is at 525, quid labor aut benefacta iuuant? Here labor denotes the efforts or work of the bull, which the context of his death (under the yoke) and the remainder of the rhetorical questions indicate, for it is the bull’s deeds that are at issue: benefacta and uomere terras / inuertiisse grauis (525-6). The death of the bull epitomizes the theme of never-ending labor up to this point in the poem: effort, even ceaselessly and nobly applied, ultimately falters when nature finally cycles towards decay and disorder. Just as Vergil said in 1.199ff., everything slips backwards, and, as for the rower, the struggle against the stream is unwinnable in the final assessment. Here, though, we have moved from the metaphor to the reality.

As noted earlier (pp. 43ff.), Book Four begins with a reference to poetry as labor (line 6), clothed in military imagery and associated with agricultural endeavors that mark it as an Iron-Age enterprise. The nautical metaphor for poetic labor, which was the first use of the term in Book 2 (decurre laborem...pelagoque uolans..., 39), recurs here in this book as well (sub fine laborum... uela... proram 116ff.) which also demonstrates poetry’s bond to the Iron Age. By introducing the book with these motifs familiar from earlier books, Vergil preserves in the audience’s mind the theme of poetic labor
that will play such an important part in the concluding episode of the *Georgics*, the Aristaeus epyllion.

_Labor_ (4.106) and _labore_ (4.114) share the familiar meaning of work or effort on the farmer’s--in this case the beekeeper’s--part. In 88-102 Vergil has shown “yet another parallel between the bees and the animals of Book 3” (i.e. selection).\(^\text{118}\) The _labor_ of controlling (restricting) nature (_nec magnus prohibere labor, 106\(^{\text{119}}\)) exhibits a familiar violence, as tearing the wings from the ‘king’ (_tu regibus alas / eripe, 106-7_) recalls the rather callous treatment of the anthropomorphized trees at 2.23: _hic plantas tenero abscindens de corpore matrum_. So Vergil unites disparate living entities not only under the rubric of anthropomorphism but with a commonality of experience, too. As humans work, the incessant toil wears away the very tools used to accomplish it--the farmer’s hands (_ipse labore manum duro terat, 114_). Here yet again Vergil displays the cyclical workings of _labor_ in the age of Jupiter, for the very imposition of effort itself brings about the deterioration of the tools used to effect

\(^{118}\) Thomas (1966) _ad_ 88-102 and 103-15. See also Miles (p. 234) who compares the selection of bees to that of seeds (Bk. 1), trees (Bk. 2), and breeding stock (Bk. 3).

\(^{119}\) The _labor_ clearly is an action, for the active infinitive of the predicate is in apposition with _labor_.

The _labores_ found in 4.156 and 184 (_laborem_ and _labor_) no longer belong to the farmer but to the personified bees, though they still represent work or effort. The vocabulary in the first instance is carefully selected to show a resemblance between human and apian efforts (cf. _laborem / experiuntur_ [4.156-7] with _hominumque boniumque labores .. experti_ [1.118-9]), while the failure of the human _labor_ due to pests, which we have witnessed already in 1.118ff., prepares the reader for the destructive pests that later beset the hive (242ff.). This reference to the beginning of the theodicy, which is reinforced by reference to their communistic existence (cf. _in medium quae sita reponunt_ [157] with _in medium quaerabant_ [1.127]), invites the audience to recall the principles that guide the experience shared by humans and other life in the age of Jupiter:

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120 Although the image of wearing the hands down duro _labore_ seems to depict the use of a tool, like one of the _arma durorum agrestium_, and thus to indicate that the _labor_ is to be seen as one of effort and imposition, i.e. "with hard toil" (cf. Thomas [1988] ad 114 for "toil"), one could understand the _labor_ to be causative, the force that necessitates wearing down the hands with effort, i.e. "because of the requirements of hard labor," as in _duris urge in rebus egestas_. Support for this lies in the tricolon of _ipse_ (112, 114 twice), which emphasizes the demand for the keeper's continuing, personal effort. Conington notes _DRN_ 5.1359-60 (atque _ipsi pariter durum sufferre laborem / atque opere in duro durarent membra manusque_), which could argue either way, depending on whether we connect our _labore with_ Lucretius' _laborem_ or _opere_. Such ambivalences serve to point out the interrelatedness of the two concepts in the _Georgics_.

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not only is incessant, directed effort required for survival, but continually and eventually destructive forces do and will wear it away—as they did the farmer’s hands—or cause it to falter. Even the bees, the chosen creatures of Jupiter (naturas apibus quas Juppiter ipse / addidit, 149-50), when they mimic the Golden Age in their communism, \textsuperscript{121} actually respond to the exigencies of a harsh age: uenturaeque hiemis memores aestate laborem / experiuntur (156-7), and even they will suffer the decay of disease (251ff.).

At 4.184 we find another misleading implication of happy cooperation: omnibus una quies operum, labor omnibus unus. Labor taken singly here could signify either of the facets I have suggested for the word, but the plain contrast with quies operum demands that we see it as ‘toil’ or ‘effort.’ The purport is of concord and harmony, but not long before, of course, we had civil wars and executions. Furthermore the following line, mane ruunt portis; nusquam mora (185), is uncomfortably reminiscent of 2.461-2 and 503-4 where Vergil condemns the baseness and violence of city and political life (ingentem foribus domus alta superbis / mane salutantum totis uomit aedibus undam and ruuntque / in ferrum).

\textsuperscript{121} And despite their militarism (in this passage, e.g. exercentur, 159; agmine facto, 167). Ross (p. 208) feels that an early stage in the Roman state is represented but certainly not a golden age.
It also recalls 3.110 where war-horses train (nec mora nec requies). and, finally, with 184, it evokes 3.242-244 (omne adeo genus...in furias ignemque ruunt: amor omnibus idem). Although the bees are free from the fury of amorous passion, Vergil reminds us that they do have an obsession—with labor. The bees’ society clearly parallels that of humans, but through their single-minded dedication to Jupiter’s system of labor Vergil has distilled them into symbols of Iron-Age existence.

At 4.340 we find that labor describes Lycorias’ having given birth: primos Lucinae experta labores. How are we to understand these labores in the context of what has been said so far? As birth is an act of creation, it seems simple to recognize here another example of work, a constructing or shaping of something new from something chaotic and fertile, comparable, perhaps, to the creation of poetry. But there is also the sense of ‘suffering’ that accompanies the painful process of giving birth, and there is the breaching of boundaries, too. Of course at 3.97 and 3.127 we saw that the labores involving procreation display an ambivalence of meaning. Experta may also provide some insight here, for it links Lycorias’

Thomas (1988) states ad 149–96, “the bees’ society is the equivalent of a human one (the bee-keeper and the didactic addressee are absent) and in its nature their society is motivated by toil.” Perkell (1989) notes the substitution of gain and work for passion (128–9).
interaction with labor to that of the bees discussed above (4.156-7),\textsuperscript{123} which suggests that her labores have something to do with construction and creation. This repetition of vocabulary, though, sharpens the already evident contrast between the community of leisurely nymphs and the idealized work-culture of the bees, which is specifically and emphatically free from the force of sexual amor and childbirth (4.197ff.). Their differing experiences of labor distinguish the mass of nameless bees from the individually named nymphs, for indeed the bees are no more capable of considering individuals than they are of producing them.

The final occurrence of labor in the Georgics comes at line 493 in the Aristaeus epyllion: _ibi omnis _/ _effusus labor_. Thomas remarks, “Orpheus, paradigm for the man who controls not only nature, but even the powers of the Underworld, finds his own labor destroyed by a momentary lapse” (pun intended, no doubt).\textsuperscript{124} He falters and he loses Eurydice forever. This labor is poetic (_testudine_, 464; _canebat_, 466; _cantu_, 471) and thus it falls within the confines of our discussion of poetry as Iron-Age work or effort to control, shape, or construct; that Vergil has selected a figure that

\textsuperscript{123} _Experiri_ occurs only four times in the poem (1.119, 2.222, 4.157, 340), and in only 2.222 is it not linked explicitly to labor.

\textsuperscript{124} _Thomas_ (1988) _ad_ 491-2.
conflates poet with one who works with nature cements again the association of poet and farmer, whose ventures ultimately circle around to decay or failure. With this climactic and paradigmatic scene involving the eventual failure of the prototypical poet, Vergil concludes his use of labor with a suggestion of the ultimately insurmountable difficulty of his own task of controlling completely a constantly changing medium--of symbols and meaning--whose icon is a word that is its own complement.

III

What is latent in Hesiod becomes a standard of operation in the Georgics: one eris (or labor) leads to the other. This becomes apparent in the Works and Days when the need to work engenders a desire for success, which grows into rivalry, envy, and jealousy of others who have things (els èterov γάρ τις τε λιθίν ἔργοιο κατιζει / πλούσιον, 21-2; ζηλοί, 23; κοτέει, 25; φθονέει, 26). Ammonius cites WD 23 to show that ζῆλος is a beneficial force to be contrasted with factious rivalry;¹²⁵ he also describes its difference from φθόνος.¹²⁶ Yet

¹²⁵ De Adfinium Vocabulorum Differentia 209: ζηλοτυπία μὲν γάρ ἐστιν αὐτὸ τὸ πάθος ἤγουν τὸ ἐν μίσει ύπάρχειν: ζῆλος μῆμοις καλοῦ, οἷον ζηλοὶ τὸν καθηγητὴν ὁ παῖς... (WD 23).

¹²⁶ De Adfin. Vocab. Diff. 211: ζῆλος μὲν γάρ ἐστιν ἢ δὲ ἐπιθυμίαν γενομένη μῆμοις δοκοῦντος τίνος καλοῦ, φθόνος δὲ βασκανία τίς τῶν ἄλλων μὲν προσόντων ἀγαθῶν, ὡμίν δ’ οὐ.
Hesiod uses φθονέω as a synonym for ζηλόω in these very lines (23, 26), and Ammonius admits a similarity in his fifth entry.127 This competitive enviousness, which is an expression of the eris that rouses humans to work (ἡ τε...ἐπὶ ἔργον ἔγειρεν, 20), in fact becomes problematic, and Hesiod warns against it but without indicating how it is an extension of something that he previously called good (τὸ ἔργα...όμενον, ἐκ κεν ἀπ' ἀλλοτρίων κτεάνων ἀεισήφρονα θυμὸν/ ἐς ἔργον τρέψας μελετᾶς, 314-6). We have gone from the awareness of another's wealth being the inspiration for work to its being better to work while keeping one's mind off of the other's wealth.

There is a continuity here that Hesiod hesitates to admit; envying and eying of the neighbor's fortune may be good at times, but it can become covetous and a source of negative strife, so that Hesiod feels the need to warn us, χρήματα δ' οὐχ ἄρπακτά (320ff.). Nor does ζῆλος, on the one hand, constitute only a desirable attitude engendered by the good eris but, on the other hand, represents the final spiritual degradation of the violent iron race that forces Αλθέως and Νέμεως to depart the earth (χειροδικαίω...ἐτερος δ' ἐτέρου πολίν ἐξαλατάζει, 189; κακῶν ἰκτήρα καί ἱβρίν/ἀνέρα τιμήσουσι δίκη δ' ἐν χερόι, 191-2; ζῆλος δ' ἀνθρώπωσιν...κακόχαρτος διαμαρτήσει, 195-6). At its evolutionary extreme

127 De Adfin. Vocab. Diff. 213: ζῆλου τρία ἑδ...τρίτος δὲ ὁ φθόνων ὄμοιος.
ζῆλος will no longer motivate commendable emulation but violent assault and forceful seizure. This avaricious ζῆλος is, in fact, interchangeable with the eris that motivates Perses to wage his small wars in court whereby he pillages others’ envied possessions (27-29, 33-39):\footnote{Despite Ammonius’ desire to show the difference between the two: ζῆλος μὲν γάρ ἐστι τὸ σῶν ἐπιθυμεῖ μιμεῖσθαι, έρίζειν δὲ τῷ μετὰ μάχης φιλανθικῶν (De Adfin. Vocab. Diff. 210).}

ο Πέρση, οὐ δὲ ταῦτα τεῦ ένικάτθεο θυμῶ, μηδὲ ο τε “Ερίς κακόχαρτος ἀπ’ ἔργου θυμῶν ἐρύκοι νείκε’ ὀπίπενον’ ἁγορῆς ἐπακούον ἐόντα.

(Δμήτερος ἀκτῆς) κε κορεσσάμενος νείκεα καὶ δῆμιν δικαίων κτήματ’ ἐπ’ ἀλλοτρίους· σοι δ’ οὐκέτι δεύτερον ἔσται ὧδ’ ἐρδεῖν· ἄλλ’ αὕτη διακρινόμεθα νείκος 35 ἰδείμηι δικής...

ἡδὶ μὲν γὰρ κλῆρον έδαψάμεθ’ ἀλλὰ τε πολλὰ ἅρπαζων ἔφόρεις μέγα κυδαίνων βασιλῆς δωρόφάγους.

Noting and, presumably, admiring another’s goods develops into the difficulty of keeping one’s greedy mind off of them and on one’s own work and then into targeting goods that one did not work for. In other words, the situation degenerates into hovering around the courts to watch (and partake in) attempts to seize others’ goods while neglecting one’s own work entirely.

Although goods ought not be snatched up (χρήματα δ’ οὐχ ἅρπακτα, 320ff.), Perses has done just that (ἁρπάζων ἔφόρεις, 38). He acquires his
booty in court, fraudulently according to Hesiod, which the poet distinguishes from acquisition by physical violence only with respect to means; otherwise it, too, is forceful plundering (λησσεται), and the two are equivalents (320-2):

χρήματα δ' οὐχ ἄρπακτα, θεόσωτα πολλὰν ἀμείνω. 320
εἷ γὰρ τις καὶ χεραὶ μέγαν ὀδήρον ἔληται,
ἡ δ᾿ γὰρ ἀπὸ γλώσσης λησσεται.

We note also that Hesiod paired the litigious and rapacious νείκεα that Perses attends in the agora at the urging of Eris (27-9) with the similarly voracious δῆριν in line 33 (κε...νείκεα καὶ δὴριν ὀφέλλοι/κτήμασ' ἐν ἀλλοτρίαις, 33-4). Here again the courtroom's strife merges with that of the battlefield, for Eris urges not just legal battles but the real thing as well (πολεμὸν τε κακὸν καὶ δὴριν ὀφέλλει, 14).\[129]\n
In describing the two types of χρήματα, ἄρπακτα and θεόσωτα (320-2), then, Hesiod restates in terms of method of acquiring goods the distinction between the two erides, the better of which is not accidentally like θεόσωτα χρήματα: they are both πολλὰν ἀμείνω (19).\[130]\n
The question is not whether to attain goods, for these are necessary

\[129\] Cf. also Aratus, Phaeromena 108f., for litigation's place next to war.

\[130\] These two lines (19, 320) are the only ones to end with the combination πολλὰν ἀμείνω. Seven other lines end with ἀμείνων preceded by other words (294, 314, 445, 570, 702, 756, 776). If there can be any doubt about θεόσωτα pertaining to goods obtained through work, 303-4 (τῷ ἐν θεῷ νεμεσθοῖ καὶ ἄνερ, ὅ κεῖν ἀεργάζοντά(μή) and 309 (καὶ ἐργαζόμενοι πολὺ φῆλτοι ἄθανάτοισιν) should put it to rest.
for life and on this point impulses behind the two *erides* converge, but how to go about it. On this point the *erides* diverge; one's method of attaining that goal is through work and the other's is through forcible seizure or violence, so correspondingly the one urges *ἐργα* (ἐπὶ ἑργον ἐγείρεν, 20) while the other prevents it (ἀπ' ἑργον θυμὸν ἑρύκοι, 28). But we have seen also how the blameworthy *eris* grows out of the other, which indeed Hesiod did tell us came first (προτέρην μὲν ἐγείνατο Νῆξ, 17). While that first, praiseworthy *eris* urges work and competition it also sows the seeds of an envy that evolves into a motivation for violence, whether that be in court or in actual war, nor do we have to wait until the end of the fifth generation of humans to witness it, as Perses has shown. In short, the division between the two *erides* (διὰ δ' ἄνθρωπον θυμὸν ἐχουσιν, 13) is not always clear, despite our ability to locate aspects of their natures where we can distinguish them; they are like-named siblings for a reason.

The *erides*, then, spring from the same source and share a distinct interrelatedness, and Zeus is responsible for their influence on human life. As we have noted, originally existence was easy (43-4):

> ἤμελις γὰρ κείν καὶ ἐπὶ ᾑματι ἑργάσασα,\n> ύσ τέ σε κεῖς ἐνιαυτὸν ἔχειν καὶ ἀργόν ὕμνα.
But by replacing the static Golden Age with the natural cycle Zeus made the world recalcitrant when it comes to obtaining a livelihood. This necessitated work, which state finds embodiment in the *eris* that urges work, just as we saw that *labor* represented this in the *Georgics*.

Let us examine some of these same issues in the *Georgics*. That the impetus to work evolves into an aggressive incarnation that interferes with that drive to work draws comment from Miles: “The highest value of rustic virtues lies in their contribution to the rise of Roman civilization, the city of Rome, and her empire. That dilemma cannot be explained away by reducing rustic virtues to the status of means to a higher end, since the end they make possible is that very society which now alienates Romans from the rustic source of their virtues.”¹³¹ He announces later that, “The changes that force man to become civilized in the best sense also force him to become civilized in the worst. They lead to competition among men--competition which is *nefas*.”¹³² Conspicuous among the changes in attitude is the development of unbridled greed, the picture of which Vergil contrasts with the quasi-mythological farmer of Book 2 who partakes

¹³¹ Miles p. 11.

¹³² Miles p. 80.
in that rustic virtue of hard work without strife.

Vergil distances the rustic setting from war (procul discordibus armis, 2.459), that signal characteristic of the Iron Age, as 2.536-40 will confirm (ante... sceptrum Dictaei regis... necdum... audierant inflari classica, necdum/...ensis).133 Free from conflict the earth finds itself able to provide for the needs of the farmers, who are fortunate as a result (fortunatos, 458). The vocabulary underscores this (460):

fundit humo facilem uictum iustissima tellus.

A superlatively just earth, that is to say one far from war, would provide an easy living, but facilem uictum denotes an idealizing departure from the modern, Jovian “reality,”134 as the theodicy reminds us (pater ipse colendi / haud facilem esse uiam uoluit, 1.121-2). Furthermore the line reveals that the greatest justice would be for humans to be provided with an easy livelihood, but they no longer have access to that, for Jupiter has replaced such justice with the modern condition of difficulty and cares, as did Zeus

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133 We saw earlier in the theodicy that a major facet of the Jovian labor is war (labor omnia uicit / improbus, 1.145-6).

in the *Works and Days*.\(^{135}\) Justice has left the world with the advent of Jupiter’s new age, and while questions of justice once were pertinent, indeed inherent to existence, they are absent from this age, in which justice is accidental. Injustice has not taken its place, rather justice is no longer a naturally occurring phenomenon, and humans must find and enforce their own values. Such a state of moral flux creates confusion among mortals, which, in the absence of natural plenty, gives rise in turn to the greed we see in 461-6.

While the absence of natural justice leaves room elsewhere for greater crimes and inversions of propriety, it also leaves room for immoderation and avarice here at the end of Book 2. When needs are no longer met spontaneously, when resources and production are limited, the cooperation of the Golden Age gives way to individual competition for and acquisition of goods; control and possession of goods become questions of status and power in a differentiated society, and Vergil provides examples of such competition among farmers at, for instance, 1.158 (*heu magnum alterius frustra spectabis acerum*) and 2.408-10 (*primus... fodito, primus...*

\(^{135}\) Although Hesiod gave Zeus a rationale for imposing difficulty, Prometheus’ theft and trickery. Cf. (in the theodicy) *curis acuens mortalia corda* (1.123), which helps to define the Iron-Age condition, and the *secura quies* (2.468) in this Golden-Age motif, which answers to Hesiod’s ἄκηδεα θυμόν (112).
cremato... primus... referto; / postremus metito). Under such conditions greed becomes a potent force and symbols of wealth have great power to move. The lofty home arrogantly adorned and richly embellished, crowds of clientes, expensive, gold-woven clothing and good wool poisoned with dyes, and the oil of the beneficent olive now corrupted with exotic flavorings all not only manifest the excessive competition in which the debased people of the Iron Age have engaged but issue challenges for further competition as well (461-6).  

In the midst of this list of riches, however, Vergil has indicated the fundamental impulse behind this spiraling quest for possessions. The advanced, modern, and urbane Romans do not center their attention on satisfying their needs through hard work, as Hesiod urges and as Vergil’s primitive rusticus does (e.g. hic anni labor, hinc patriam paruosque nepotes / sustinet..., 514-5). Rather, their competitive instinct has evolved beyond survival into eying greedily others’ goods and taking them forcefully, as in the case of the

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134 Cf. Miles, p. 80: “At a time when terrae ferre omnes omnia possunt, private property and personal competition are pointless.”

137 Michael C. J. Putnam says on p. 34 of Virgil’s Poem of the Earth: Studies in the Georgics (Princeton 1979) that “(man’s) aggression whets further passion. He is by instinct greedy and jealous of another’s success.” Henceforth Putnam.
bronzes snatched from Corinth (*Ephyreiaque aera*, 2.464), which Mynors describes as "Objects made in a superior bronze alloy, with a semi-mythical origin in the sack of Corinth by Mummius in 146 BC, ...used constantly as a status-symbol in Rome."\(^{138}\)

When Vergil resumes at 495ff, the discussion of the ends to which Iron-Age competition, strife, and greed have led, he makes clearer the violent results. Iron-Age development brings strife between brothers (*infidos agitans discordia fratres*, 496), as it did between Hesiod and Perses in *Works and Days*, as well as political dominion such as Octavian’s, which is transient here as at the end of Book 1 (*res Romanae perituraque regna*, 498).\(^{139}\) Iron-Age laws direct interaction among faithless privateers (*ferrea iura*, 501), who career into violence (*ruuntque / in ferrum*, 503-4), insinuate themselves into the courts of foreign potentates (504), and sack cities (505)\(^{140}\) in order to surpass their competitors in luxury and sate their

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\(^{138}\) Mynors ad 464.

\(^{139}\) Mynors ad 498 compares *Aeneid* 8.471 and suggests that *perituraque regna* may refer to a risk to Rome’s supremacy. But Thomas (1988) ad 498 does not mince words, "had V. wished to avoid the reader’s connecting *peritura* with *res Romanae*, he could have done so." See also Clay p. 242.

\(^{140}\) Cf. *WD* 189 (*τερος δ’ τέρου πόλιν ἐξαλάναξε*) and recall the bronzes stolen from Corinth. Mynors ad 505 says, "as V. is writing about Romans and for Romans it is hard to think there can be much doubt" that *urbem* refers to Rome itself.
covetous greed (506-7):

ut gemma bibat et Sarrano dormiat ostro;
condit opes alius defossoque incubat auro.\textsuperscript{141}

Oratory and demagoguery\textsuperscript{142} lure others to violence and civil war, and finally, having transgressed the limina of others, they are forced to discard their own dulcia limina\textsuperscript{143} and seek a new fatherland (508-12). As in Hesiod’s fifth generation (\textit{WD} 174ff.), the decay of the Iron Age can be seen clearly here, where the fabric of society unravels and continuity is exchanged for disruption.\textsuperscript{144}

The patterns of thinking among the rustics, though, enjoy freedom from war, and consequently a dignus honos follows the plow; that is to say, that the praiseworthy eris is honored.\textsuperscript{145} The farmers sustain themselves (\textit{sustinet}, 515) and enjoy what nature offers rather than what they can squeeze out of her or their

\textsuperscript{141} Cf. Horace \textit{Sermo} 1.1.41-2 (quid iuuet immensum te argenti pondus et \textit{auri} / furtim \textit{defossa} timidum deponere terra?) and 1.1.70-1 (congestis undique saccis / indormis). Conington ad 507 argues that “such a mode of hoarding would be natural in a time of proscriptions and confiscations,” but Vergil’s depiction seems less forgiving than that.

\textsuperscript{142} Cf. Hesiod’s equation of violence by tongue or hand (\textit{WD} 320-2).

\textsuperscript{143} Vergil marked this twofold disregard by placing limina in metrically identical positions only seven lines apart (504, 511).

\textsuperscript{144} Putnam 155.

\textsuperscript{145} Cf. Hesiod’s “Just State” (\textit{WD} 225ff.).
neighbors, which was precisely what Hesiod counseled (WD 27ff., 311ff.). This differs from the situation at the end of Book 1, where conflicts eliminated such propriety (tot bella per orbem / tam multae scelerum facies, non ullus aratro/ dignus honos, 505-7).

The picture of civil war that ends Book 1 is probably one of the simplest examples of strife in the poem. We have noted already how war and civil war can emerge from an exaggerated competitive impulse, and this will be no exception. The triumphos for which Octavian cares so much (1.504) are but another manifestation of the political scrambling we saw at the end of Book 2. He emerges uictor from the contest of fraternal bloodshed just as from his eastern campaigns over meager foes (extremis Asiae...uictor in oris / imbellem auertis...Indum, 2.171-2) and will enjoy the great public acknowledgement of his superiority. In the competition for survival, which here has taken the form of war against other humans instead of against the land, Octavian has shown himself supreme.

Yet the wars that Octavian wages--especially the fraternal wars--are responsible for preventing the practice of agriculture, just as were Perses' in the Works and Days. We recall that his quasi-military quest for others'--specifically his brother's--goods, inspired by the eris of war, threatened the production of goods inspired by
the praiseworthy *eris* (μηδὲ ο’ Ἐρις...ἀν’ ἔργοι θυμῶν ἐρύκοι, 28). Vergil describes the Roman situation (1.505-8):

quippe ubi fas uersum atque nefas: tot bella per orbem, tam multae scelerum facies, non ullus aratro 506 dignus honos, squalent abductis arua colonis, et curuae rigidum falces conflantur in ensem.

The strife of war again hinders agriculture and honest toil, but Vergil has loaded his scene with an irony absent from Hesiod’s. For Hesiod the progression is linear from the good *eris* to the bad and from practicing agriculture to impeding its practice. Vergil, though, has told us that the world is upside down, that proper roles are reversed, and so his picture is not linear but circular. The metaphorical and worthy (*dignus honos*) war of agriculture has been interrupted by the wicked and perverse\(^{146}\) war proper, but in the process this real war utilizes transformed farming implements to perform metaphorical agriculture complete with produce (*falces...in ensem, 508; sanguine nostro / Emathiam et latos Haemi pinguescere campos, 491-2; agricola incuruo terram molitus aratro/...inueniet ...pila... rastris galeas pulsabit, 494-6).*\(^{147}\) And in a very real sense,

\(^{146}\) Recall labor *omnia uicit* / *improbus* (1.145-6) as well as *tam multae scelerum facies* linked directly with war in this passage.

\(^{147}\) Cf. e.g. 1.80: *saturare fimo pingui...sola*. Note also Putnam pp. 71-2.
the squalor induced by war (*squalent abductis arua colonis*, 507) will in due course necessitate more agricultural toil.

As in the *Works and Days*, the gods acquiesce to such violence (cf. ἀδανάτων βουλήσαν ἔρειν τιμῶν [16] and *nec fuit indignum superis bis sanguine nostro / ... pinguescere campos* [491-2]). But even as Mars rages over the world (1.511) we must remember his dual function. He is god both of agriculture and of war,\footnote{Line 511, *arma ferunt; saeuit toto Mars impius orbe*, may well point to this duality, if we recall that the farmer’s tools at 160 were *arma* (nominative case), for *arma* occurs in this book only at these two places (and as *armorum* at 474).} and as such he oversees those two products of Hesiod’s two *erides*. Vergil has tightened the knot of relationships here, though, by bringing both aspects of Mars under the single heading of warfare.\footnote{Recall that Vergil names both war and work labor (e.g. 3.193, 2.513).} And for Vergil, too, beyond the martial-agricultural inversion just discussed, the military motif has been central to the discussion of agriculture throughout, by means of which both war and farming have been presented as an imposition of will on a delimited environment. So Vergil has encapsulated in the imagery and the deity the conjunction of the two impositions urged by the two forms of Hesiodic strife, and in so doing he has shown that transition from the one to the other is a simple
step and that the seeds of the greater, more damning conflict lie in the everyday struggle for survival.

Other examples of effort's leading to violence can be found. The vine, for instance, which demands such a great expenditure of labor to achieve success, results in murderous violence by way of its product, wine (2.454-7). But in the proem to Book 3 Vergil indicates the deleterious character of jealousy not by showing its progression from necessity to competitiveness and then to violence but by indicating the nature of its removal. At the end of his description of his temple to Octavian Vergil depicts the banishment of invidia to the underworld where it will suffer fear of traditional figures and punishments (Furies, Cocytus, Ixion's wheel, Sisyphus' rock [3.37-9]). Octavian has succeeded beyond the point where competition with him is acceptable, and accordingly the poet asserts a break in the normal cycle. M. W. Dickie has shown how the

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150 Thomas (1988) describes the connection of labor with the vine ad 2.420-5, "The success of labor in Book 2 is virtually synonymous with successful viticulture," and ad 2.454-7, "the vine, and man's propagation, control and cultivation of it, achieved through the application of labor, and frequently depicted as a kind of warfare against its natural tendencies, have been the subject of most of the book."
banishment of ἰνίδια or inuidia was standard emperor-praise,\textsuperscript{151} and one can see its symbolic importance here. The advanced stage of the competitive impulse almost destroyed the Roman state with civil war and, in the vignette closing Book 1, wrought havoc on the virtuous pursuit of agriculture; competition with the victor of that struggle would amount to nothing less than renewed civil war. The poet shows his awareness of the potential for danger to evolve from continual striving, then, by rejecting it here as unfruitful (infelix)\textsuperscript{152} for society.

We recognize, though, that Vergil invests his labor with more than this one, competitive aspect of Hesiod’s eris. Farrell states that, “as we have now seen in so many similar cases, [Vergil] analyzes his archaic original into its elementary components, discovers in these disiecta membra the germ of new poetic possibilities, and creates through imitation an original idea in harmony with the demands of a poem for a new age.”\textsuperscript{153} This idea suggested itself earlier in my


\textsuperscript{152} Thomas (1988) notes ad 2.81, “felix, like laetus (1.1n) often holds its primary sense ‘fertile’, ‘fruitful’ in the Georgics.”

\textsuperscript{153} Farrell p. 143.
analysis of the theodicy, where I showed that Vergil borrowed *eris* from the thematically continuous sequence of myths that included the Myth of Ages and the myth of Prometheus and Pandora. While Hesiod made *eris* an integral part of the fabric of a new world that required work to live, Vergil has conflated the various myths into a single, seamless version wherein *labor* plays the role not only of *eris* in its more restricted function but also in its more comprehensive aspects as they were loosely developed in the subsequent myths of *Works and Days*.

Vergil has used the connection between *eris*’ urging humans to work and the other myths’ mandating that humans work to create a single system in the *Georgics*, where *labor* informs the entire (real and) mythological complex. He has maintained the twofold nature that Hesiod gave *eris* in *WD* 11-26 to describe the new natural cycle, so that just as war responds to the divinely occasioned impulse to compete, so more broadly work responds to the divinely ordained intransigence of a nature no longer spontaneously productive—a competition with nature for survival. Vergil cinches the connection by using terms fitting the narrower, martial conflict—the formal qualities of blameworthy *Eris*, that is—when he treats the general, agricultural struggle for existence as a metaphorical war.
On a grand scale, then, we can say that labor represents the natural cycle, for this is what compels humans to work, which itself is the responding labor. The unforced provision of a bountiful earth has disappeared along with the eternal spring of the pre-Jovian era. The static has given way to the cyclical (2.401-2):

redit agricolis labor actus in orbem
atque in se sua per uestigia uoluitur annus.

So while Vergil’s labores display the traits of Hesiod’s erides, he also has expanded the parameters of his discussion of their interaction to include more than simply an impulse to work or war; he makes explicit Hesiod’s implications. The tension between the two includes the natural tendency toward decay or dissolution and the tendency toward growth, between destroying and building, between merging and distinction, between order and disorder. In Vergil’s adaptation of eris and its development in labor, Iron-Age competitiveness arises from the Jovian labor and leads to war, which is itself, of course, a labor, that in its turn necessitates further effort (such as the need to resuscitate neglected fields). Not only, then, does the first labor represent the cyclical pattern in nature (e.g. the seasons), but in tandem with the second labor displays a cyclical interaction between humans and their environment. Furthermore, by using
military imagery to describe agricultural imposition on nature, Vergil accomplishes at least two things: he shows how the microcosm (of simply surviving) mirrors the macrocosm (of all endeavor even as far as world conquest) and he adds potential moral implications for basic human activities.

In the next chapter I will examine how Vergil assembles both destructive and creative forces under the rubric of liquid imagery to describe this fluctuating natural cycle and its contingencies. As Vergil’s scheme has left no space between these forces in the process of existence, we will see that it is seldom easy to attach simple, fixed valuations or labels to conditions, and thus we will come to see that Vergil’s discussion itself is fluid.\footnote{Again I would direct the reader to Batstone (1988) and (1984), in the conclusion of which he discusses the Georgics’ “ability to conjure up and contemplate things from many, even contradictory, perspectives” (370). He says that “Propositions like name-calling refuse to be fixed propositions and become the image of a voice that tries to label a fluid reality” (my emphasis; 373) and considers Vergil’s treatment of processes that are circular (373).}

The issue of human control and direction of natural forces will form the topic of the third chapter, where we will see that the success or failure of mortal endeavors can be explained in terms of the integrity of boundaries. Already we have seen how the military motif plays a part in depicting this human struggle, and here we will
see further that in order to extract a living from a tenacious earth humans must attempt to control, mediate, and form boundaries in order to contain or delimit the potential found in the natural cycle. We will find that the bugonia encapsulates this struggle, but as Vergil’s discussion is not restricted merely to human agricultural efforts, so too ours will go beyond simple agricultural examples.
CHAPTER II

Liquid Imagery

Vergil begins his ostensibly didactic material with the fundamental transition from solid to liquid (1.43-4):

Vere nouo, gelidus canis cum montibus amor
liquitur et Zephyro putris se glæba resoluit...

This springtime, however, does not represent the idyllic, Golden-Age Spring of myth, for that Spring endured perpetually. Vergil binds this transition intimately and emphatically to a period within a natural motion, Beginn und Ziel sind gegenwärtig, der Gang des Jahres, of which the idyllic season of spring is merely a part. By the end of the paragraph he has taken us through the cyclical pattern of seasonal changes: through waxing days (maturis solibus, 66) and

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1 Klingner (25) actually focuses on cyclical work, but this only shows what we have seen before and will see again, that the need for work and the work-response to the need are in constant, dynamic interplay, are complementary, and so a description of one will often serve conversely as a description of the other. Batstone (1988) notes of spring and the poem’s shifting meanings, “In this small way, as spring is itself a process in time which sets things in motion and changes them, so Vergil’s description requires a sense of changing syntax” (239).
toward the fall equinox (*sub ipsum / Arcturn*, 67-8). In addition to joining spring to a yearly cycle, Vergil further removes it from myth and plants it in the Jovian era by tying it to work as well (*incipiat iam tum..., 45f.*). Yet while spring does not mean a golden age, its liquidity does represent the fertility once abundant in the Golden Age.

We recognize from lines both immediately following and further removed that the fertile and productive soil of 1.43-4 that arises from the seasonal-cyclical process of dissolution--symbolized here by snow's liquefaction--has two qualities: it is *putris* and *pinguis*.\(^2\) Lines 1.63ff. tell us of productive *pingue solum* (64) that needs to be rendered crumbly by plowing and the effects of the sun (*inuertant, 65; puluerulentia, 66*) in order to produce, while a remaining non... *tellus fecunda* (67) requires a second breaking-down by the plow to evoke the merits of the *pinguis* soil or merely to ensure its

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presence. Elsewhere Vergil makes explicit the connection implied here between plowing and the desirable *putris* soil: *nigra... et... pinguis... terra/ et cui putre solum (namque hoc imitamur arando)./ optima frumentis* (2.203-5). More succinctly he states its absolute value: *optima putri/ arua solo* (2.262-3). These examples show us that, in order to be fecund, soil needs to enjoy not merely the process of dissolution from 1.43-4 to become *putris* (cf. *liquitur ... resoluit*, 1.44) but also the product of the melting to become *pinguis* (cf. *umor*, 1.43). Yet again the most specific connection between fertility and liquid in the *Georgics*’ opening technical passage is perhaps the

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3 I must diverge from the editors’ interpretation of the relationships in 67-70. Mynors notes ad 67 that “at *si* is used when the presumption on which we have been acting hitherto is withdrawn, and to suit the new conditions fresh instructions have to be issued.” The new conditions are unproductive land (at *si non... tellus fecunda*) and the instructions are to plow lightly for the two reasons given in the dependent (negative) purpose clauses that follow in 69 (*illics*) and 70 (*hic...*). Both clauses are subordinate to 67-8 in sense and grammatically; both explain the rationale behind the action of the apodosis; so to treat the protasis, *non... tellus fecunda*, as the referent for 70 misconstrues the sense and syntax of the sentence: it ignores that at *si non... fecunda* is the condition from which both 69 and 70 ultimately arise. Indeed *illics* refers to a *pingue solum*, but in this case to a *non fecundum* one, which does not produce due to the interference of the weeds that the plowing will remove, and as *pingue* occurred only five lines earlier it is not repeated. Instead the reader supplies it from the contrasting *hic, sterilum... harenam* of the following line. The *sterilem harenam* is also *non fecundam* and thus needs to be plowed to maintain its moisture, but it is *sterilem... harenam* and not *non... fecunda* that describes the soil type in 70 that differs from the one in 69. Cf. 2.251-3.

4 Ross explains the moistness of *pinguis* in his second chapter (esp. pp. 34ff.).
rationale behind plowing an infertile field to make it fertile: *ne deserat umor* (70). The liquefying *umor* that appeared at the start of the passage to introduce the season of fertility reappears at the end of the passage as the essential element of fertility itself.⁵

There is a final point to be made about the emphatically placed *umor/liquitur*, and it goes back to its being in transition,⁶ for while I noted that Vergil depicts the advent of a season of fertility, I did not emphasize that he also thereby implies a context into which an absent fertility must be introduced—a season without fertility. The snow on the mountains symbolizes the frozen, winter months, wherein nothing grows. Vergil describes such a season at 2.315-8:

> Nec tibi tam prudens quisquam persuadeat auctor tellurem Borea rigidam spirante mouere. rura gelu tunc claudit hiems, nec semine iacto concretam patitur radicem adfigere terrae.

This season of frozen water does not allow any fertility and obstructs the farmer’s efforts, and Vergil uses it elsewhere to characterize the barren extremes of Scythia’s unproductive land (3.352ff.):

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⁵ W. R. Johnson, in *Horace and the Dialectic of Freedom* (Ithaca 1993), suggests the fertility of liquid (149) as well as a comparison with Vergil: “Horace’s garden resembles in many ways the rural, agrarian Italies we find in...Vergil’s *Georgics*” (150). Henceforth Johnson.

⁶ Professor Batstone explains how the verb *liquitur* itself introduces a fluidity of meaning to the passage (Batstone [1988]: 238-9).
neque ullam
aut herbae campo apparent aut arbore frondes;
sed iacet aggeribus niveis informis et alto
terra gelu late septemque adsurgit in ulnas.
semper hiems, semper spirantes frigora Cauri.

congrescent subitae currenti in flumine crustae...

et totae solidam in glaciem uertere lacunae.

He uses it as well to contrast the miraculous agricultural prowess of
the Corycian farmer, who defies seasonal boundaries (4.135-7):

et cum tristis hiems etiamnum frigore saxa
rumperet et glacie cursus frenaret aquarum,
ille comam mollis iam tondebat hyacinthi.

And, when Orpheus has lost Eurydice, his wanderings take him to
desolate lands that reflect his inner frigidity and abandonment of
fertile interactions with other humans (4.516-9):

nulla Venus, non ulli animum flexere hymenaei:
solus Hyperboreas glacies Tanaimque niualem
aruaque Riphiaeis numquam uiduata pruinis
lustrabat.

Furthermore, while water in non-liquid form suggests infertility, the
only occurrence of the verb *liquor* other than 1.44 reveals once
again the connection between liquidity and fertility (2.185-8):

quique frequens herbis et fertilis ubere campus,
qualem saepe caua montis conuale solemus
despicere (huc summis liquuntur rupibus amnes
felicemque trahunt limum).
Already in the first two lines after the proem, then, Vergil has introduced the vital concepts of the seasonal fluctuation that forces humans to perform labor in cycles and the imagery of liquids that will describe the fertility necessary for human survival.

In that same passage Vergil states that we must learn the nature and habits of a place before plowing (*prius ignotum ferro quam scindimus aequor*, 1.50), "a line which, with one change (e.g. *pinu* for *ferro*), would refer not to ploughing, but to seafaring." As noted previously, Vergil links farming and sailing quite closely in the *Georgics*; indeed they both appear in the theodicy as icons of the Jovian Age. Therefore it should be remarked before we go on that Vergil casts the poem's primary activity, agriculture, in imagery suited as well to sailing, so that oftentimes agricultural references will carry with them some intimation water-borne activity. This is especially true in the six instances where we see in *aequor* a primary reference to land,\(^7\) while in others a deliberate conflation of land and sea images is evident.\(^8\) Through *aequor* especially, then,

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\(^7\) Thomas (1988) *ad* 1.50. See also Mynors, Page, et alii.

\(^8\) 1.50, 97; 2.105, 205, 541; 3.195.

\(^7\) E.g. 1.327 where the land is flooded and 3.201, where there are “three pairs of words, in each of which one word stands for land and one for sea” (Mynors *ad* 3.198).
these modern arts become connected in their response (*labor*) to the state of Iron-Age existence.

Vergil does not leave the business of liquids simple, of course, and in our first meeting with the trees of *Georgics* 2 he provides a catalogue of ten that grow without human assistance (10-19). He thus undermines the expectations that we developed in encounters with the ceaseless effort required for farming in Book 1 by suggesting an almost Golden-Age fertility in the trees' habits (*nullis hominum cogentibus ipsae / sponte sua*, 10-11; cf. 1.127-8). Although the Jovian Age intrudes immediately with its artifice (*sunt alii, quos ipse uia sibi repperit usus*, 22; cf. *uiam*, 1.122, and *usus*, 133) and familiar violence (*obruit*, 24),¹ Vergil takes the opportunity to argue that at least one of these trees stands still further apart from the usual needs of the Iron Age. The olive, he says, grows even from dry, hewn stumps (2.30-1):

\[
\text{quin et caudicibus sectis (mirabile dictu)} \\
\text{truditur e sicco radix oleagina ligno.}
\]

The vitality of the plant extends past amputation (cf. *abscindens de corpore matrum*, 23) to growth from the dried out pieces (*sicco*, 31). The element of the combination that stands out, however, must be

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¹ *Obru* occurs eight times in the *Aeneid* but in the *Georgics* only here.
the tree's maintaining vitality after having lost its moisture, for while
the farmer similarly dismembers other trees for plantings, we do not
hear of their becoming dry. The emphasis on the miraculousness of
the olive's puissance therefore serves to set in relief the normal
circumstance of liquid's being the *sine qua non* of life.

While it is a marvel for something deprived of liquid to grow and
farmers normally must assure liquid's presence for a productive and
fertile field, Vergil warns as well that this liquid fertility in a soil
(*tellus*, 2.248) can become overwhelming and undesirable (2.251-3):

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umida maiores herbas alit, ipsaque iusto
laetior. a, nium ne sit mihi fertilis illa,
nec se praeualidam primis ostendat aristis!
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Thomas (1988) points out that "when the foliage (*herbas*) grows too
tall and too rapidly...the fruit or produce is robbed of its nutriment."

At 1.111 we see a similar danger. This time, however, it is the ears,
not the foliage, that become too heavy for the stalks, the remedy for
which is grazing the young plants or avoiding the problem initially
by removing the potent moisture (1.111-4):

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quid qui, ne grauidis procumbat culmus aristis,
luxuriem segetum tenera depascit in herba,
cum primum sulcos aequant sata, quique paludis
collectum umorem bibula deducit harena?
```

Page explains the dilemma *ad* 1.111: "lest the stalk fall beneath the
weight of the ear,' as would happen if owing to the excess of moisture [my emphasis] the corn grew too tall and luxuriant.” Mynors sees the same problem in the former passage: “V. seems to fear that plentiful water will cause excessively fast growth, as a result of which the crop will fall flat as soon as it comes into ear (for it is hard to see what else primis aristis can mean).”¹¹ Thus while fertility and growth require liquid water, the connection between them is such that too much liquid creates too much fertility, which presents a real danger of losing the harvest’s quality or the crop itself. We can begin to see now, that Vergil’s liquids inhabit a complex environment in which changes in context and degree render it difficult or impossible to apply fixed or necessary values to content. While liquids represent a fundamental fertility that the farmer must provide to ensure productive fields,¹² in some select cases their absence does not eliminate vitality and in others they may be too effective to be helpful.¹³

¹¹ Mynors ad 2.251-3.

¹² Indeed Putnam claims that water is “the most essential, creative element in nature” (278).

¹³ On p. 32 Liebeschuetz comments on Lucretius’ attribution of multiple valences for a single item.
The liquid need not be water, however. At the end of the first book we encounter the aforementioned inversion of the metaphor that says agriculture is warfare; here war has become metaphorical agriculture and the fertilizing liquid is blood (1.491-2):

\[
nec \ fuit \ indignum \ superis \ bis \ sanguine \ nostro \\
Emathiam \ et \ latos \ Haemi \ pinguescere \ campos.
\]

Again a *pinguis* soil is fertile and productive, and--in keeping with the liquid, the seed, and the planters--the crop will suit warfare: *pila* (495), *galeas* (496), and *ossa* (497). This harvest displays a further parallelism to agriculture proper that brings even this unusual crop within the pale of the natural cycle of the Iron-Age. Not only are liquids needed to produce abundance at harvest, but the same blight attacks this crop as attacked that of Ceres. Both here and in the theodicy Vergil uses the bold image of *robigo*’s eating the crop (*mala culmos / esset robigo, 1.150-1; exesa... scabra robigine pila, 1.495). Even armor and warfare fit into the natural cycle, where fertility passes to harvest whereupon it is broken back down.

The crop of military hardware immediately suggests Vergil’s Praises of Italy in Book 2. There we could argue for the literal truth of *nec galeis densisque uirum seges horruit hastis* (2.142) as far as Italy is concerned, for the Roman *pila* and *galeae* that the future
farmer's field will produce (1.493-7) lie in the confines of Philippi
(Romanas acies iterum uidere Philippi, 1.490; finibus illis, 1.493).
But it is hard to see why Vergil would repeat such a vivid image and
specify the correspondence with vocabulary unique in the Georgics
to these two passages (galeas, 1.496; galeis, 2.142), if he did not
expect the reader to associate the mythological crop of warriors with
those fields fattened with Roman blood and producing a crop of
Roman arms.14 Here again we see a fertile land that bears soldiers,
and Vergil uses liquid imagery to characterize that land's abundance.
The wine-god's liquid fills Italy like a cup (Bacchi Massicus umor /
impleuere, 143-4), while the copious victories of the land's warriors
find culmination in the Clitumnus' frequently bathing victims in its
waters to prepare them for sacrifice (saepe tuo perfusi flumine
sacro, 147).15 Indeed, enumerated in the list of Italy's resources are
at least eight lines that include its rivers, seas, lakes, and ports
(flumina, 157; mare, 158; lacus, 159-60; portus, 161-4). The list of

14 Contrast the view of R. F. Thomas, Lands and Peoples in Roman
Poetry. The Ethnographical Tradition, Cambridge Philological Society
Supplement 7 (1982) 39-40, 85, who feels 11. 136-42 are mere foreign
thaumasia from which Italy's realities are to be distinguished. For a
general treatment of Vergil's manipulation of the ethnographical
tradition in this passage see his pp. 39ff. Henceforth Thomas (1982).

15 Ross notes that the maxima uictima looks forward to the Aratean
motif of the violent and impious bronze age at the end of the book (116-
17).
Italy's abundant waters culminates in metaphorical rivers that flow with precious metals (165-6):

haec eadem argenti riuos aerisque metallaa
ostendit uenis atque auro plurima fluxit.

And as he turns solid metals to liquid to show Italy's opulence,\(^\text{16}\) so here Vergil finds inspiration--poetic fertility--in metaphorical springs (174-6):\(^\text{17}\)

\begin{equation}
tibi res antiquae laudis et artem
ingredior sanctos ausus recludere fontis,
\end{equation}

Ascræumque cano Romana per oppida carmen.

The land that is so fertile that its animals and crops bear twice, that eastern kingdoms cannot vie with its riches, the \textit{magna pares frugum} (173), is metaphorically and literally brimming with liquids.

Likewise in Book 2 Vergil places the Praises of Spring (323-45), where he claims that the spring of the current, cyclical system enjoys a fertility and mildness once universal and eternal. The creativity and fruitfulness of the season finds embodiment in the metaphor of sexual union between sky god and earth goddess (325-7):

\begin{equation}
tum pater omnipotens fecundis imbribus Aether
coniugis in gremium laetae descendit, et omnis
magnus alit magno commixtus corpore fetus.
\end{equation}

\(^{16}\) Thomas (1982) suggests the image's negative potential (42-3).

\(^{17}\) See Page ad 175 and Mynors ad 174-5 for the metaphor.
We have confirmation in mythological terms, then, of the potency and fertility of liquids. The showers are fecund (*fecundis*), their receiver fertile (*laetae*), and their bringer universally powerful (*omnipotens*). His sexual mingling with his mate, while couched in a ‘polite’ term for intercourse,\(^{18}\) maintains the image of his essential liquidity as he nourishes all produce (*omnis fetus*).

In the eight lines that follow the *hieros gamos* and precede the description of pre-Jovian conditions (328-35), Vergil describes nature’s response to spring and the mighty union: thicket resound with birds’ calls, cattle breed, the land produces, grasses dare to grow and vines do not fear storms but thrust forth buds and unfurl leaves. Every item in these lines is an action in response to the tranquility and fertility of the season, save the second half of line 331:

\[
\text{superat tener omnibus umor.}
\]

Rather than a response to spring, here we have a quality of it, and again we see fruitfulness tied to liquid. Vergil tells us in epic tones\(^ {19}\) that in spring, the remnant of an ideal era and still when all things grow and reproduce, the sky god brings waters that nourish all things; more prosaically but to the very same point he tells us that

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\(^ {19}\) Cf. *DRN* 1.250-3 and Homer’s μέγας μεγάλωσι (Iliad 16.776 and *passim*). See also Thomas (1988) and Mynors on these lines.
moisture abounds.

Similar to that in the Praises of Italy, the Praise of Rustic Life (2.458ff.) presents the reader with another idealized scenario. Perhaps the most striking claim for the life of the simple country-dweller is to be found at the very start (458-60):

O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint,
agricolas! quibus ipsa procul discordibus armis
fundit humo facilem uictum iustissima tellus.

Their good fortune defies the very nature of the Jovian Age, as we recall from the theodicy (1.121-2, 149):

pater ipse colendi
haud facilem esse uiam uoluit.

uictum Dodona negaret.

Rather, their situation approximates the blissful age before the imposition of Jove’s new laws (1.127-8):

(ante iouem) ipsaque tellus
omnia liberius nullo poscente ferebat.

Of course at 2.500-1 we find confirmation of the Golden-Age habits of the land that the farmer enjoys:

quos rami fructus, quos ipsa uolentia rura
sponte tulere sua, carpsit (agricola).

Furthermore our fortunate farmer finds himself separated
momentarily indeed from war, but also from the very tools of his trade, his *arma* (*procul ...armis*, 459), which Vergil listed immediately after the theodicy (*Dicendum et quae sint duris agrestibus arma*, 1.160). A spontaneous earth removes the need for weapons (tools) and competition (war), and the theodicy tells us that the elimination of such ease was Jupiter's original purpose. On the basis of these few examples alone, therefore, we can recognize the utopian quality of the life described here. More to the immediate point, Vergil expresses these pre-Jovian conditions of pervasive fertility and resultant, spontaneous bounty enjoyed by the farmer with the image of pouring a liquid (*fundit ...tellus*, 460).

Not only does this farmer receive poured-out munificence from a just earth, he himself is "poured out" amid the bounty of his existence. He lives a life of bliss despite the nominal presence of *labor* and seasonal change (514ff.), and his land enjoys a fertility that "delivers effortlessly, merely on ploughing the ground," for which we may compare our earlier discussion of *pinguis* and *putris* (pp. 91ff.). Acorns and arbutes again abound (520; cf. 1.148-9), cows have full udders, and kids are *pingues*, all of which mark the natural

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20 Thomas (1988) ad 4.513-40 describes how this is a Golden-Age existence.

fruitfulness of the setting. Here, with full mixing bowls and libations to Lenaeus, the farmer is "poured" on the grass (527):

\[\text{ipse dies agitat festos fususque per herbam.}\]

Vergil tells us that with his *dulces nati* (523) and *secura quies* (467)\(^2\) the farmer indeed enjoys great riches of his own.

Amid this portrayal of an idyllic farm-life, Vergil has placed an assessment of his poetic options. The possibilities lie in a poetry that comprehends nature and its inner workings and a poetry that espouses the delights of the countryside in a more pastoral vein.\(^3\) The force that might prevent his attainment of the former concerns us here. That force would be cold blood about his heart (483-4):\(^4\)

\[\text{sin has ne possim naturae accedere partis frigidus obstiterit circum praeordia sanguis...}\]

As indicated earlier, liquids—even blood—can provide fertility, but frozen liquids are signs of infertility. I would suggest, then, that

\(^2\) Cf. *WD* 112, ἀκηδέα θύμον.

\(^3\) I would suggest that the question is less of an "either or" than it appears at first reading. The former "choice" is for knowledge and the latter for appreciation. These two can be complementary—object and approach—and if we are to understand with Thomas ([1988] *ad* 475-94 and ff.) that these may represent Vergil's current and previous poetic endeavors, the *Georgics* and the *Eclogues*, we must understand that they are not exclusive, for Vergil did manage to create both.

\(^4\) Conington (*ad* 484) and others direct us to Empedocles for the source of the theory.
Vergil has taken this opportunity to cast his poetic fertility, if you will, into the general equation of liquidity, and has found Empedocles' theory useful and germane in illustrating his discussion of scientific knowledge and poetry. Though strictly speaking the blood may not be frozen (cf. *gelidus*, 1.43), it is not a free-flowing liquid, either, as *obstiterit* implies. The cold blood, then, approximates in scientific-poetic terms the frozen liquids that we have seen to be indicative of agricultural infertility; thus such blood would inhibit Vergil's abilities, in contrast to the *sacros fontis* of 2.175, which enable the poet to sing his Asciaean song.

Cyrene's realm, in Book 4, is a yet larger mythological setting where we find the forces of liquidity at work. Ross hits on the nature of the place when he says on page 225, "Cyrene offers a mother's comfort and love and receives Aristaeus in the depths of the nurturing element itself, the life-giving *umor." Cyrene, of course, is a water-nymph to begin with and proven fecund by her offspring Aristaeus, who returns now to the womb.\(^{25}\) As Vergil has cast the region as a metaphorical womb, its fertility is not in doubt, which confirms the association of liquid and fertility that we have seen elsewhere. The emphasis that Vergil places on the wetness here,

\(^{25}\) Putnam 279-80. He treats Cyrene's realm and its wetness on 278ff., and on 282 he says, "Water is again the essential, ultimate principle."
though, deserves some attention.

Aristaeus’ approach to Cyrene contains only the slightest hint of the stress to be placed on the waters in her kingdom. He stands at the head of the Peneus (caput ...amnis, 319) and names her as the one who keeps the depths of the stream (quae gurgitis huius / ima tenes, 321-2). His complaints seem petulant and perhaps sarcastic, as if he doubts his mother’s ability to destroy all his orchards, stables, fields, and vineyards, for the bees that he has lost are indeed the least hardy of his charges. Thus when he sees for himself the magnitude of her realm, he is stupefied; he sees the waters—the “ultimate nurturing element”²⁶—in their vastness beyond the single stream where he stood.

The picture of the realm begins with its central figure in her central chamber (mater ...thalamo sub fluminis, 333) and passes quickly into a list of the nymphs that surround her. As the scene is set under water and alludes to Achilles’ lament to Thetis in the Iliad, we expect that the nymphs surrounding Cyrene will be water-nymphs as were Thetis’ accompanying Nereids.²⁷ Such, however, is not the case, and only two seem to be so, for Clio and Beroe are

²⁶ Ross 222.

²⁷ Iliad 18.37ff.
Oceanids (341). The focus on the liquid aspects of the realm, then, is delayed again for several lines until Arethusa pokes her head out of the water (caput extulit unda, 352) and sees Aristaeus, again by the river (ad undam, 355), shedding tears (lacrimans, 356), about which more later. Once he enters, though, water predominates.

When she orders the river to part (iubet discedere... / flumina, 359-60) and the wave takes the shape of a mountain (curuata in montis faciem ...unda, 361), Cyrene makes manifest her divine powers and mastery of the element of fertility, for she is able to cause liquid water to assume internal definition and internally cohesive shape. Having used water and her power over it to gather up her son, she now receives him sub amnem (362), and for the next eleven lines Vergil lists the sight of waters that astounds Aristaeus (mirans, 363; stupefactus, 365).

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29 Normally, externally placed barriers are required to separate bodies of water, or they would flow into each other and mix indiscriminately. Here it parts and stays parted without intervening obstacles. Separation will occupy us in the next chapter.

30 Liquid water cannot, of course, be piled up or maintain a shape other than its container’s, for it has no internal structure—another concern for the next chapter.
The first several lines of this spectacle describe generally the various waters. Aristaeus sees Cyrene’s realm as *umida regna* (363), within which are enclosed lakes and woods (*lacus clausos lucosque*, 364). Then the sight of the world’s living pulse stuns him (365-7):

\[\text{et ingenti motu stupefactus aquarum omnia sub magna labentia flumina terra spectabat diuera locis.}\]

Water, flowing underground, expresses the vitality of the world and this domain, its heart. Aristaeus absorbs the scene only slowly; first it astounds him as a whole, single movement, but soon he discerns all the world’s various rivers individually. Vergil details a list of eight,\(^{31}\) and he concludes with a three-line depiction of the Eridanus, which itself ends in a line that emphasizes liquids (371-3):

\[\text{et gemina auratus taurino cornua uulu Eridanus, quo non alius per pinguia culta in mare purpureum uiolentior effluit amnis.}\]

The river and its destination are liquids, and the verb describes its liquid flow through fields made fertile--moist--by its waters (*pinguia*).\(^{32}\)

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\(^{31}\) Could Vergil have been punning on *unda* in the tricolon of unde, used to describe the rivers in 368-9?

\(^{32}\) *quo non alius*... implies as well that other *pinguia culta* have their own sources of moisture, their own rivers.
Following the catalogue of waters comes the treatment of Aristaeus, and here, too, liquids enjoy a central position. The nymphs bring him water, described in exalted language, to wash his hands (manibus liquidos dant ...fontis, 376) and set full cups on the table (plena.../ pocula, 378-9). Full wine-cups, as we saw in the Praises of Italy, represent bounty and fertility (graudae fruges et Bacchi Massicus umor / impleuere, 2.143-4). The introduction to Book 2 presents us with a similar understanding (2.4-6):

huc, pater o Lenaee: tuis hic omnia plena
muneribus, tibi pampoline grauidus autumno
floret ager, spumat plenis uindemia labris.

Of course in this passage the making of wine stands as a metaphor for poetic creation, but the image is the same and the abundant vintage represents the successful and productive poetic endeavor.

Now Cyrene turns to libation: cape Maeonii carchesia Bacchi: Oceano libemus (380-1). Not only are the waters that flow in Cyrene's realm the vital pulse of the world, we now learn that Ocean, the great encircling water, is the source of all being (Oceanumque

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33 See Mynors ad 4.376ff.

34 Page ad 4.378 notes that wine is the beverage, and we gather this as well from 380: Maeonii carchesia Bacchi.
patrem rerum, 382).\(^{35}\) Seeking a sign from him she pours liquid into fire (ter liquido ardentem perfundit nectare Vestam, 384) and achieves, apparently, the proper balance (as does Vergil in this golden line about which Ross and Thomas are strangely silent), for the response is propitious (ter flamma ad summum tecti subiecta reluxit, 385).\(^{36}\) The omen confirms her belief that Proteus must be sought, “because he knows all things”\(^{37}\) and, perhaps not surprisingly, as a fundamental source he is a creature of water (Est in Carpathio Neptuni gurgite uates..., 387), about whom more will be said later. Once she has finished her pronouncement about Proteus, Cyrene prepares her son for his task, and again she utilizes that in which she has the greatest power—liquids. While the nectar she poured on the fire just before her speech was understandably liquid (liquido ...perfundit nectare, 384), for nectar is the gods’ drink, we might expect the ambrosia with which she anoints Aristaeus just after her speech not to be quite so fluid, but it is (liquidum ambrosiae defundit odorem, 415). In Cyrene’s hands fundamental force and power are liquid, and so that aspect of the divine nectar and

\(^{35}\) “With rerum V. also alludes to the theory of water as the original element” (Thomas [1988] ad 4.382).

\(^{36}\) See Conington and others ad 384 for the blaze’s propitious nature.

\(^{37}\) Ross p. 222. 4.392: nout namque omnia uates.
ambrosia rises to the surface; in abstract terms, the fertility of the mother reinvigorates the child. We will return to examine certain other, less munificent aspects of Cyrene’s *umida regna* and her instructions to Aristaeus, but now we will look at a final example focusing on liquids and fertility.

Returning from the realm of myth, we will examine for our final expression of the basic connection between fertility and liquids the infusion of vitality into seeds, which will serve also as a seguí into a discussion of Vergil’s treatment of the destructive powers of liquids. At 1.193-6 the poet describes preparations made to ensure the vigor and success of his crop:

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semina uidi equidem multos medicare serentis
et nitro prius et nigra perfundere amurca,
grandior ut fetus siliquis fallacibus esset
et quamuis igni exiguo properata maderent.
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The farmer will apply a solution of soda and of *amurca*, “the watery fluid expressed from olives at the same time as the oil,” to enhance his seeds’ growth, and Vergil’s use of the verb *perfundere*, ‘to soak’ or ‘to steep’, to describe the farmer’s efforts at fertilization sustains the connection between liquids and agricultural enrichment.

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38 Mynors *ad* 1.194.
Yet, as suggested earlier, Vergil does not leave relationships simple nor does he fix values immutably. So just as we recognize that *perfundere* designates the fertilizing treatment beneficial to the farmer's goals in 1.193-6, the poet uses it also in conjunction with another liquid (*sanguine*, 1.491), that once fertilized fields, to mark a horrific scene of death (*gaudent perfusi sanguine fratrum*, 2.510). It specifies the treatment for preventing the death of sheep due to disease (*dulcis idcirco fluuiis pecus omne magistri / perfundunt*, 3.445-6), and it describes the preparation of victims for death to celebrate military conquest (2.146-8):^39^

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{hinc albi, Clitumne, greges et maxima taurus} \\
\text{victimam, saepe tuo perfusi flumine sacro,} \\
\text{Romanos ad templae deum duxere triumphos.}
\end{align*}
\]

And while seeds soaked in *nitrum* and *amurca* may render superior plants, poppies soaked in sleep actually damage the land by ‘burning’ (*urunt Lethaeo perfusa papauera somno*, 1.78).

This last passage itself contains contrasting valuations, for at 1.84ff. Vergil tells us that burning can also be beneficial in retrieving fertility. Furthermore, the list of particular benefits derived from this burning focuses almost exclusively on the dual nature of liquids;

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^39^ A different perspective earlier allowed us to focus on Roman success in these lines.
while they can revive the lost fertility, they can also cause damage (1.84-93):\textsuperscript{40}

Saepe etiam sterilis incendere profuit agros atque leuem stipulam crepitantibus urere flammis: 85 siue inde occultas uiris et pabula terrae pinguia concipiunt, siue illis omne per ignem excoquitur uitium atque exsudat inutilis umor, seu pluris calor ille uias et caeca relaxat spiramenta, nouas ueniat qua sucus in herbas, 90 seu durat magis et uenas astringit hiantis, ne tenues pluiae rapidiue potentia solis acrior aut Boreae penetrabile frigus adurat.

We learn, then, that liquids themselves may be beneficial (\textit{pabula pinguia, sucus}) or the contrary (\textit{inutilis umor, tenues pluiae}),\textsuperscript{41} and again we observe the infertility of cold (\textit{penetrabile frigus adurat}). And although ‘burning’ by something ‘wet’ (\textit{urunt ...perfusa papauera}) can be damaging, burning by fire proves beneficial--because it either gives or takes moisture! So amid the interplay of elements we perceive that Vergil has also indicated an ambivalence in liquids.

Let us return now to 1.193ff., where we saw the farmer treating seeds with liquids to optimize their viability. The lines that follow,

\textsuperscript{40} Ross and Putnam discuss this passage on pp. 45-7 and 30-1 respectively, where they argue for a balancing of the elements. Ross, of course, makes much of the mixture of heat and wetness.

\textsuperscript{41} Standing water will devastate a crop of wheat or corn, unlike rice.
ending with the well known metaphor of the oarsman, express
another aspect of the natural cycle in which the farmer and his
treated seeds take part (1.197-203):

uidi lecta diu et multo spectata labore
degenerare tamen, ni uis humana quotannis
maxima quaeque manu legeret: sic omnia fatis
in peius ruere ac retro sublapsa referri,
non aliter quam qui adueso uix flumine lembum
remigiis subigit, si brachia forte remisit,
atque illum in praeceps prono rapit alueus amni.

I argued in the previous chapter how the labor in 197 describes the
human effort to control or direct natural forces, in this instance by
soaking the seeds with liquids; the sibling labor, I have also been
arguing, is the natural cycle, which forces humans to expend effort.
We see here that while trying to enhance the fertility-aspect of the
natural cycle, the farmer must try to restrict that aspect’s
complement—destruction—and still they “degenerate”. Our specific
focus here, however, is on the fact that Vergil uses liquid imagery to
inform the degeneration.

Human violence and force strive against backsliding from goals,
but backslide everything does, as sublapsa tells us. This other
labor, with a long a, finds itself frequently in the company of
liquids. *Labor* uncompounded describes rivers in Book 2 when they flow under ancient walls (*fluminaque antiquos subter labentia muros*, 2.157) and again in Book 4 where they flow under the earth (*sub magna labentia flumina terra*, 4.366), both of which *sub* (*subter*) modifies as in our passage. *Labor* also describes drainage at 2.349 (*labentur aquae*), and *dilabor* characterizes Proteus' liquid escape (*in aquas tenuis dilapsus*, 4.410). Another setting, the description of the plague's effects, which will concern us again in the next chapter, reveals a conjunction of destruction, liquids, and *labor*. 3.484-5 portray the internal effects of the disease on the living once thirst has disabled them:

> rursus abundabat fluidus liquor omniaque in se ossa minutatim morbo conlapsa trahebat.  

Here the fluid causes collapse of internal structures, while at 3.498ff. we see the external effects on the dying:

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42 *Labor* occurs nine times (1.6, 366; 2.133, 157, 349; 3.457, 498; 4.249, 366) *conlabor* once (3.485), *dilabor* twice (3.557; 4.410), *elabor* twice (1.244; 2.305), and *sublabor* once (1.200).

5 The similarity between the two lines is noteworthy and helps to show that Vergil intended some connection be recognized between the uses of *labor* and liquids: *labentur aquae, tenuisque subibit...*(2.349); *in aquas tenuis dilapsus abibit* (4.410).

"Page says ad 3.484, "The phrase describes the way in which the purulent fluid rots and undermines the bones so that they decay away into it."
Fluid (sudor) moves now outside the body whence we view the horse's collapse, and cold (frigidus) once again takes us far from fertility (infelix) to death itself (morituris). Finally we view the dead bodies and the results of destructive fluids (3.557):

    turpi dilapsa cadauera tabo.

The boat metaphor's sublapsa, too, sits in the context of liquids and so fits into a complex of liquid imagery that frequently embraces destruction and that spans the poem's four books.

We realize, then, that labor's 'slipping' in 1.200 is that of 'flowing' in keeping with and in preparation for the metaphor of the oarsman who fights the current. This metaphor sums up the arguments of the poem so far: Jupiter has made life a constant struggle for humans, and "it takes all man's disciplined ingenuity not to improve his lot but merely to maintain his simple gains." Of course the metaphor tells us more than this; fate itself deems that

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45 Putnam 40; see his pp. 38ff. Batstone (1984) recognizes what seems to me clearly to be the case: if it is fated that the oarsman relax at some point and glide backward, then he can hardly be deserving of blame: "In the context, Vergil has given us a failure which is ultimately as un-understandable as it is fated. These things happen" (424; 423ff).
the cycle not be stopped and the rower—that is to say each and every individual or particular thing—eventually moves to destruction. As a symbol to represent this aspect of universal law—of the natural cycle—Vergil has chosen water, and thereby he reinforces the precarious ambivalence of life in the Jovian Age: what is needed can also prove to be dangerous.

If we examine Orpheus and Eurydice's trials in Book 4 we will find concerns closely related to the metaphor of the oarsman,46 for both involve the failure of labor. Furthermore, these passages share vocabulary and both conclude with scenes of a boat being swept downstream. Let us begin by examining the vocabulary. To begin with, the verbs that mark the moment of failure in each passage are in the perfect tense and compounded with the prefix re- (remisit, 1.202; restitit, 4.490; respexit, 4.491). The verb rapere indicates in both cases what has happened to the victim; in 1.203 the river snatches the rower47 (illum ... rapit alueus) and at 4.504 and 519 Eurydice has been snatched away (rapta, raptam). The unstoppable (and inescapable) force that has determined the course of events is in each situation fate, and again the courses' directions are the same.

46 Miles notes the similarity of the passages on pp. 277-8 but does not pursue it.

47 Following Mynors ad 201-3.
for the passive victims—backward (fatis ...retro ...referri, 1.199-200; retro fata uocant ...feror, 4.495-7).

The failure that occurs in both passages is that of labor (labore, 1.197; labor, 4.492), as noted above. In Orpheus’ case, however, we should note the specific character of the failure, for it involves liquid imagery. Orpheus’ stopping and looking back causes his effort to be poured out like a liquid (effusus labor); as in the oarsman-metaphor the expended effort proves useful only as long as it and the uis humana can be exerted. In both situations, though, the victim eventually is carried off downstream, one in a lembus (1.201) by the river (flumine, 1.201; alueus, 1.203), the other in a Stygian bark (Stygia ...cumba, 4.506). The gnomic pronouncement of the first book, then, finds in the fourth book its specific, mythological exemplum, in which Vergil has used a concentration of shared ideas and vocabulary cues to confirm the recollection.

For our current purposes, then, death can be considered a form of destruction, and in dying Eurydice displays affinity for fluids. Not only does she ‘swim’ in Charon’s boat (nabat, 4.506), her eyes also begin to swim as death overtakes her (conditque natantia lumina somnus, 4.496). We also saw above that Vergil uses liquid imagery to describe the death brought on by the plague, for instance in the
case of the horse (labitur ...uictor equus, 3.498-9), and we could add to the list the bull that died under the yoke and flowed to the ground like water (solutur latera ...ad terramque fluit, 3.523-4). Book 2 gave us two scenes where liquids were bound up with death, too: bulls were bathed in the river before being sacrificed (2.147) and Romans\textsuperscript{48} enjoy bathing in the blood of their brothers (2.510), and the end of Book 1 supplies us with a picture of civil war, where we will find liquids in association with destruction as well.

In closing Book 1’s section on signs, the sun warns of impending war (caecos ...tumultus ...operta ...bella, 1.465), and then Vergil specifies the signs from the sun that accompanied Caesar’s death. To this are added the portents of land, sea, and so forth (469-71). A third of the signs that Vergil then enumerates (471-88)\textsuperscript{49} involve fluidity, some more impressive than others, but the two portents that command the greatest attention in the list, the three-line descriptions of Aetna and the Eridanus, fall into this category. The less elaborate include: the standing still of some rivers (sistunt

\textsuperscript{48} Mynors \textit{ad} 2.505 says, “as V. is writing about Romans and for Romans it is hard to think there can be much doubt” about the identity of the people discussed here.

\textsuperscript{49} I count Aetna’s eruption, sounds in Germany, Alpine tremors, the great voice, the phantoms, talking herds, still rivers, gaping earth, weeping and sweating statues, the Eridanus, fibers in entrails, blood in wells, howling wolves, lightning, and comets.
amnes, 479), strange for its arresting of the natural flow of water—as if time, too, stopped in a frozen moment where existence came to a halt; the dripping of blood in wells, which means the mixture of two fertilizing agents—water and blood—whose valuations, however, contrast markedly; and the sweat coming from bronzes (aeraque sudant, 480) and the tears shed by ivories (inlacrimat ...ebur, 480), which response to loss Aristaeus shares (lacrimans, 4.356).

The descriptions of Aetna’s eruption and Eridanus’ onrush themselves occupy a third of the eighteen lines of portents, however, and thus demand attention. The Eridanus is fluuiorum rex and thus in its way symbolic of all rivers and their power, and just as the river in the metaphor of the oarsman so too the Eridanus has the power to wash everything downstream with it: forests, herds, and their stables along with them (481-3). Violent even in a generally positive context (uiolentior..., 4.372-3), here it scours (proluit) the earth as it moves across it (camposque per omnis), while in reaction to the destruction of civil order Aetna also invades the fields after having cast off its shape (471-3). The mountain’s violence takes the form of fluids, with Aetna itself seething with waves (undantem ...Aetnam) and its rocks turning to liquid (liquefactaque ...saxa).50

50 Putnam makes much of this on p. 69.
This use of the verbal stem *liqui*- occurs elsewhere in the book only at line 44, where Vergil described the seasonal melting of snow (*liquitur*, 44).\(^{51}\) The re-use of the vocabulary in this context of destruction points again to the variety of aspects of the natural cycle and the flexibility of Vergil’s treatment thereof. While at one point we consider dissolution productive of a necessary and desired fertility, at another it can be seen as simple and unwanted destruction. Yet the ideas are not inconsistent; they merely disclose the fluctuating character of the natural cycle and, correspondingly, the poet’s treatment of it.

Likewise, the verb *undare* marks contrasting scenes of fertility and destruction elsewhere. At 2.437 Vergil extols the spontaneous fecundity (*fecundae*, 2.446) of trees by describing another mountain with the participle of *undare* (*undantem ...Cytorum*),\(^{52}\) where clearly the implications are positive. But on the doors of Octavian’s temple Vergil intends to place the Nile as it rages in war (*undantem bello magnumque fluentem / Nilum*, 3.28-9). Here the billowing is implicitly negative and dangerous, and it will be Octavian’s quelling of such threats that will earn him his exalted position. This list of

\(^{51}\) The adjective *liquidus* -a -um occurs at 404 and 410.

\(^{52}\) See Thomas (1988) *ad* 2.437 for the rationale behind Cytorus = a mountain.
signs does not conclude Vergil’s use of liquid imagery in describing the civil war, however; he has anchored his list with these liquid-based portents, but the sequence of events following Caesar’s death contains its own images of liquids and destruction.

We have seen already how the blood of the Roman soldiers fertilized the deadly fields of war (1.491-2), but only ten lines later Vergil repeats the phrase sanguine nostro in the same metrical position (491, 501). This second use, however, has associations also with the Eridanus, for in both cases the liquid washes things away, or rather tries to do so. But while the fertile liquid of the river destructively scours the land (proluit), inversely the blood—the product of destruction—that perversely fertilized the fields of war will, it is hoped, rinse the guilt from the Trojan line (501-2):

satis iam prudem sanguine nostro
Laomedonteae luimus periuria Troiae.

Thus again we witness in sanguis and luere the fluid and circular interplay of fertility and destruction. And as Roman guilt plays itself out in world-wide strife (tot bella per orbem, 505; saeuit toto Mars impius orbe, 511), Vergil depicts even the rivers themselves as partaking in the armed destruction (hinc mouet Euphrates ...bellum, 509) that steals dignity from the plow and leaves the fields shabby
from neglect (*squalent abductis arua colonis*, 507), while in other situations they are the source of vitality.

Rivers act destructively elsewhere, of course. The Eridanus displayed both of its aspects in the Aristaeus epyllion (4.372-3):

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

Both fertilizer and destroyer, it flows through the fields. The Claniu, too, passes through and presumably contributes to the land’s richness (2.217-23), but it destroys as well (2.224-5):

| talem diues arat Capua et uicina Vesaeuo
| ora iugo et uacuis Claniu non aequus Acerris. 225

It floods and scoursthe land as does the Eridanus, and thence arises its iniquity to Acerra. The town’s lost herds, stables, forests, and peoples are all subsumed in *uacuis*, emphatic in its desolation.

The Nile on the other hand, which we have seen surging with war, proves beneficial when it floods (*effuso ...flumine*, 4.288). Vergil’s description of the territory around the river (4.287-92)

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53 See Mynors ad 2.224-5 for the collection of sources on the river’s flooding.

54 Twice it refers to fields purposely emptied for human goals (2.54, 3.143), twice it refers to the emptiness of air (2.287, 3.109), once to vacant minds (3.3), twice to death: of a removed king-bee (4.90) and, in participial form, of pastures left vacant by the plague (*longe saltus lateque vacantis*, 3.477), and twice to floods (1.62, 2.225).
emphasizes the richness derived from the fertilizing waters, as we
gather from *fortunata* (287)\textsuperscript{55} and the pointed statement in 291
(...*uiridem Aegyptum nigra fecundat harena*). The river’s overflow
brings the best soil for crops,\textsuperscript{56} the land turns green with lush
growth,\textsuperscript{57} and the verb itself argues for the flood’s beneficent
fertility. Ross claims a similarity between the Nile’s fertilizing floods
and the bugonia, for black (*nigra*, 291) represents death and *harena*
is normally sterile. The Nile in Ross’ view, then, creates a new
vitality from (symbolic) death,\textsuperscript{58} which is in perfect keeping with
what we have seen for other rivers and even in the two passages we
examined concerning the Nile. They encapsulate natural processes in
their cyclical and inseparable destruction and fertility. Ross goes on
to cite Ovid’s comparison in the *Metamorphoses* of Deucalion’s flood
to the “Nile’s annual production of spontaneous life.”\textsuperscript{59} Strangely, he
does not mention Vergil’s own treatment of Deucalion’s flood, to

\textsuperscript{55} Thomas (1988) *ad* 4.287 looks to the “mythical ethnographical nature
of the passage” for the primary implications of *fortunata*.

\textsuperscript{56} As Thomas (1988) points out *ad* 4.291.

\textsuperscript{57} Ross says that *uiridem* means ‘not so much “green” as “full of new
growth”’ (217).

\textsuperscript{58} Ross 216-7.

\textsuperscript{59} Ross 217.
which we will turn now.

Vergil implies much in the four-line aetiology that describes the inception of the laws of modern (Jovian) existence (1.60-3):

continuo has leges aeternaque foedera certis
imposuit natura locis, quo tempore primum

Deucalion vacuum lapides iactuit in orbem,
unde homines nati, durum genus.

Without ever mentioning water, he compresses the story of Deucalion’s flood, the reordering and the repopulation of the earth into a few words. Of course Deucalion’s name suffices to invoke the flood itself, but *vacuum orbem* conveys the magnitude of its destruction: the world was left empty, scoured clean of its inhabitants, a situation analogous to the floods of the river Clanius, for instance, which also left the land *vacuus* (*uacuis* ...Aderris, 2.225), as we discussed earlier. This erasure, however, was the immediate (*continuo*) source and cause of new order, namely those very laws that the “begetting” or “productive”⁶¹ power (*natura*) established in the void. Then, following the diluvian cataclysm, there arose the newly-sown *durum genus* of *hominis*, who were born (*nati*) from

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⁶⁰ See Thomas (1988) *ad* 1.60 ("temporal and thus also logical") and ff.

⁶¹ Ross is emphatic about the active sense of *natura* (pp. 19ff.).
the “bones of the earth” (*lapides*, 62), which meaning for stones in this context we can glean from Ovid’s version of the story.\(^{62}\) Bones, of course, are structural elements exposed only when decay has removed form from a body, even as stones are remnants of earth’s decayed or dismantled foundations, exposed when the soil is washed away. Here both of these products of destruction provide in a single guise materials for new construction.

By selecting the story of Deucalion for this aetiology of natural variety Vergil has not only provided an archetype for the cyclical process of dissolution and rebuilding, but he has also yoked that archetype--and thus the process--securely to the inauguration of the Jovian age. For after having been reduced to formlessness by liquid at the hands of Jove, the earth has assumed its present shape through the application--indeed, the imposition--of the new, Jovian ordering principle that arose from that very dissolution. Furthermore, within this overarching picture of destruction and reconstruction lies a second illustration of the natural cycle, when humans are born from ‘bones’. And, finally, Vergil has established a correspondence between these manifestations of the cycle through vocabulary, for he marks the principle of creation in each with the

\(^{62}\) *Metamorphoses* 1.313-415.
word-stem nat- (natura, nati). From this compound destruction and rebirth we comprehend a message that Vergil iterates throughout the poem: life, growth, and structure are in eternal interplay with disorder, decay, and death in the Jovian age. This process and its aspects are the labor that compels humans to work and that Jove himself placed in the earth.

Vergil's treatment of the fifth as an unlucky day (1.277-83)\(^6\) contains again, as did the myth of Deucalion, a mythological archetype for worldly occurrences. The earth-born giants (partu Terra...creat...fratres, 278-80) make an attack on the kingdom of Jove and attempt to destroy it (caelum rescindere, 280).\(^6\) While trying to destroy the one ordered system they create another—a pile of mountains. To maintain his own system, pater Jove (283) destroys this new structure (ter pater exstructos disiecit fulmine montis, 283) just as humans destroy the structures of other, non-mythical terrestrial creatures when making a threshing-floor (1.178ff.). Furthermore, Jove must take action repeatedly (ter, 281

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\(^6\) Thomas (1986) discusses these lines' Homeric reference and their "correction" of the original on pp. 185ff.

\(^6\) Scindere has referred three times to human, agricultural activities. At 50 and 97 it characterized plowing and at 144 splitting logs.
and 283) just as the humans against their *monstra* (1.185), for this disruptive force, like all Iron-Age *cura*ae, persists and the requirement for effort in this age is never-ending. Destruction, as we see, need not always come in liquid form, but this same god soon reappears to enact the same scene with one exception: this time he destroys with water.

This devastating aspect of *pater* Jove reappears only 45 lines later, where he no longer plays the mythological god but the real incarnation of natural, ruinous force in his world (*ipse pater*, 1.328). Vergil highlights the scene by claiming to have been an eye-witness and emphasizes this with anaphora (*saepe ego*...uidi, 316-8; *saepe*, 322); he has witnessed the destruction of the products of human and animal agricultural effort (*boumque labores*, 325). In the midst of the tumult Jove himself dashes down three mountains with his thunderbolt precisely as he did at 280ff.; here is the very same god, and the word-choice matches almost exactly: *pater*, 328, *pater*, 283; *fulmina*, 329, *fulmine*, 283; *deicit*, 333, *disiecit*, 283. As with the threshing floor at 1.178ff., the mythological archetype finds its embodiment, expressed here, however, just as in the myth: the

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storm-god lays waste the works of the earth-born.

Of primary concern to us here, of course, is the storm itself and how it recalls the constellation of ideas around liquids' destructive force. The liquefaction that accompanied spring at 1.43f. suggests itself immediately, for here, too, spring brings water (imbriferum uer, 313). Now, however, the waters bring ruin and Vergil chooses to depict the storm's devastation not with liqui but with ruere, which characterizes the deluge in two notably similar line-ends (ruit imbriferum uer, 313; ruit arduus aether, 324) as well as in line 320, where it describes the uprooting of the fields in the winds' battle (eruerent). This verb distinguished as well the aphorism at 1.199f. (sic omnia fatis / in peius ruere), which Vergil illustrated with the metaphor of the oarsman, whose struggle against the river's current expressed the universal law and natural cycle of destruction.\footnote{The Nile, beneficent though its floods may be, also shares this verb as a reminder of the river's potential for destruction (ruens, 4.292).}

Due to their destructive nature and in keeping with the military coloring of the scene (e.g. induceret, 316; concurrere, 318;\footnote{Putnam points out on p. 51 that concurrere is used only once again in the poem, to describe civil war at the end of the book (1.489).} proelia, 318; telo, 332), the rains become a great army on the march (immensum...agmen aquarum, 322), and their victims turn out to be
representatives of the rich and productive aspect of liquids: the ripe crops that swell with milk (*frumenta ...lactentia turgent* [315] = *segetem ...sublimem expulsam* [319-20]). They find company in a tempest foul with deadly, black showers (*foedam ...tempestatem imbribus atris*, 323) that reappear, more dire than before, at the end of the storm’s description (*...ingeminant Austri et densissimus imber*, 333). The rain’s downpour is not its sole devastating effect, however.

When the lofty sky rushes down, it floods the lands with a great deluge (1.324-7):

\[
\text{ruit arduus aether}
\]
\[
\text{et pluuia ingeni sata laeta boumque labores}
\]
\[
\text{diluit; implentur fossae et caua flumina crescut}
\]
\[
\text{cum sonitu feruetque fretis spirantibus aequor.}
\]

Vergil repeats the image at 370ff., where, despite monitory signs, the lands flood anyway (*cum fulminat et cum /...tonat ...omnia plenis / rura natant fossis*). *Quae uigilanda uiris?* (313) indeed. By conjoining two proximate flood-scenes with unique vocabulary the poet invites us to compare them, whereupon we see that the signs’ implied benefits (311-5) are illusory. Destruction is inevitable, and the only benefit the farmer could receive from knowing when the

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68 *Fossa* occurs only at 1.326 and 372, in both of which cases it is joined with related words for ‘full’, *implentur* and *plenis* respectively.
storm will come is managing to stay dry indoors as his fields are uprooted.69

Other floods come to mind, such as that of the Eridanus at the end of the first book. It, too, washed away mortal works with a compound of luere placed conspicuously at the beginning of its line (cf. diluit [326] and proluit [481]). Still prominent to the reader, however, is Deucalion’s flood, for as we saw it has already introduced devastation of mortal works and inundation of the world and provided an archetype for Jupiter’s natural cycle. We witness in the storm the embodiment of that archetype, albeit at a different point in the cycle, for here we focus specifically on the movement from growth to ruin while we meet Deucalion only after the destruction, when the productive facet of existence waxes. Yet we do see the grander movements of Jovian law expressed in their specific, temporal shapes, embedded in which picture lies the incarnation of the myth of the giants Otus and Ephialtes. Previously humans played out the Jovian role and fought against earth-born pests (1.178ff.), but here Vergil has revised the cast, and no longer do the earth-born humans parallel the sky god; rather they take the giants’ place, and they and their works become the targets of the god’s stormy assault.

69 See Ross 80-90.
Through such variation Vergil shows us that humans do not reside at a single point in the cycle; as active agents in the world they give and receive in turn as gods and as *monstra*. Thus the choice of a storm to exemplify the dangers to human efforts grants Vergil access not simply to the complex of ideas around destructive and productive liquids but to the storm-god Jupiter and the mythological archetypes and aetiologies that the poet can use to place human existence in varying contexts.

Rain-showers and storms elsewhere demonstrate the ambivalence we have by now come to expect of liquids: sometimes they are destructive, sometimes enriching. The destructive, black rains of the great storm just discussed ally themselves with the black rains of the world’s uninhabitable extremes (1.235-6):

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quam circum extremae dextra laeuaque trahuntur 235
caeruleae, glacie concretae atque imribus atris.
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Vergil has made these regions bleak indeed, for not only do they suffer the destructive aspect of liquid forces, they do not even have a fertility or productivity to destroy, for they are frozen and hence infertile from the outset. Again in Book 3 cold rain proves deadly (*frigidus imber*, 3.441), for it causes disease to set in on sheep,\(^7\) and

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\(^7\) See Ross 179–81 for a discussion of the aspects of cold and winter here.
one potential benefit of burning stubble in Book 1 was that it might prevent *tenues pluuiae* from penetrating and burning the soil (91-3). In Book 2 we find those who cover their cuttings with rocks and pottery as a protection against the danger perceived in poured-out showers (*effusos munimen ad imbris, 352*), and soon we are warned that, even after making all necessary precautions and preparations: *maturis metuendus Juppiter uuis* (419). This of course repeats the lesson taught by the great storm and its warning signs, which did nothing to protect the crop against the god. Finally we might note that the bees that enjoy special favor from Jupiter (4.149ff.) avoid rain (*nec uero a stabulis pluua impendente recedunt / longius, 4.191-2*), and dangerous showers were in fact absent from the primordial and Golden-Age springtime (2.333-4):

nec metuit surgentis pampinus Austros 
aut actum caelo magnis Aquilonibus imbrem.

On the other hand we saw in this same passage that the *hieros gamos*, emblematic of fertility and productivity, took the form of fecund showers (*fecundis imbribus, 2.325*). Abundant rains, in tandem with streams, also maintain the swamps in which the chersydrus dwells in the spring (*dum / uere madent udo terrae ac pluuialibus Austris, / stagna colit, 3.428-30*), where it eats fish and
frogs. Due to their absence in the parching summer, however, the marshes dry up and the snake takes to land and poses a threat to humans (432-9). And while parching heat attends the emergence of the plague as well,\textsuperscript{71} which the snake "clearly symbolizes",\textsuperscript{72} we have already noted that rains do not ameliorate but in fact cause disease (\textit{imber}, 3.441), so again and in closely related passages Vergil does not provide fixed assessments of phenomena. Clearly beneficial, however, are the \textit{amicos imbris} at 4.115; the farmer himself should wear his hands down with \textit{labor} to ensure a sufficient amount of this necessary moisture (114-5). And finally, early in the poem Vergil indicates the fundamental need for showers when he urges the reader to pray for rain lest he become destitute (1.157-9).

I have argued that two \textit{labores} operate in the world of the \textit{Georgics}. The one \textit{labor} is the more readily recognized \textit{labor} of human effort, which grows out of the other \textit{labor}. This 'other' \textit{labor}, in keeping with the Hesiodic model of \textit{eris}, precedes and necessitates its sibling; it compels humans to work. Jupiter put it in the world to force humans from an easy existence. I have also argued that this \textit{labor} takes the form of the natural cycle, for that is precisely what

\textsuperscript{71} Aeestu occupies the ends of line 3.434 in the chersydrus passage and, only 45 lines later, line 479 in the introduction to the plague.

\textsuperscript{72} Thomas (1988) \textit{ad} 3.425-34.
forces humans to work and to work endlessly. The constant and unstoppable interplay between construction and destruction, the fertility and decay that follow the seasons of the circling year, these are the *leges aeternaque foedera* that govern existence, and Jupiter laid them as cornerstones of reality in his age. Before Jove there were no seasons, and before there were seasons there was no *labor*.

The purpose of this chapter was to examine how Vergil utilizes liquids and liquid imagery to inform the facets of the natural cycle, specifically fertility and fecundity on the one hand and on the other destruction and dissolution. Certainly we have seen that Vergil does not use liquids exclusively in treating this topic. For instance Jupiter destroys with lightning, and fire devastates the vineyard at 2.303ff.\(^7\)

The adjective *graudus* represents fertility as well; of its eleven occurrences seven refer to rich agricultural produce\(^7\) and four to pregnant animals.\(^7\) Yet these are insufficient for Vergil’s purposes because they cannot describe the breadth, scope, and the flexible contexts of the forces of nature while at the same time reflecting the

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\(^7\) Although Vergil does describe the fire’s spreading with the verb *elabi* (*elapsus*, 2.305), which we saw had connections with liquidity and ‘slipping’.

\(^7\) 1.111, 319, 2.5, 143, 424, 3.317, 4.231.

\(^7\) 2.150, 3.139, 155, 275.
shifting nature of the topic, which Vergil does exploit with the liquids.

We have also glanced beyond the content of Vergil's discussion to the way in which Vergil treats liquids. We have found not a single valuation for fluids, but a complex of evaluations and perspectives to consider in analyzing them. Vergil's depiction of natural processes conforms to his assessment of them: they are inextricably intermixed and ever changing, not entirely graspable, solid, or fixed, but liquid. Labor represents such difficulty at least in part because it is not solid, static, or fixed; nature, need, and necessity present a shifting face, and no one answer or method ever suffices as a response. The next chapter will move from the natural-cycle labor to this complement, the human response to that protean cycle.
CHAPTER III

Boundaries

In the previous chapter we focused on the cycle of fertility and decline, the labor that forces humans to expend effort to eke out a living, its connection to seasonal changes, and how Vergil characterizes it with liquids and liquid imagery. This chapter will deal with responses to those fluctuating circumstances of the Jovian world. We have seen that this is another labor, the attempt to control or, at least, to direct natural forces toward advantageous goals. One must manipulate the potential of the natural cycle to extract benefits from it, and to do so requires delimiting it by establishing (sometimes artificial) boundaries to create a system of manageable size, within which one hopes to regulate the natural processes; this necessarily involves order. So we will look also at boundaries, not always those set by humans, but whose integrity nevertheless determines success or failure of mortal enterprise.
We will begin with boundaries, how they arise and their varieties, and turn later to their success or failure. Ross recognizes their significance:

"[N]ature" was not the world of flora and fauna and other natural forces that it is for us, or for the American Indians or the Eskimos, but the world of cultivated growth within the farm's sacred *termini*.¹

*Termini*, in fact all boundaries or divisions, define at least two things, what is within and what is without, and perhaps a third, what is in transition. Definition, in turn, lays the foundations for order of all sorts, for order requires that distinctions be made. Vergil gives us the origins for such concerns in Deucalion's flood and in the theodicy.

Deucalion's flood explains the world's biological and agricultural differences and limitations in lines worth quoting again (1.60-3):

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continuo has leges aeternaque foedera certis
imposuit natura locis, quo tempore primum
Deucalion vacuum lapides iactuit in orbem,
unde homines nati, durum genus.
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The laws of nature place restrictions on existence and give it particular shape and order:

Words like *felicius* (1.54) and, more pointedly, *iniussa* (1.55) lure us into thoughts of an almost golden age. No ordering is necessary...But the obverse of this scattered spontaneity is limitation, the regulating laws and compacts that nature had

¹Ross 21.
imposed on the earth when Deucalion sowed his stony crop of men...No golden age this but a realistic post-Promethean time of Nature's controlled patterns and man's equally disciplined response.²

That "stony crop" is a genus, a particular class or type to be distinguished from others in the new world of Jovian divisions.

The differences in this world enter upon a shapelessness, an unmarked void (vacuum orbem) through the placement of laws on lands made distinct thereby (certis locis). We find similar division in the heavens (1.231-2):

Idcirco certis dimensum partibus orbem per duodena regit mundi sol aureus astra.

The sun passes along a path of specifically measured-out sections, and we soon find that his movements are among the specific signs (certis signis, 1.351) that Jupiter established (ipse pater statuit..., 1.353). We also learn that the world is divided into five distinct zones and that the gods play some part in their distribution (munere concessae diuum, 1.238). The division and definition of the world on this large, cosmic scale are accompanied by more particular, earthly concerns in the theodicy.

² Putnam 29.
Jove was first to bring *ars* (1.122) to the fields. As kin to ἀραρίσκω, *ars* exemplifies calculated joining, the bringing together and ordering of discrete components to achieve a single goal, whether those components be the parts of a plow or the accumulated bits of knowledge required for farming. In a simpler form ordering appears in the assertion that boundaries or divisions were entirely prohibited in the previous age, and since these lines focus on the farmer, the question of demarcation in the new age is of the earth into fields (125-8):

Ante iouem nulli subigebant arua coloni: 125
ne signare quidem aut partiri limite campum
fas erat; in medium quaerebant, ipsaque tellus
omnia liberius nullo poscente ferebat.

*Signare, partiri,* and *limite* fill line 126 with a vocabulary of distinction and definition, literally as terms of definition for land-boundaries and significantly as fingerprints of the Jovian world: since such definition was absent from the Golden Age, its presence itself defines the Jovian.

The inhabitants of the former age allowed individual distinctions to give way to consideration of group goals (*in medium quaerebant,* 1.127), which implicitly contrasts the single farmer’s self-absorbed *auaritia* in the new age. And in the flanks of the sentence (125-8)
we recognize the basic distinction between the ages: a cultivator--an orderer--subdues land worked by a tool (\textit{arua}, land plowed \textit{[arare]} ) by an \textit{aratum }, which is juxtaposed to the earth’s spontaneous production in an essentially fertile and productive era characterized by freedom from boundaries. William Least Heat-Moon captures some of the “modern” attitude in discussing the inhabitants of Chase County, Kansas:

The dreaming citizens lie comforted that outside their walls run the township-and-range lines, their defense against a fruitful and transgressing nature perpetually threatening erasure and apparent disorder. That’s why, if you ask me, they retain the so discernible Osage orange hedgerows, and it’s also why they cut and poison and burn and bulldoze those \textit{Maclura} that break ranks and take higgledy-piggledy to the open pastures rightfully belonging to the aboriginal and faceless grasses and forbs.\(^3\)

In the theodicy, the nature of the Jovian Age, as distinguished from the Golden, is cast first in terms of definition.

Much of the technical material in the first part of Book 1 deals with distinctions, and, in fact, inasmuch as the poem treats knowledge of farming and the proper application of that knowledge in the Jovian world—that is \textit{ars} and \textit{usus}—one could argue that

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definition and distinction lie at the heart of the poem. Indeed language itself depends upon definition to express ideas and so the poem as a poem depends upon definition for its formal characteristics. My purpose here, however, is to examine how the poem treats boundaries so we might form an idea of what part they play primarily in Vergil’s agricultural world. Let us turn, then, to the early parts of Book 1 to investigate their handling of boundary-concerns.

Before plowing an ignotum aequor (1.50), Vergil tells us that we must examine the territory to determine the traits that set it apart from other places. Lands have their own weather, tilling styles, and habits (uarium caeli ...morem ...patrios cultusque habitusque locorum, 51-2), and we note that patrios refers to distinctions of homeland, the difference between ‘us’ and ‘not us’ that prepares us for the differences among specific nations a few lines hence. Regions differ in what they will and will not grow, which Vergil highlights

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4 Ross, for instance, implies such an understanding of the poem when he treats its “science” in chapter 2 and passim, but is correct to say of the poetry that “Vergil gives us connections, not definitions, and reserves the right to find patterns whose clarity unsettles our preconceptions” (9).

5 If it has not become clear yet, I emphasize now that I see boundaries very broadly in the poem. For example, a definition is for me--and in fact--an establishment of boundaries, and a difference naturally implies this as well.
with *hic ...illic ...alibi* (53-6) before moving on to the diverse countries and peoples. He ends the passage with lines we have seen before, which express the variety of soils (*pingue solum ...non tellus fecunda ...illic ...hic*, 63-70). Distinctions, then, form the basis of instruction in this first paragraph of technical material.

The second and third paragraphs do much the same thing while turning from types of soil to different treatments of it. At each point, though, the treatment must conform to the various soils’ needs. Alternation of crops, leaving fields fallow, fertilizing them, and burning the stubble respond to the heterogeneous requirements of the several types of field in the second paragraph, while the regulation of moisture and the pertinent seasonal conditions provide the topic for the third. Each paragraph, then, has its own, discrete topic of inquiry, as we might expect. Vergil’s systematic approach, however, does serve to highlight the numerous distinctions to be seen in only a brief introduction to agriculture, and such distinctions are the basis for the poet’s discussion as well as the foundation for the farmer’s preparations for his task.

If we move ahead to the farmer’s arms (1.160-75) we find some truth in Perkell’s statement that the farmer is “the figure who

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*Klingner 28f.*
imposes a form and meaning upon nature."7 We must emphasize, though, the restricted environment in which the statement is true: Jove has imposed his chosen form on the world already, and the farmer in turn adds his own imposition to this decidedly not formless nature. For example, the seven-line description of the plow is rife with shaping, forming, and specification.8 But what is the boundary? Again we find it in ars, for here the natural has been separated from the artificial; this is a tool whose parts have no organic connection, only that placed upon them by an imposer of form and meaning.9 Perhaps not ironically, the farmer will use this tool to break a boundary, the soil’s.

Returning to the soil, we see that Vergil carries the theme of distinction in the plant world well into Book 2 (109):

nec uero terrae ferre omnes omnia possunt.

Thomas comments that “It is a central premise of the Georgics, as of agricultural reality, that productivity is restricted by region.”10 We have already seen that this truth took center stage at the opening of

7 Perkell 45.

8 E.g. flexa (169), curui formam aratri (170), etc.


the poem’s instruction, but it remains such a force that Wilkinson, citing Burck, dwells on “variety as the spirit that pervades and distinguishes the first main Part of this Book.”11 We have the variety of trees and their propagation, a lengthy catalogue of wines and their homelands far and wide, and the variety of lands, a foil-passage that leads up to the Praises of Italy, which itself extols the abundance and variety native to that country.12 We also see once more the distribution of diverse homelands, this time to trees, by means of the adjective patrius (diuisae arboribus patriae, 2.116), and as before the differences thus indicated prepare us for the various nations a few lines hence. Again, this is the product of Jove’s restructuring of the world: the narrow range of habitable land bounded by static and fruitless extremes (has inter...duae, 1.237; ad Scythiam...consurgit, premitur Libyae deuexus in Austros, 1.240f.) agrees with the current age’s limited fertility but not with the abundance of a Golden Age, free from boundaries (omnis feret omnia tellus, E. 4.39; tellus / omnia ...ferebat,1.127f.).

As always, some examples will have to be passed over; any form of containment, such as the rain when it confines the farmer

11 Wilkinson 85.

12 These are Wilkinson’s divisions (pp. 85-8).
(Frigidus agricolam si quando continet imber, 1.259), implies a boundary. Still, I think that we now have a workable sketch of the concepts of boundaries and definition without which Vergil could not proceed with the georgic instruction, concepts that constitute and make possible the application of the agricultural ars. They are bound up with notions of order, direction, and restriction as well as structure, sometimes concrete and at other times more abstracted. We will now add to the picture the human agent, who must manipulate various definite systems in order to survive, for the Iron-Age world will not provide for him sufficiently as it did in the boundless and fertile Golden Age.

As I said at the beginning, the farmer attempts to control or direct natural forces toward advantageous goals. He must manage the natural cycle's potential to win sustenance, and if he is to manage it it must be manageable. Therefore the farmer limits the scope of his attempted control (e.g. partiri limite campum) to dimensions within which he can reasonably hope to apply his arts to order and direct the system. Within the boundaries of his fields and flocks the farmer can regulate to a certain degree the variables of Jovian-Era fertility and productivity; such mastery of discrete portions remains his best chance, for wholesale command of fertility and the
productive process rests in the hands of Jupiter, as Vergil has made clear.\textsuperscript{13}

Our next question is, then, what is this control that the Iron-Age agent imposes? Already we have spent some time discussing the military motif that describes the fierce human response to competitiveness and, more broadly, the struggle to survive in the modern world.\textsuperscript{14} The poet introduces it in 1.99:

\textit{exercetque frequens tellurem atque imperat aruis,}

and confirms it in 1.160 by labeling agricultural implements \textit{arma}. It is carried on through the poem in lines such as 2.369-70:

\textit{tum denique dura}
\textit{exerce imperia,}

and 3.373-5, which displays a brutal twist on an ostensibly peaceful lifestyle:\textsuperscript{15}

\textit{sed frustra oppositum trudentis pectore montem}
\textit{comminus obruncant ferro grauiterque rudentis}
\textit{caedunt et magno laeti clamore reportant.}

\textsuperscript{13} Batstone (1984) notes this need of restriction in a different context: "Even in the context of games, which try in artificial ways to regulate and control forces which in other contexts more regularly get out of control, the world is at times prone to its headlong, breakneck, uncontrolled ways" (427). We will see the un-control presently.

\textsuperscript{14} See e.g. Wilkinson 78 and passim.

This motif characterizes the human response to the world and provides insight into the very nature of Jovian existence. It gives shape and color to the activities of the farmer, but while it provides a metaphorical dimension for, and understanding of, these actions, a more concrete examination of them will reveal their intimate ties to boundaries.

What the farmer must do in order to grow his crops and to succeed at his ordained tasks is, as we shall see, effect and manipulate imbalances in the natural cycle, but the imbalances must be directed and contained, not merely random, of course. Control of the imbalances intrinsic to the dynamic system of nature (which includes humans), however, often becomes problematic if not simply impossible, due not infrequently to their being unobserved until too late. Putnam describes the situation as follows:

Outer nature's negative indifference to man's situation can be only partially altered by man who, with continuous effort and the constant imposition of order on her chaos, can expand her rhythms to embrace growth as well as decay, creation as well as destruction. In what follows I hope to refine this broad statement. We will see

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16 Ross speaks of the farmer's need to achieve "balance" among the elements, sometimes by tempering opposites (pp. 38, 54, 93), but that is not the whole picture.

17 Putnam 7.
that the farmer imposes not only order but chaos as well; within the confines of his fields and flocks he tries to exaggerate the pendulum’s swing between those two points in the cycle.

When we examine the suggested human response to the springtime melting in the opening technical passage (1.43ff.), we find that the poet urges the farmer to accelerate this process of breakdown. At the time that the soil ‘dissolves’ (putris se glaeba resoluit, 44), the farmer should plow (depresso...aratro, 45); Vergil gives explicit corroboration to this enhancement of the natural cycle at 2.204: putre solum (namque hoc imitamur arando). This is to say the farmer should utilize a product of ars—a tool—in manipulating the state of the soil.18 And yet, while human skill applied to disparate materials can construct tools such as plows, before the plow actually enters the picture at the end of line 46, the natural process of destruction has already begun to affect it (sulco attritus splendescere uomer); the shiny newness is born of wearing away, the

18 Vergil soon spends seven lines describing the construction of the plow, but it is an item readily available pre-made (see e.g. Perkell 29–30). The description thus highlights the artistic process.
loss of some of the metal.¹⁹

We see many boundary-issues already in the first instructional passage, then. *Vere nouo* gives us a seasonal boundary, answered in the second technical paragraph by another seasonal boundary (*mutato sidere, 73*), but more concretely the clods are broken down. At first the new season’s winds cause them to dissolve themselves, but then humans enter and break them down; we witness, therefore, a twofold assault on boundaries, from within and without. The internal cohesion of the body has given way, whatever it was and however insignificant the force that maintained the distinction that allowed the poet to speak of a glebe in the first place. Matching and extending that natural dissolution, the farmer exerts effort on the clod externally and destroys the integrity of the body, breaches the boundaries that identified the clod as such. On a somewhat larger scale the farmer interests himself not merely in individual clods but in the plot as a whole, and this expands the circle of limitations. He does not plow a straight line until he tires; rather he portions off a plot of land, a discrete, recognizable field (*illa seges, 47*) within which

¹⁹ Lucretius on the plow’s wearing away: *uncus aratri / ferreus occulte decrescit uomer in aruis* (1.313-4). Liebeschuetz notes the tendency also in Lucretius to organize “his material in such a way as to mirror the coexistence of creative and destructive processes in nature” (32).
he toils. There he cuts the surface of the earth (scindimus aequor, 49), which clearly entails breaching its boundary. Within his delimited space, then, the farmer disrupts boundaries--that is, he creates chaos--in preparation for a crop. And again, this is in perfect keeping with the natural cycle, where disruption precedes growth and provides fertility for it; the farmer's mundane chores must always accompany the larger, cosmic currents.²⁰

*Auari* (1.47) also guides our examination. The field will respond to the wishes of a greedy farmer only if it receives the utmost in preparation (the double plowing);²¹ if it receives anything less, we infer, it will not sate the farmer's rapacity. Treated accordingly, the field's crops burst open or shatter (*ruperunt*, 49) the farmer's granaries.²² Unlike the manifestations of chaos found in *liquitur* and *resoluit*, where the collapse of structure brings with it the dissolution

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²⁰ "Doing work which has to be done over and over again helps us recognize the natural cycles of growth and decay, of birth and death, and thus become aware of the dynamic order of the universe. "Ordinary" work, as the root meaning of the term indicates, is work that is in harmony with the order we perceive in the natural environment." —Fritjof Capra.

²¹ See Mynors' lengthy discussion of the number of plowings: two or four? (ad 1.47-8). In either case the point is that much work needs to be done to disintegrate the soil.

²² Despite Mynors' zeal for precision (ad 49): "Granaries do not explode..." Professor Babcock reminds me that, in fact, grain silos do explode if the grain dust is ignited and the structure is sufficiently airtight.
of boundaries, here we have the breach of formal boundaries, of fines, as with the farmer’s plowing. In the size of the harvest and the rupture of the horrea Vergil expresses the effects of the farmer’s amor habendi, an intemperate force that will dominate the stage later in the poem. The lack of regulation or limits on his acquisitiveness causes him to covet beyond his capacity to use, which is reprehensible, and the resulting harvest mirrors his unbridled striving by growing beyond measure (immensae, 49) and beyond the farmer’s ability to store it. It first defies limits and then destroys them, and so the farmer’s moral flaw extracts destruction from growth; here, we could say, the farmer has expanded nature’s rhythms too far. Frequently we will see rumpere represent a loss of regulation or a simple breach of boundaries with the consequent loss of definition or structure, as with the bees at 4.212-3 (rege...amisso rupere fidem). The evaluation of such occurrences, however, will not be fixed; as with the liquid imagery already discussed, chaos and

23 Mynors ad 47–8 attempts to explain away the bold use of avarus.

24 Cf. Horace’s roughly contemporary Sermo 1.1 and its denunciation of avaritia. Relevant as well is Wendell Berry’s sentiment from The Unsettling of America (1977), “It is likely that we will have either to live within our limits...or not live at all. And certainly the knowledge of these limits and of how to live within them is the most comely and graceful knowledge that we have, the most healing and the most whole.”
lack of definition can be both desirable and undesirable to the farmer.

Before moving on, it may be worth pointing out briefly the continuity from Book 1 to 2 in Vergil’s treatment of the farmer’s task of creating fertility through chaos. At the beginning of the paragraph on laying out vine-rows (i.e. ordering) we see the farmer’s manual destruction of clods of earth acting in tandem with the soil’s exposure to natural, cyclical forces to make a crumbly soil, which is best (*optima putri / arua solo*, 2.262-3; cf. *pinguis ...terra / et cui putre solum ...optima frumentis*, 2.203-5). The farmer should see that the soil is cooked (*excoquere*, 2.260; cf. *coquat*, 1.66), knock down mounds (*concidere montis*, 2.260; cf. *rastris glaebas qui frangit*, 1.94; *cumulosque ruit*, 1.105), expose the clods to wind and cold (*Aquiloni ostendere glaebas*, 2.261; *uenti curant gelidaeque pruinae*, 2.263; cf. *Zephyro putris se glaeba resoluit*, 1.44; *bis quae solem, bis frigora sensit*, 1.48), and should stir the fields (*labefacta mouens ...iugera fossor*, 2.264; cf. *[pater ipse] primusque per artem / mouit agros*, 1.122-3). Page describes the combination of the natural cycle and the farmer’s enhancement of its movements, “which by disintegrating the soil bring it into a condition when the young seed
can best find the elements needed for its nutrition.²⁵

Once more the natural cycle provides the pattern, for growth follows destruction. We recognize, too, the consistency Vergil has maintained in his presentation of what constitutes fertility. Liquids, we saw, characterize fertile conditions, while here the farmer enhances fertility—the soil's potential—by disrupting boundaries (by plowing or hoeing) on the limited scale of his field. Liquids, as also we saw, characterize the destructive aspect of the natural cycle. Yet we must remember that the cycle is seamless; although made up of a number of distinct acts or processes, the transition from destruction to constructive fertility is imperceptible and immediate. So, too, the farmer destroys and thereby creates a fertile environment for new growth. By no means accidentally, this manipulated environment's definitive quality matches that of fertile liquids: it is boundless, and in this we note a kinship between the conditions of the pinguis and putris soils discussed previously. We can see that liquids epitomize the undefined and the boundless: they seek their own level, they have no set shape, although obviously they have surfaces—where sky meets sea or air meets water—these surfaces are not fixed but

²⁵Page ad 1.48. Indeed, Liebeschuetz discusses the Georgics' "background of the universal pattern of growth and decay" and how "the farmer is obliged to fit his work into a schedule dictated by natural processes if he is to benefit rather than be ruined by them" (35).
are ever-changing, nor do they possess even a fixed surface-area. Only in their frozen state—when, in fact, they are not liquid but solid—did we see that they denoted infertility. Thus the farmer reproduces an unrestricted and shapeless fertility, which is wonderfully replete with potential for new shapes and definitions—more specifically, perhaps, a renewal of the old shapes and definitions.\textsuperscript{26}

Naturally, accelerating or facilitating the process of breakdown is not the farmer’s sole task, but it is important to realize that neither is the “imposition of order” and form; he not only balances elements but amplifies the imbalances in the kinetic cycle of growth and decline. He does indeed control and guide with experience and knowledge, as Ross says,\textsuperscript{27} but to say that through this knowledge and manipulation he achieves “balance and harmony where otherwise there would exist only opposition and strife”\textsuperscript{28} leads one to the conclusion that the farmer achieves and in fact tries to achieve some sort of static and well-ordered state. The ephemeral

\textsuperscript{26} Johnson says that nature “is akin to disorder in its partiality to fertility and extravagance and flux and variation” (149). I do not, however, embrace wholeheartedly his attribution to humans alone the province of pattern—at least not for the Georgics.

\textsuperscript{27} Ross 23.

\textsuperscript{28} Ross 38.
combination of the *pinguis arista*, though, lasts no longer than the
dry heat of summer or the wet cold of winter; the farmer harvests in
the spring when the elements mix naturally and plants again in the
fall when they mingle anew. The achievement of the farmer’s *labor*
rests, at least in part, in being able to extend those naturally
occurring states—through manipulating boundaries—so as to extract
more from them than they would give on their own in the Jovian Era.

Ross argues, as have I on different grounds, that “the farmer’s
*labor* is an act of violence against nature,” but he continues,
“necessary, however, for progress in the face of nature’s opposition;
the course of nature, for man, is degeneration, inevitable as the flow
of water downhill.”29 Again I would suggest that we refine our
understanding of the situation to accommodate the larger picture of
the cyclical process. The trees in 2.10ff., for example, are certainly
not fictitious or degenerative when we encounter them:

namque aliae nullis hominum cogentibus ipsae 10
sponte sua ueniunt..

And while the metaphor of the oarsman, which we examined in the
previous chapter, tells us that ultimately every thing ‘degenerates’,
we have seen as well that that process is merely a part of the natural

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29 Ross 83.
whole. Lucretius put it this way (1.506-9):

ex omnibus amnibus umor
tollitur in nubis. quo cum bene semina aquarum
multa modis multis conuenere undique adaucta,
confertae nubes umorem mittere certant.

Yes, water flows downhill--at least until it evaporates and goes into the air, whence it returns to flow downhill again.

Furthermore, Ross’ terms--“progress” and “degeneration”--are relative and once again assume that the farmer achieves some static, sustainable state, which new condition we are to regard as the standard against which future changes are to be judged. In fact, the opposition that the farmer’s “progress” encounters is not directional but inertial, and a closer look at the assumptions about degeneration in the context of the oarsman-metaphor and the passage regarding trees’ produce will cast some light on this point. These passages contain the only occurrences of the verb degenerare in the poem (1.198, 2.59), and they share the theme of labor (1.197, 2.61) and uis humana as well.30 In both Vergil has given us instances of humans realizing through labor produce larger than is strictly natural.

Now it seems clear that the metaphor supplies an image of destruction, and so I have argued that we read in it the liquid embodiment of that one aspect of the natural cycle. In addition, since failure at producing a sufficiently large crop means potential starvation for the farmer, a more tangible destruction is available here as well. But when we note the specific meaning of degenerant in 2.61, we must account for another possibility in the metaphor. The degeneration that the trees' fruit experiences does not lead to no fruit but comes rather from a decline away from an artificial or exaggerated state created by the farmer. The same can be said of the seeds in 1.193ff. In other words, the question need not be about the natural cycle of growth and decay—construction and destruction—but can also be about human efforts (labor) to modify natural tendencies. Accordingly we recognize that in peius (1.200) and turpis (2.60) can represent degeneration not to some absolute vanishing point but "degeneration" as a return from an artificial state created by the farmer to a natural condition or disposition, to an equilibrium intrinsic to each natural thing. These terms, then, reflect the perspective of the human who hopes the fruit somehow will remain in its cultivated (manipulated) state and who calculates (describes) changes (e.g. "degeneration") not from the natural but
from this artificial condition. The birds (*auibus, 2.60*), on the other hand, do not seem to think these grapes are so bad; rather than being degenerate, they appear to be fine food as they occur naturally. So just as an actual pendulum resists forces that would move it off of its line of motion, so here the metaphorical pendulum's swing of the natural cycle resists lateral forces that would modify the characteristics of its constituents. Jove has established the difficulties of the natural system and has proven to be a model for violent imposition on it, but while he has made life hard, he has not made it progressively harder.

Within the natural cycle of growth and decay, then, we recognize a sort of poise in the tendency of things to maintain their own characteristics—as if nature seeks its own level in this regard. Far from being a balancer or harmonizer as with ratios of elements, in this respect the human agent strives to push things out of balance in order to obtain greater yields than are inherent to the plants and animals in his charge. The balances of which Ross speaks are proportional equivalences; the farmer attempts to mimic the elemental mixtures from the unstable time of year (the warm and wet spring or fall) through his *labor* in order to achieve the *pinguis*
arista.\textsuperscript{31} Naturally therein exists the greatest potential for creation and new structure where old structure is least clear, and the misalignment of the elements results in both tumult and great possibilities. This tension in the natural cycle is the source of the energy that permits growth, and while such cross-over times may enjoy a quantitative or numerical balance of elements, they do not possess stability or equilibrium, but their opposite.

The opposition that the farmer’s efforts encounter in our examples, then, is the inertia of nature’s predisposition to preserve its identity in the face of his attempts to modify certain characteristics through selection and cultivation. And all the while he struggles with that, he struggles also with the exigencies of cyclical fertility and destruction, whose movement he tries to redirect, extend, speed up, or cause to move less swiftly, but always he uses the cycle, for his life and livelihood both reside within it. Sometimes, too, the cycle overtakes him. So, on the one hand, he breeds plants and animals selectively to evoke or magnify certain traits and must expend continuous effort to preserve his achievements; on the other hand, he constructs a plow and then mimics the field’s abrasive effect on it when he sharpens the blade.

\textsuperscript{31} Ross ch. 2.
Let us return now to our examination of the farmer’s interaction with boundaries as he strives to perform his agricultural tasks.

Barriers constructed by humans appear frequently throughout the poem. The Corycius senex, for example, dwells under the Tarentine citadel (sub Oebaliae ...turribus arcis, 4.125), and walled cities look down upon the Italian countryside (2.155-7), which examples remind the reader of the poem’s ever-intrusive military undercurrents. Farmers use rocks and pots to screen cuttings from fertile yet damaging forces (2.350ff):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{iamque reperti} & \\
\text{qui saxo super atque ingentis pondere testae} & \\
\text{urgerent: hoc effusos munimen ad imbris,} & \\
\text{hoc, ubi hiulca siti findit Canis aestifer arua;}
\end{align*}
\]

and Vergil has established limits to his poetry that supposedly prevent him from pursuing the topic of gardening (spatiis exclusus iniquis, 4.147). But let us look more specifically at human efforts to control or direct nature through containment, and, even more specifically, let us make it be nature in the fundamental form of liquid.

In the Praises of Italy Vergil evokes the mighty achievement of Roman technology in describing the naval base constructed by Agrippa for use in the ongoing civil war (2.161-4):
an memorem portus Lucrinoque addita claustra
atque indignatum magnis stridoribus aequor,
Iulia qua ponto longe sonat unda refuso
Tyrrenusque fretis immittitur aestus Auernis?

"Harbours form a traditional part of ethnographies," Thomas tells us,
"...but V.‘s selection is odd: he has chosen two, the Lucrine and the
Avernus, neither of which was originally a harbour, but which were
transformed by the works of man."\textsuperscript{32} Let us emphasize \textit{successfully}
transformed. This feat dares to establish barriers (\textit{addita claustra})
that deny the sea access to the lakes (\textit{ponto refuso}) and likewise
securely enclose them. The indignity suffered by the sea
(\textit{indignatum magnis stridoribus aequor}) bespeaks the violence
which we have seen to be the mode of human imposition on nature.\textsuperscript{33}
In short, the triumph of \textit{labor} in this passage rests in the successful
placement of boundaries on water so as to make it useful for human
ends.

Re-establishment of boundaries finds expression in the poem as
well. When at the end of Book 1 Vergil described the havoc of the
civil war with the simile of the chariot’s mad rush, he used liquid
imagery to illustrate the destructive lack of control (1.512-4):


\textsuperscript{33} See Thomas (1988) \textit{ad} 2.161-2 for a brief discussion of the violence
implicit here and Vergil’s use elsewhere of \textit{indignatus}.
ut cum carceribus sese effudere quadrigae,
addunt in spatia, et frustra retinacula tendens
fertur equis auriga neque audit currus habenas.

The chariot pours out of the gates, the reins prove useless, and the occupant is carried off.\textsuperscript{34} Noteworthy here is the number of vocabulary items for restraint and containment (\textit{carcer, retinacula, tendens, auriga, habenas}), which serves to emphasize their failure.

Turning to the similar end of Book 2, however, we find a much more placid scene. Vergil signals the book’s conclusion with a metaphor that treats his poetic journey as one by chariot (2.541-2):

\begin{quote}
Sed nos immensum spatiis confecimus aequor,
et iam tempus equum fumantia soluere colla.
\end{quote}

Control of the chariot has been regained, and thereby our poet has passed safely over an \textit{immensum aequor}, thus completing a portion of his task. As a matter of fact, this point of success and completion permits the poet a brief respite from striving for control—respite from \textit{labor}, that is\textsuperscript{35}—and so he releases the “horses” from the harness with which he constrained and guided them.

\textsuperscript{34} Note the similarity of the oarsman’s plight and the use of \textit{ferre} in the passive in both contexts.

\textsuperscript{35} We remember that elsewhere Vergil calls poetry a \textit{labor} (e.g. 4.116).
This _aequor_, however, gives us pause, for at first glance we might assume it to be the sea. Vergil, we recall, used a sailing metaphor early in the book for this very same purpose, to describe the extent of his poetic journey (2.39ff.). With _pelago patenti_ (2.41) he revealed musings on a large-scale endeavor, which _immensum...confecimus aequor_ implies he has accomplished, but in both cases he has reversed such thinking with self-imposed limits (cf. _non ego cuncta meis amplecti uersibus opto_ [2.42] and _et iam tempus...soluere_).

Sound and meter in 2.541 also recall 2.162, where the _aequor_ howled:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{atque indignatu m magnis stridoribus aequor} & \quad 2.162 \\
\text{sed nos immensum spatiiis confecimus aequor} & \quad 2.541
\end{align*}
\]

I would suggest that Vergil has gained control not only of the wayward chariot of Book 1, but through this line he has also managed to pull in the reins on the waters, violent and thus dangerous to traverse, behind which Agrippa built a safe harbor. In such a way at the end of Book 2 does our poet suggest the

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36 Thomas (1988) ad 2.541 suggests that _immensum_ particularly suggests the sea.

37 Due to both their personified, angered state and Pompey’s fleet.

38 See Thomas (1982) 42ff. for such daring endeavors as human excess.
potential for mastery of powerful and variable natural forces and, through this metaphor for poetry, of the difficult task of mastering words whose meanings, as we have noted, are frequently changeable like liquids. So as he pauses between books and unyokes his "horses"; he frees himself temporarily from his labor and its metrical demands (soluere).39

The plant-world draws the ordering and controlling attention of humans as well. When cold rains contain the farmer on the inner side of his limen (continet imber, 1.259), one task that Vergil suggests is the preparation of ties to bind the vine (atque Amerina parant lentae retinacula uiti,1.265). He endorses a more violent containment in Book 2, however, once the vines have gathered some strength (2.367-70):

inde ubi iam ualidis amplexae stirpibus ulmos exierint, tum stringe comas, tum bracchia tonde (ante reformidant ferrum), tum denique dura exerce imperia et ramos compesce fluentis. 370

The ascending tricolon effected by anaphora of tum accentuates the insistence of the four imperatives, which urge a ruthless domination by the farmer. Lest we forget its origins in Hesiod’s eris of war, the familiar military motif arrives with (dura) exerce imperia to inform

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39 Verba soluta is, of course, the term for non-metrical writing.
this characteristic mode of the human labor of control. The farmer again manages the vitality of nature by confining fluidity, for the vines he is to contain (compesce) enjoy the liquid imagery we have observed marking the exuberance of growing things (ramos fluentis).

About a hundred lines earlier (2.274ff.), though, Vergil populates the military motif with none other than Mars himself (283), agricultural deity as well as god of war, who makes his first appearance since Book 1’s scene of impious civil war (511).⁴⁰ Here Vergil likens the perfection of a farmer’s efforts to deploying an army in the field, and control, order, and boundaries form the context of the discussion. He tells us that the precision required in the planting of vines is exacting (in unguem, 277); the farmer should measure out and delimit the field (metabere, 274), and paths dividing the plants must form perfect right angles ([in unguem] secto uia limite quadret, 278). The requirements for laying out the vineyard are as those of the legion drawn up for battle (279-83):

\[
\text{ut saepe ingenti bello cum longa cohortis explicuit legio et campo stetit agmen aperto, 280}
\]
\[
directaque acies ac late fluctuat omnis aere renidenti tellus, necdum horrida miscent proelia, sed dubius mediis Mars errat in armis.}
\]

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⁴⁰ Mars appears only once in each book (1.511, 2.283, 3.91, 4.346) and in adjectival form at 4.71.
Here order is poised on the cusp of chaos. Beneath the bounded rows--the lines of battle set upon the land by the farmer--the earth is fluid like the sea (fluctuat), and this fluidity evokes both the fertile potential of the land and the potential for the failure of the mortal enterprise. The soldier-farmer confronts the challenge and attempts to construct an organized system for distilling usefulness from the land. The poet instructs him to see to his design in a line replete with Iron-Age terms of delimitation (omnia sint paribus numeris dimensa uiarum, 284), but the outcome of the military-agricultural endeavor remains in doubt (dubius Mars): will the lines hold or break? Will the farmer be able to shepherd the forces on their way or will they escape his artistic limits?

The martial aspect of human efforts to control the natural potential of fluids appears just as clearly in Vergil's treatment of irrigation in 1.104-110, where he adapts the Homeric simile from Achilles' struggle with Scamander. The Homeric-Achillean farmer undertakes to contain and direct the flow of water in order to

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41 *Fluctuare* appears only here in the poem; its kin *fluctus* occurs seven times (2.108, 160; 3.200, 237, 542; 4.195, 429), each of which refers to the sea or body of water, twice in similes (2.108, 4.195).

42 See Thomas (1986) pp. 178-9. The military imagery of 99 (exercetque ... atque imperat) is a suitable introduction to the Homeric adaptation in 104-110.
provide the necessary fertility for growth in his field. Again the management of a small-scale environment provides the possibility of securing a livelihood. Having broken down distinctions in the earth (cumulosque ruit, 1.105) the farmer provides for the liquid vital to fecundity. He maintains and guides the waters in channels to exhausted locations, at which point he disrupts their contained paths to redirect and release them into the fields. The symbolism is stark and accessible in the terms laid out so far: the human agent exerts restraining and directing force to regulate on a limited scale the natural, unstructured constituents of fertility and productivity. We find here as well the imagery whose consistency Vergil maintains throughout the poem: he characterizes the natural forces with liquid imagery and the human agency with the military motif.

Symbolically, however, Book 4’s passages on Proteus and the bugonia, which bring us to the poem’s climax, provide us with the most powerful descriptions of mortal success in setting limits on the potential within the natural cycle and then reaping its benefits, and again Vergil characterizes this potential with liquid imagery. Let us begin with the description of Proteus and the familiar violence with which Aristaeus, who “represents the arts of civilization”, captures him.
Proteus is many things: source of all knowledge (*nouit namque omnia uates*, 392), symbol of all nature’s shapes (*uariae ...species atque ora ferarum*, 405; *omnia transformat sese in miracula rerum*, 441), source of instruction (*praecpta*, 398), and an unnecessary link in the chain of information--if not in the chain of learning--for "Cyrene could have saved [Aristaeus]" from Proteus’ capture.\(^{43}\) He is also a marine figure, who has the respect of Nereus and the nymphs--including Cyrene around whom the kingdom of waters seems to revolve--(*hunc et Nymphae ueneramur et ipse / grandaeuus Nereus*, 391-2); and Neptune graced him with the gift of prophecy (*quippe ita Neptuno uisum est*, 394). It is his association with water and his mutability that will concern us here.

Vergil gives us two descriptions of Proteus, one from the mouth of Cyrene (387ff.) and one in simple narrative (429ff.). Cyrene makes it clear to Aristaeus that he must use force to extract anything useful from this creature of nature--not just any force, but restrictive, binding force (4.396-400):

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hic tibi, nate, prius uinctis capiendus, ut omnem expediat morbi causam euentusque secundet. nam sine ui non ulla dabit praecptae, neque illum orando flecetes; uim duram et uincula capto tende; doli circum haec demum frangentur inanes. 400
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\(^{43}\) Putnam 286.
Ross points out that "how Aristaeus learns from [Proteus] seems to concern Virgil even more than what he learns." He goes on, "Again Virgil is drawing on an old idea--the ritual binding of the seer, who must be forced into revealing his knowledge," and continues, "The prophesy of the seer must come from a cave (which is as necessary as the ritual binding)." For Ross, though, the salient characteristic of the attack is the violence employed, while with the binding and enclosure within the cave Vergil merely follows traditional and literary precedents and pursues a contrast between the wet cave of Cyrene and the strangely hot conditions within Proteus' cave. For the current analysis, however, Proteus' constraints and bonds assume at least as much importance.

When Aristaeus actually confronts Proteus and contains him with bonds in an enclosed area (the cave), we can see symbolized in his struggle the efforts typical of the farmer whose progress we have been following and will follow in treating the bugonia with its enclosures and restrictions of liquid forces. As we noted, Proteus is all nature (4.406-410; 4.437-42):

...uariae eludent species atque ora ferarum.  
fiet enim subito sus horridus ataque tigris

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44 Ross 222.

45 Ross 223 and 225.
squamosusque draco et fulua ceruice leaena, 
aut acrem flammae sonitum dabit atque ita uinclis 
excidet, aut in aquas tenuis dilapsus abibit. 410

cuius Aristaeo quoniam est oblata facultas, 
uix defessa senem passus componere membra 
cum clamore ruit magno, manicisque iacentem 
occupat. ille suae contra non immemor artis 440 
omnia transformat sese in miracula rerum, 
ignemque horribilemque feram fluuiumque liquentem.

His mercurial form assumes both animal and elemental shapes, but
his climactic attempt at escape in each list is to turn into water itself
(aquas, fluuiumque liquentem). In each description, moreover,
Vergil emphasizes the liquidity with a participle. Proteus does not
merely become liquid, he ‘slips’ into liquid form with the verb labi
(dilapsus, 410), whose relationship to liquidity we discussed earlier.46
In the latter passage he becomes not just flowing water, but liquid
flowing water, which calls to mind the poem’s first sentence of
technical material where, too, fluid liquefies (umor / liquitur, 1.43-
4).47 This is the force that Aristaeus confronts; it is expressive of the
fluid natural cycle with which mortals struggle, and as Proteus

46 Do we have in this line a Vergilian pun? Abibit sounds quite
suggestive of bibere in this context of liquids.

47 Verbs of liqu- stem are rare in the poem: liquor occurs twice
(1.44, 2.187), ligueo only here (4.442), and, to extend the category
only slightly, liquefacio only three times (1.473, 4.36, 555).
appears as the source of all knowledge, his fluidity expresses also the kaleidoscopic instability of knowing.⁴⁸

All of Proteus’ forms represent the potential in the world, the potentially dangerous and the potentially beneficial, and in keeping with the farmer’s methods Aristaeus first establishes the boundaries within which he will work (when he chains Proteus within the cave’s enclosure) and then proceeds to extract the benefits from that limited and manageable domain. Significant within this framework, though, is that Proteus’ primary associations and ultimate form are liquid, and by making it so Vergil stages a struggle between him and Aristaeus comprehensible in terms of two of the poem’s primary images: liquid and war, the fluid natural cycle and the military response of humans. As usual, success depends on the mortal agent’s ability to maintain the integrity of the boundaries he puts in place; if Proteus manages to get beyond Aristaeus’ fetters, then Aristaeus will reap no rewards. But I am getting ahead of myself. Aristaeus does manage to contain Proteus’ quixotic form and thus succeeds in obtaining information and in learning the lesson of how to manipulate nature.

⁴⁸ We recall the variability in evaluations of liquids and liquid states.
Let us turn now to a final example of successful bounding and harnessing of nature's potential, the bugonia. Ross argues,

"Since we are to read this account as a *thaumasion*, we are not necessarily to believe it, at any level. ... But is it not possible to see that Virgil intended 'belief' at an altogether different level, a belief in an intellectual abstraction? This possibility, it seems to me, is what has been denied by the demonstration that the passage is an ethnographical *thaumasion.*"\(^4^9\)

He concludes, then, that

"This *fama* is not practical science: we are already in a world of fiction just as unreal as that of Aristaeus and Orpheus. The point needs stressing, for the simple reason that more often than not the *bugonia* is made to represent (at least) a reality--that is, to stand symbolically for an abstract truth (regeneration, the restoration of life). We ... ought to be ready, at least, for the possibility that this may be another wonderful delusion."\(^5^0\)

We need not debate here the metaphysical applications of the tale of the bugonia, however. It is sufficient for this argument that the bugonia epitomizes the principles, if not the realities, that have governed human attempts at deriving benefits from nature. We can be certain that Vergil knew his Hesiod, so maybe his muses, too, know how to tell lies like the truth (ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύπωσιν ὁμοία

\(^4^9\) Ross 215-6.

\(^5^0\) Ross 216.
Vergil places the bugonia in Egypt, but he makes a point of mentioning the neighboring Persians in a way that establishes something of a military context for the location of this \textit{ars} (\textit{pharetratae uicinia Persidis}, 290). The last lines of bugonia's description also focus on the military (4.313-4):

\begin{quote}
\text{ut nervo pulsante sagittae,}
\text{prima leues ineunt si quando proelia Parthi.}
\end{quote}

Thus the martial nature of human agricultural tactics stays in plain view,\textsuperscript{51} while raw violence abounds as well, for despite the bull-calf's resistance (\textit{multa reluctanti}) it is suffocated and bludgeoned (4.300-2). In this procedure, then, we have the familiar mode of application of human \textit{labor} to nature, which also parallels the treatment of the resisting Proteus just noted.

The method and material also remain familiar: the farmer manages boundaries and limitations and coordinates his efforts with the natural cycle. The emphasis on restriction is clear in the establishment of the enclosure for the bull (4.295-8):

\begin{quote}
exiguus primum atque ipsos contractus in usus 295 eligitur locus; hunc angustique imbrice tecti parietibusque premunt artis, et quattuor addunt quattuor a uentis obliqua luce fenestras.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{51} See Ross' discussion of this passage's relationship to violence and \textit{ars} (218-9).
The choice of location is guided specifically by its restrictiveness (exiguus, ipsos contractus in usus), and then the farmer presses in against it with even more restrictive boundaries: a narrow roof (angustique imbrice tecti) and tight walls (parietibusque ...artis).

The farmer exercises containment on the very body of the calf so as to form an unbroken barrier between its insides and what exists beyond its hide, and within this boundary the farmer creates fertile liquidity by destroying structure with force applied from without, just as he did when he plowed (4.299-302, 308-9):

\[
\text{tum utius bima curuans iam cornua fronte quae\textit{ritur}; huic geminae nares et spiritus oris 300 multa reluctanti obstruitur, plagisque perempto tunsa per integram soluuntur uiscera pellem.}
\]

\[
\text{interea teneris tepefactus in ossibus umor aestuat...}
\]

The procedure is consistent: define the scope of control, delimit the object of labor, and then enhance target’s natural fertility by reducing structures to formlessness whence new structures can arise. Within the unbroken skin the farmer liquefies the body.

A few observations will conclude this brief examination of the bugonia. First, and as noted above, the farmer operates within the movement of the natural cycle when attempting the bugonia. As
with the spring’s first melting of the *umor* and glebes in Book 1 (43ff.), Zephyrus arrives to signal the beginning of change and liquefaction (4.305):

hoc geritur Zephyris primum impellentibus undas.\(^52\)

The fertile time is still the unstable season of mixing elements. Next it is worth noting that, while Ross argues well that “the Nile produces new life from its black sand--precisely what the *bugonia* creates,”\(^53\) they produce these results in differing ways which depend upon the effective capacities of the different agents. The Nile possesses--in fact represents--the vast force of nature itself; its flooding is the unstoppable, destructive force of the liquid natural cycle that makes way for the new. It brings destruction when it spreads beyond its bounds, and outside those bounds, in the newly silted plains, is where the new life arises. The bugonia, however, represents mortal work, and mortals do not have the sweeping potency of rivers, so they must isolate points where they will have sufficient power to effect change. Therefore the destruction accomplished in the bugonia occurs within boundaries, and thence also bursts forth the

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\(^{52}\) See Putnam 274, where he treats “the creative liquefaction of the bullock that will also change death to life at the first inkling of winter’s cold yielding to spring’s warmth.”

\(^{53}\) Ross 217.
new life. Finally, as Ross points out,\textsuperscript{34} "The violent bugonia concludes with the simile of war (the Parthian archer)," but that is only the second in a pair of similes, the first of which is \textit{ut aestuiis effusus nubibus imber} (4.312). Not only does this recall the fertilizing Nile from a few lines before (\textit{effuso flumine}, 4.288), but even Ross would have to admit that the combination of summertime heat and rain (\textit{aestuiis} and \textit{imber}) provides the best mixture of elements for growth. This serves to paint with liquid imagery a picture of fertility and potential that contrasts, or better yet complements, the military imagery following. The bugonia, then, offers both sides of the \textit{labor} coin: liquid imagery suggesting the natural cycle and military imagery suggesting the human response to that cycle.

Having investigated aspects of success, we turn now to an examination of failure. As with the success of mortal endeavors, the question of failure hinges on the corruption of boundaries and their (im)proper manipulation, and again, boundaries are to be viewed in a broad sense that includes constraints and control as well as distinctions and divisions of various types. We have seen that nature can bring destruction, for instance in floods, but such destruction precedes a resultant fertility, just as fertility preceded it.

\textsuperscript{34} Ross 218-9.
and thus flows the natural cycle. Likewise the farmer employs destruction on a small scale to effect fertility from which he can draw usefulness, as in growing crops. This artificial process, though, depends upon the farmer’s ability to regulate variables, and since he cannot control all of nature, he limits his undertaking in order to keep the scope of his project manageable. If he succeeds, then he gains fertility and fecundity from the liquidity of the natural cycle, as argued above. If, however, some force should overcome boundaries or restraints, then the destructive aspect of the natural cycle comes to the fore, and this affects all mortals, human and animal alike.

We can begin by looking at the verb *rumpere* and its compounds, which imply some sort of crossing of a boundary, breaking free of constraints, or even erasure of definition. Vergil tells us, for instance, that the cold of winter bursts rocks (*cum tristis hiems etiamnum frigore saxa / rumperet*, 4.135-6), and so they lose definition as did the glebe in spring. However, as already noted for other words, *rumpere* will not have a single, stable evaluation, but perhaps we will be able to find a pattern useful for this argument.

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55 *Rumpere*: 1.49, 446, 472, 510; 2.75, 480; 3.43, 328, 428; 4.136, 312, 492, 556; *erumpere*: 4.78, 313, 368; *abruptum*: 3.259, 530.
We can find instances of a “good” breaking of boundaries, which is to say that the bursting represents bounty, fertility, or good fortune. In Book 1, for example, the greedy farmer’s efforts are repaid with a bountiful harvest that bursts the granaries (*immensae ruperunt horrea messes*, 1.49). Clearly the harvest breaches boundaries and containment, but this fulfills the wishes of the farmer perfectly and his goal is achieved.56 Bursting in Book 3 marks a time of safety from snakes in Calabria, for when streams flow from their fonts (*dum amnes ulli rumpuntur fontibus*, 428), food is plentiful in the marshes and the snake remains there. And in Books 2 and 4 the bursting is done by new life and represents exuberance; buds burst forth from their sheaths at 2.75 (*tenuis rumpunt tunicas*) and at 4.556 the bees boil out of the bugonia-calf’s ruptured ribs (*ruptis efferuere costis*). It should not go unnoticed, however, that in these last two examples human *labor* is not far away. The bursting bud shows where to insert a graft, and the bugonia was, as we saw, a quite violent process, about which more shall be said presently.

On the other hand, a clear loss of control and potential danger present themselves in many other contexts with *rumpere*. The end

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56 When we take the bursting metaphorically. Earlier I argued that the farmer’s greed is reprehensible (it is), but this does not obscure the fact that the rupture represents, to him, something desirable.
of the first book provides two immediately useful illustrations. Caesar's death removes the linchpin from the sociopolitical order of Rome, of course, but nature responds to the loss with its own disintegration. Specific to our concerns here is the eruption of Aetna, which Vergil depicts as a smithy--a place of artistic fabrication--rather than simply as a natural phenomenon. The liquid destruction that boils out of the mountain and into the fields escapes from broken furnaces (1.471-3):

quotiens Cyclopum effluere in agros
uidimus undantem ruptis fornacibus Aetnam,
flammarumque globos liquefactaque uoluere saxa!

The ovens should keep the fire inside both for usefulness and to prevent cataclysm, but the death of Caesar removes the restraints from such forces: they rupture and liquid destruction escapes. This scene colors our impression of the bees' emergence from the dead calf at the end of Book 4 (4.555-6):

liquefacta boum per uiscera toto 555
stridere apes utero et ruptis effluere costis.

The parallels of vocabulary are striking: *liquefacere* occurs only once in the poem outside these passages while *effluere* occurs nowhere else in Vergil. The 'rebirth' of the bees, then, which might

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well be taken to exemplify bounty, carries with it as well intimations of liquid destruction and murderous violence against which nature responds explosively. \textit{Rumpere} likewise describes the aforementioned sociopolitical disintegration when Vergil relates the discord following the murder (1.510-1):

\begin{verbatim}
  uicinæ ruptis inter se legibus urbes arma ferunt.
\end{verbatim}

510

The chiasmus highlights the emotional separation taking place as the cities move away from each other and their compact, but the rupture of the legal bonds represents the loss of legitimate boundaries between them, and the arms that they bear they bear across old borders that now are gone.

Similarly the structure of bee society continues steady and secure as long as their king remains safe, but his loss means the collapse of society and country (4.212-4):

\begin{verbatim}
  rege incolumni mens omnibus una est;
amisso rupere fidem, constructaque mella
diripuere ipsae et cratis soluere faurum.
\end{verbatim}

Again the leader is the linchpin. Once he departs, the society shatters its mental cohesion and tears down its physical manifestations. The structure fails and the hive dissolves as did the glebe under Zephyrus’ breeze \textit{(putris se glaeba resoluit, 1.44)}. 
The last example of *rumpere* that we will look at involves Orpheus’ travail in the underworld. We saw earlier that Vergil characterizes the failure of the poet’s *labor* as a liquid being poured out (*effusus labor*, 4.492). Indeed, the very flow of this liquid destruction, brought about by *amor*, a force we shall treat presently, itself implies the crossing of some sort of boundary. Orpheus’ control fails: he forgets and his mind is conquered (*immemor heu! uictusque animi respetit*, 4.491). He resembles the careless shepherds who burn the orchard (*incautis pastoribus*, 2.303) and the throngs that die in the plague (*incautum ...uales*, 3.469), for he, too, fails to guard against calamity (*...incautum dementia cepit amantem*, 4.488) and suffers for not having his guard up; his defenses against failure are permeable.\(^58\) Thus he is unable to secure the compass of his efforts from disruptive effects, specifically the disruptive effects of *amor* that have made him out of his mind (*dementia*). He cannot manage all of the variables even in the restricted parameters of his attempt (for he was not trying to resurrect all of the dead but only one), and so the *labor* pours out. Vergil completes the thought by expressing the failure also as the rupture of quasi-legal bonds between the singer and the lord of the Underworld (4.491-493):

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\(^{58}\) *Incautus* appears in only these three passages in the *Georgics*. 
The failure of the *labor* in fact is the breaking of the pact with Pluto, and, as we have seen in regards to the images that follow, liquid destruction accompanies the inability of *labor* to confine variables successfully.

Orpheus' *amor*, which precipitates the disintegration of all his efforts, arises from within as a natural impulse, to which Vergil devotes much of the first half of Book 3. There our poet paints a larger picture of the effects of *amor* on all sorts of creatures, some of which effects it will be useful to examine here. We will find *amor* to be a disruptive force, a characteristic consonant with the nature of the fertility that is at its heart. Since this is so, humans must contain or direct it in order to extract value from that fertility. Yet *amor* causes the traversing or destruction of boundaries and limitations--indeed the sexual act itself entails the crossing of boundaries--and the crossing of boundaries, as with any loss of containment in the Jovian world, presents potential dangers as well; *amor* does not diverge from that reality.

The preparation of the mare for mating in 3.129ff. consists of depriving her of necessary foods and fluids until, like a field, she is
ready to receive the fertilizing liquid (semen). And liquid it is, as Vergil makes clear in 137, for the breeders thus treat the mare so that she is thirsty \textit{(rapiat sitiens Venerem interiusque recondat)}. She takes the liquid inside her body, which is to say across a boundary. This controlled sexual act--breeding--Vergil has called a \textit{labor} twice already (3.97-8, 127), as discussed earlier, and as such the breeder establishes and manipulates boundaries, for he must decide which animals will mate with which. He separates animals so that they cannot attempt intercourse against his wishes and therefore he establishes external impediments to their interaction. The drive toward \textit{amor}, however, is a drive to obliterate distinctions and boundaries, for it is a fertilizing act, and we have seen that fertility is unstructured.

\textit{Amor} distracts animals from the work that farmer may want them to do (3.209ff.), and so to control them he utilizes barriers to separate bulls from the cows that would whet their sexual appetite (3.212-6):

\begin{quote}
 atque ideo tauros procul atque in sola relegant 
pascua post montem oppositum et trans flumina lata, 
aut intus clausos satura ad praesepia servant.  
carpet enim uiris paulatim uritque uidendo 
\end{quote}

femina.
Divisions and limitations are the order of business here, whether the farmer utilizes naturally occurring impediments (mountains, rivers) or constructs his own (stables).

Failure to separate bulls and heifers produces violent and disruptive results (3.219):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{pascitur in magna Sila formosa iuuencä:} \\
\text{illi alternantes multa ui proelia miscent} \\
\text{uulneribus crebris; lauit ater corpora sanguis,} \\
\text{uersaque in obnixos urgentur cornua uasto} \\
\text{cum gemitu; reboant siluaeque et longus Olympus.}
\end{align*}
\]

The clash echoes off Olympus and the horns prove to be dangerous weapons, as the divisions give way upon the mixing of the battle. The wounds are many, and the result that \textit{amor} achieves when containment (or restraint) fails is the bulls’ tearing open of each others’ flesh. Their anatomical integrity is compromised and their vital, internal fluids (\textit{ater sanguis}) escape the confinement of the body and wash over them. The failure of one boundary because of \textit{amor} leads to the breach of another, which follows the pattern we saw for mating as well.

The battle results in another separation of the bulls, but only temporarily (\textit{nec mos bellantis una stabulare, sed alter/ uictus abit longeque ignotis exsulat oris}, 3.224-5). While away, the bull
practices tearing (*uentosque lacesit* / ictibus, 3.233-4), and upon his return Vergil characterizes the violence inspired by his *amor* with a five-line simile (3.237-41):

fluctus uti medio coepit cum albscere ponto,
longius ex altoque sinum trahit, utque uolutus
ad terras immane sonat per saxa neque ipso
monte minor procumbit, at ima exaestuat unda
uerticibus nigramque alte subiectat harenam.

The second clash appears as if it will be greater than the first. We see the unrestrained, love-driven force expressed in the familiar terms of liquid destruction as a wave that grows at sea and approaches the land. The battle is about to be joined, and the poet leaves us at the moment when the bull prepares to shatter the boundary between himself and his foe.

Vergil expresses this situation more generally in the subsequent paragraph (3.242ff.), where he says *omne adeo genus in terris .. in furias ignemque ruunt: amor omnibus idem* (3.242, 244). *Amor* overcomes all boundaries (3.252-7):

ac neque eos iam frena uirum neque uerbera saeua,
non scopuli rupesque cauae atque obiecta retardant
flumina correptosque unda torquentia montis.
ipse ruit dentesque Sabellicus exacuit sus
et pede prosubigit terram, fricat arbore costas
atque hinc atque illinc uernos ad uulnera durat.
These impediments recall those brought into play by the farmer in 212ff., but if anything they are more imposing. Not mere stables but reins and physical punishment stand fruitlessly in the horses’ way; not mere mountains and wide rivers but cliffs, crags, and raging rivers that tear mountains down. The boar, on the other hand, makes preparations against the assaults that love inevitably causes. He hardens the barrier of his hide so that it will be less easily penetrated.

Vergil tells us, though, that the fury of no other creature surpasses that of mares under the influence of *amor* (3.266). Because of it they tore apart Glaucus’ body (3.267-8) and range far and wide (3.269-70):

illas ducit amor trans Gargara transque sonantem Ascanium; superant montis et flumina tranant. 270

The repetition of *trans* emphasizes the nature of their trek: it involves crossing borders of all sorts. They are uncontrollable and bear no restraints, and perhaps the greatest marvel is their production of *hippomanes* (3.280ff.). At the acme of their madness, and suddenly pregnant without sex, *amor* seems to produce a fluid so destructive—and yet implicitly a product of fertility (pregnancy)—that stepmothers use it for poisons. Thus while the love-drive is
essential to life and humans manipulate its potential to achieve manifold benefits, failing to contain it or the creatures under its influence (all creatures, that is, including humans) brings about destruction, whether in the form of blood or poisons escaping the body’s confines.

For our final look at amor let us turn our attention to Vergil’s statements about his own poetry in 3.284-94. We saw in the first chapter how the military imagery (uince, 289) and concerns for recognition linked both the poetry and the agriculture in this passage to labor.59 Vergil claims, though, to be detained from larger concerns by an amor of details (3.284-7):

Sed fugit interea, fugit inreparabile tempus,
singula dum capti circumuectamur amore. 285

hoc satis armentis: superat pars altera curae,
lanigeros agitare greges hirtasque capellas.

The abruptness of hoc satis armentis provides not only an instant transition from the first half of the book, it also shows the poet forcefully redirecting his poetry from the course influenced by the amor that has distracted him, as it did the bull earlier (3.215-7) and, indeed, does all creatures (amor omnibus idem, 3.244). Having been

59 Cf. the preem 4 (in tenui labor; at tenuis non gloria, 6) and laudem (3.288) and honorem (3.290). See Thomas (1988) ad 3.294.
captured by it, he fails to harness and direct the available potential within his temporal confines and thus does not proceed toward his goal, which is disastrous. We may recall lines 3.66-8:

optima quaeque dies miseris mortalibus aeui
prima fugit; subeunt morbi tristisque senectus
et labor, et durae rapit inclementia mortis.

Adam Parry's discussion of biological creation, the precarious state of the individual, and the poignancy of these lines is worth quoting:

[T]he clear thought that underlies the transformation is the characteristic contrast between the evanescence of the individual and the continuation of the race. Though contrasted, there is an indissoluble connection: if the race, the process of life, is to continue, the individual must be selected, and the brief moment allotted must be seized and exploited; otherwise the race itself will decline or disappear. But even if it does not disappear, the irreducible value of the individual life is lost, and that loss is inconsolable.60

The mortal poet must not allow his moment to pass, an awareness he shows also at the beginning of Book 3: modo uita supersit. With his turn to flocks, though, he reasserts his regulation of the creative principle and mastery of its disruptive aspects, which, he claims, have led him away from an orderly progression through his subject and instead into a diffuse wandering among unconnected topics or details.

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60 Parry 41; see also Putnam's discussion (201ff.).
And yet it is *amor*, introduced by the repeated *sed*, that gives him the strength and desire to take on the great task (*magnum*, 3.289) of composition (3.291-4):

*sed me Parnası deserta per ardua dulcis*
*raptat amor; iuuat ire iugis, qua nulla priorum Castaliam molli deuertitur orbita cliuo.*
*nunc, ueneranda Pales, magno nunc ore sonandum.*

As were the animals previously so, too, the poet is led by love across the most imposing mountains; its violently driving force controls them. But as Mynors submits, “as the poet warms to his work, the path to success takes an easier gradient,”⁶¹ and this route brings him to where the poetically fertile waters of Castalia await. To this I would add the proposition that Vergil depicts the poet gaining control of his inspiration just as he did of his poetic direction a few lines before—we have seen in the case of the bull that little of constructive value comes from being controlled by rather than in control of *amor*. The poet must contain and direct his creative potential for it to be useful, to achieve his goal, and again he depicts the confines of this “poetic fertility” temporally: anaphora of *nunc* (294) renews the anaphora and sentiment of 284 (*sed fugit ...fugit inreparabile tempus*). For the poet, the rough ideas and words not

⁶¹ Mynors ad 3.289-93.
yet cast in meter become transformed in his hand.

As Thomas points out, the reference here looks past Lucretius’ foot-path to Callimachus’ wagon-track; “orbita does not and cannot mean uestigium.”\textsuperscript{62} Thus Vergil refers to a program of Callimachean poetics and, implicitly, its carefully wrought character, which requires the control to which I suggested Vergil alludes. But we need not rely on this argument alone, for Vergil has given us an image as well as an allusion. The rugged crags through which the inspirational amor sweeps the poet clearly contrast the soft, final descent toward his Castalian destination. His path may be untraveled but he does not career down broken tracks, for this is Vergil and his descent is a controlled descent. He approaches the spring with composure, with which he can best develop the potential there, and just as previously an emphatic statement reasserted the poet’s control and direction, this time the anaphora of nunc in tandem with gerundives does so.\textsuperscript{63}


\textsuperscript{63} The anaphora of nunc (294) also recalls that of fugit (284), with which Vergil ties the end of the paragraph to its beginning; the middle-voiced verbs that describe the poet’s motion, circumuectamur (285) and deuertitur (293), add to this effect. See Putnam 202-3.
Between these two abductions by amor Vergil has introduced the aforementioned labor, colored as a term of great effort. In the three central lines of the paragraph he recounts again the nature of the difficulty involved in success in the age of Jupiter (3.288-90):

hic labor, hinc laudem fortes sperate coloni.
nec sum animi dubius uerbis ea uincere magnum
quam sit et angustis hunc addere rebus honorem. 290

Praise, triumph, and honor mark the lines; these terms of Iron-Age conquest characterize mortal efforts to direct forces around them toward goals of their choosing. So when amor asserts its influence on the poet he finds his project confronted with the potential for creativity or destruction, and it comes as no surprise that he depicts these powers as liquids: sea\textsuperscript{64} and spring. His successful management of amor, thus turned to creativity, we witness in his poetry. We recognize here that he has depicted himself as threatened with a loss of control over his poetry, but each time he has succeeded in reasserting that control and turning the potential toward beneficial ends, and thus he continues his project.\textsuperscript{65}

\textsuperscript{64} Page \textit{ad} 3.285 says the metaphor is from either sailing or riding.

\textsuperscript{65} Miles notes that Vergil claims to have lost control of his poem (199).
From consideration of this example of the poet’s momentary triumph and mastery of dynamic energies let us turn to the losing struggle against the plague. Vergil tells us the conditions under which the plague sets in (3.441-4):

\[
\text{turpis ouiis temptat scabies, ubi frigidus imber altius ad uium persedit et horrida cano bruma gelu, uel cum tonsis inlotus adhaesit sudor, et hirsuti secuerunt corpora uepres.}
\]

The causes are two liquids: winter rains and summer sweat.\(^6\) The danger in both cases is that the destructive liquid will somehow penetrate the sheep’s bodies, in the first case by sinking deep to the quick by unspecified means but in the second case by entering through a literal tear in the flesh. As we have seen before, the farmer must manage boundaries to protect his interests, and so Vergil goes on to suggest remedies for these threats to the integrity of the animals’ hides (3.445-51).

In its onset the disease “glides deep into the bones and turns into a parching fire, a *furor.*”\(^7\) The verb is *lâbor* (ima dolor balantium lapsus ad ossa, 3.457), which in chapter two we saw operating in conjunction with liquids and destruction. And while Ross has argued

\(^6\) This is the summer shearing (*tonsis*) notes Page ad 3.443.

\(^7\) Ross 180.
well that “the plague... (478-566) is the great exemplum of fire’s destructiveness,” let us nevertheless remain alert to the liquid aspects of disease as we continue examining boundary issues.

Once disease has entered the animal and found a foothold, the farmer must seek ways to treat the afflicted creature. Vergil suggests two general methods: taking (cutting) things out and putting things in. Twice he urges cutting the lesion open or out, in which case the farmer acts in his capacity as manager of boundaries. In 3.452-4 we find that if the disease remains hidden within the flesh it is allowed to survive:

non tamen ulla magis praesens fortuna laborum est quam si quis ferro potuit rescindere summum ulceris os: alitur uitium uiuitque tegendo.

Here the farmer attends to the problem with the knife by rupturing the protective covering that hides the defect and thus exposes it to the outside. Likewise at 468-9 the knife is used:

continuo culpam ferro compesce, priumquam dira per incautum serpant contagia uulgus.

Here, however, the body has become a greater entity, the entire flock, from which the farmer excises the dangerous affliction—a single, contaminated animal. And at 459-60 Vergil offers lancing a

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48 Ross 181; see generally his section “The sacer ignis” (177ff.).
vein (bleeding) as a possibility for draining the fever out of the sheep, in which treatment we encounter the disease’s deadly heat in a liquid form that the shepherd must conduct from within the body.

The disease progresses, though (3.549-50):

    quaesitaeque nocent artes; cessere magistri,  
    Phillyrides Chiron Amythaoniusque Melampus.  550

When methods of removing the disease from the body had failed, attempts were made to treat it within (509-14):

    profuit inserto latices infundere cornu  
    Lenaeos; ea uisa salus morientibus una.  510  
    mox erat hoc ipsum exitio, furiosis refecti  
    ardebant, ipsique suos iam morte sub aegra  
    (di meliora piis, erroremque hostibus illum!)  
    discissos nudis laniabant dentibus artus.

Replenishing the victims’ vital liquids seemed a viable option for treatment, but in fact all it has done is reinvigorate the disease’s burning. The dying animal’s response to the damaging liquid is to tear open its own flesh. As Glaucus’ mares rent his flesh and the warring bulls opened wounds in each other under the influence of *amor*, so here under the effects of disease the horses rupture the confines of their own bodies. *Amor* directed the destruction outward and affected boundaries between bodies, while the plague returns the destruction to the victim and has its effect on and within
individual bodies.

Despite the best efforts at prevention, still the plague sweeps across all creatures (genus omne neci pecudum dedit, omne ferarum, 3.480) with its fiery effects (ignea... sitis, 482-3). Yet we saw in the previous chapter that the plague asserts immediately its destructive force in liquid form as well (484-5):

rursus abundabat fluidus liquor omniaque in se ossa minutatim morbo conlapsa trahebat. 485

Internal composition collapses (labor) and dissolves, which becomes externally evident at 498-501:

labitur infelix studiorum atque immemor herbae uictor equus fontisque auertitur et pede terram crebra ferit; demissae aures, incertus ibidem sudor et ille quidem morituris frigidus...

Sweat reappears from the section on causes, but now as a symptom it combines the perspiration of summer (sudor, 444) and the cold liquid of winter (frigidus, cf. frigidus imber, 441). In the end, though, sweat turns into more than a natural systemic reaction to the disease; it becomes a foul product of the sickness (563-6):

uerum etiam inuisos si quis temptat amisus, ardentes papulæ atque immundus olentia sudor membra sequebatur, nec longo deinde moranti tempore contactos artus sacer ignis edebat.
In this final passage the fire ravages human bodies as well, but sandwiched between the two pictures of burning (*ardentes papulae, ignis*) lies one of destructive liquid; once a marker of impending death, sweat here becomes an agent in the degenerative illness.\(^69\)

While the plague’s primary associations reside with fire, then--the plague’s description, and with it the Book, ends by calling the malady a *sacer ignis*, and the frequency in the passage of words like *ardeo* (490, 505, 512, 565) certainly reinforce an imagery of fire--still we recognize that Vergil has not abandoned his use of liquids to describe destruction. Furthermore, we see this destruction in the context of boundaries: blood has issued from the horse’s nose (*it naribus ater / sanguis*, 3.507-8), bodies have lost their distinction when melting away with vile moisture (*turpi dilapsa cadauera tabo*, 3.557), and with the death of the sea creatures, who leave their habitat and cross onto land, Vergil evokes the failure of mortal labor to overcome the difficulties of the epidemic (3.541-3):

> iam maris immensi prolem et genus omne natantium 
> litore in extremo ceu naufraga corpora fluctus 
> proluit.

Since sailing has represented a primary Jovian *ars*, depicting deaths

\(^69\) We may recall here the fire that first lay hidden and then chased through the orchard in Book 2 (303ff.), but here it is the liquid that chases.
as shipwrecks argues for the failure of *ars* here, as indeed it has failed. As when floods scour away fields and storms decimate harvests, the vast, impersonal, and destructive power of the liquid cycle asserts itself here as the sea casts ashore the ruins of creatures devastated by the plague.

The death that strikes the reader most strongly, however, is perhaps that of the honorable bull (3.515-30). His human diligence and morality include hard work, simplicity, and freedom from vice; these characterized his life and so his death seems all the more unfair, but Justice left the earth in Book 2, and all things exist within the scope of the cycle of growth and decay. None of the invigorating, life-sustaining liquids with which he filled his life (*purior electro... amnis, 522; fontes liquidii atque exercita cursu / flumina, 529-30*) avail him as now he descends in the cycle. He crashes limply to the ground and, as with the horse just before, his blood gushes out of his body—the life-force departs the confines of the flesh (*mixtum spumis uomit ore cruorem, 516*). His plague-stricken body streams toward land (*ad terramque fluit*), a victim of destruction just as the love-struck bull, characterized at 237ff. as a mountainous wave approaching shore (*fluctus... ad terras*), was an agent of destruction; but no longer does willpower or life support the sick beast (522-4):
solumuntur latera, atque oculos stupor urget inertis
ad terramque fluit deuexo pondere ceruix.

The invisible bonds that hold the creature together dissolve (*solumuntur*), and it flows to the ground in its downfall, for once again *labor* has proven ultimately to be ineffective at stemming the current of the natural cycle through its destructive, boundary-obliterating phase. Amid the heat of fiery ruin, death and destruction remain liquid.

Success and failure in the management of various types of boundaries, then, translate into success or failure of mortal enterprise, but, as we saw in the use of *rumpere*, successful manipulation of boundaries can include their crossing as well as their maintenance. The human agent’s ability to regulate the necessary variables depends upon his ability to isolate his target and restrict the parameters within which he works. Within this scope his management sometimes will include obliterating boundaries or dismantling previous structure(s) in order to facilitate the imposition of a new order of his choosing: controlling animals’ sexual interaction (*amor*) when he selectively breeds his stock or the act of clearing the land and breaking the soil to create the optimal conditions of fertility for the growth of crops are included in such
management. At the same time he needs to protect the purposely disrupted area from disturbances from outside, such as pests, and so he builds and maintains barriers. Frequently this control of natural forces by means of boundaries consists of controlling liquids, and controlling them with martial violence, in keeping with the liquid and military imagery of the poem. We witness this liquidity, for example, in metaphorical guise when the poet controls Castalian waters to fabricate the measured rhythms of poetry.

These tasks require diligence, but even with unabated effort and industry there exists no guarantee of success. Vergil stresses this grim truth as the bull collapses under the yoke after years of honest service, when the farmer fails to separate the amor-stricken bulls, or when the farmer who prepares to harvest his ripe field encounters the dangers of the storm sweeping in upon him from beyond the limits of his field and power. In these instances, as we have seen in other examples as well, the care-taking human was incapable of maintaining intact the boundaries that were in place naturally or by his hand (the animal’s hide, the bulls’ isolation, the field’s termini), and the potential of liquids crossed over (according to his perspective) from beneficial to damaging: the rains did not fertilize but destroyed the crops, the amorous bull became a crushing
wave, and the dying bull's internal juices along with all his vitals turned into a virulent liquid. In contrast to this mythical plague\textsuperscript{70} and its destructive liquids, the fabulous success of the certainly mythical bugonia demonstrates that proper management and containment of a bull's inner juices within the boundaries of its hide produces not ruin but bounty in the farmer's eyes when the bees emerge from within. So despite disease's fiery symbolism and season, the mechanism of destruction and creation within the natural cycle, as well as Vergil's representation and evaluation of that mechanism, remains fluid, awaiting proper definition to extract its potential.

CONCLUSION

Hesiod's *Works and Days*, especially the myth of the *erides*, provided Vergil with the essential materials that he selected and Romanized, in composing the *Georgics*, to construct a picture of the world and to give form to the *labor* that would be the guiding principle there. For his part, however, Hesiod did not furnish only a single mythological principle to explain existence. Rather, he created an impressionistic montage of myths at the beginning of the poem, which, when taken in tandem as they should be, fashion a larger picture of which the myth of the *erides* is merely a part. They explain in a variety of ways how the world changed from an easy, spontaneously--or at least bountifully--productive one to a difficult one where survival for humans is arduous, even tenuous, and possible only through hard work.

When comparisons among Hesiod's myths are drawn, we recognize that Zeus' introduction of *eris* in the one corresponds to his ending of the Golden Age in the others. Of the myth's two *erides*,

203
good and bad, Zeus placed the good in the world first, and through competition it forced humans to work, which parallels the other myths’ imposition of the need to work to secure the necessities of life. The perpetual spring ends and troubles begin on earth, which represents a mythological rationale for the state of existence current in the Iron Age. Natural cycles rather than static, eternal bounty and ease govern this existence: growth yields to decay and winter yields to spring. But, while implicitly this first eris, which through competitive strife urges mortals to work, is tied to and even parallels the natural cycle in its effects, Hesiod has not made an equation of the two. For Hesiod, the seasonal and cyclical process of nature’s revolving year and eris are not precisely the same thing but are clearly and intimately related elements of the same mythological system.

Zeus also burdened humans with Hesiod’s ‘bad’ eris. This younger sibling fosters a martial impulse that can be traced to an origin in the competitive impulse of the primary eris. Hesiod’s admonitions in the Works and Days and their vocabulary, when viewed as a whole, reveal that eris progresses from healthy competitiveness to covetousness to the urge toward forcible and unjust seizure of the products of another’s labor. This second eris,
then, proves ultimately to be the mythological rationalization of the human response to the exigencies of the world as it has been molded by Zeus through his first *eris*. Again, for Hesiod, *eris* is an agent; he has not made an equation of *eris* and military violence.

Vergil tapped into Hesiod's mythological complex to form his own explanation of modern existence. He does so most clearly in his theodicy, the beginning and end of which he has marked with allusions to the *Works and Days*. Within the theodicy *labor omnia uicit / improbus et duris urgens in rebus egestas* is the linchpin and crux of Vergil's explication of a twofold significance for *labor*. The necessity and difficulty of the system introduced under the new god's reign mark Jove's first *labor* as they marked Zeus' first *eris*, while the military connotations of *uicit* evoke the second, martial *eris* as a human response to that changed world. Further evidence of this military aspect comes in the placement and meaning of *improbus* as a modifying adjective of *labor*. With it Vergil alluded to *σχέτλιη*, which adjective Hesiod attached to the martial *eris*. Yet Vergil has made a significant modification to his *Works and Days* model, for he has synthesized Hesiod's patchwork of myths into a single version. Here *labor* assumes the role that I showed was only implied for—or perhaps associated with—Hesiod's first *eris*. For
Vergil, *labor* does not just parallel the natural cycle in its effect of driving humans to work as did *eris*; he has made the equation Hesiod did not: *labor* is the natural cycle, the natural interaction of construction and destruction in Jovian existence. Nor does its other facet merely urge war and warlike actions; it is military activity.

Soon after the theodicy Vergil confirms his explanation of that aggressive human response to the natural cycle when he calls the farmer’s tools *arma* (1.160ff.). Not only does this naming enhance the connection of *labor* to war, however, but with it Vergil explains and makes explicit for his two *labores* the connection Hesiod only implied between the two *erides*. Vergil has drawn the two forces represented by *labor* (or *eris*)--motivation and response--into a clearer relationship, and so provides us with a Vergilian reading of Hesiod’s mythological system. No need in the *Georgics* to progress through competition born of need, zeal, covetousness, law courts, and war in order to display the link between the sky god’s imposition and humans’ ultimately warlike response to need. Vergil has revealed the relationship at its most basic level—in the farmwork required by the new order simply for survival.\(^1\) So while the

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¹ In a similar vein, Putnam notes that “war...is a corrupt version of man’s enmity with nature,” and, in introducing the farmer who digs up Roman arms at the end of Book 1, that “There is also the further twist that the artistry used against the earth is a stepping-stone toward the martial artifacts man produces against himself” (p. 71).
progression from Iron-Age need to literal war is available in the
*Georgics* as it was in *Works and Days*, we find also that each step
along the way mirrors that end result. This crystallization of ideas
implicit in the Hesiodic material gives Vergil the freedom to explore
some fundamental assumptions about the traditional Roman soldier-
farmer. The hardy folk extolled in the Praises of Italy indeed are
belligerent at heart, for such is farming at its heart, and so they
progress to domination by war. War naturally grows out of the
Roman struggle with the soil, and thus Vergil draws a Roman
conclusion from Hesiod’s connections.

The first chapter showed us, then, Vergil’s adaptation of *eris* and
its development in *labor*. Just as from Hesiod’s *eris*, so too Iron-Age
competitiveness arose from the Jovian *labor* and led to war, which
was itself a *labor* that in its turn necessitated further effort (such as
the need to resuscitate neglected fields). Not only, then, did the first
*labor* represent a cyclical pattern in nature, but in tandem with the
second *labor* it displayed a cyclical interaction between humans and
their environment. Furthermore, by using military imagery to
describe agricultural imposition on nature, Vergil has accomplished
at least two things: he has shown how the microcosm (of simply
surviving) mirrors the macrocosm (of all endeavor, even as far as
world-conquest) and he has added potential moral implications for basic human activities.\textsuperscript{2} These moral implications find their contrasts in the treatment of, say, the Corycian senex and the avarus agricola or the rustics of the second book’s finale and the hard, military race of Romans in the Laudes Italicae. In his depiction of farming Vergil has interjected a commentary on contemporary society’s harshness and misguided aims; “at Rome, the conflict of highly charged social values could find expression in these terms.”\textsuperscript{3} Farming, then, inasmuch as it mirrors broader issues in the Georgics, provides a critique of aggressive greed and a praise of contentment and restraint. But while the iratus arator may have seemed unnecessarily harsh and heartless in tearing up the ancient homes of birds, Ross goes too far, I think, in saying the Georgics show “a world in which man intrudes rather than belongs, where his intervention and manipulation, rather than fostering, perverts and even destroys,”\textsuperscript{4} for we have seen quite clearly that humans are subsumed in the natural process of labor and that their labor partakes in and

\textsuperscript{2} We must not forget that the martial eris is blameworthy and savage (ἐνεμωμένη and σχέτικη [ND 13 and 15]) and to be contrasted with the ‘good’ eris (ἀγαθή, ND 24).

\textsuperscript{3} Ross 16.

\textsuperscript{4} Ross 23.
enhances that cycle. At worst, humans are belligerent insiders: their actions inform a microcosm within the macrocosm of all existence.

An investigation of Vergil’s use of liquid imagery for describing the natural cycle has shown us that this labor exhibits two facets, or perhaps tendencies, which under scrutiny betrayed no gap or seam between them despite their possessing distinct appraisals from a human perspective at isolated moments. Since, however, the natural cycle never stops--is fluid--the evaluations of points on the cycle lose their usefulness in an eternally changing present. Evaluations remain in constant flux due to the need for continual reevaluation brought on by shifting circumstances. Sometimes there must be destruction, sometimes construction, but neither is inherently good or bad, merely appropriate at different times.

The facets of this natural-cycle labor that liquid imagery represents are growth and decay, fertility and infertility, construction and destruction. We have found that all growth requires fluids and that liquidity accompanies abundant fertility and fecundity. Dryness, on the other hand, or when liquids are no longer liquid but rendered solid, characterizes unproductive contexts. The ancient image of pater Aether’s fecund showers naturally points to the fertility of fluids, but Vergil’s choice of liquidity to describe
fertility benefits as well from the fact that liquids have no
preexisting shape or inherent definition and thus represent an
organizational tabula rasa. Infusing such potential into projects,
then, provides the greatest opportunity for (re)creation of (new)
forms.

Likewise liquidity furnishes a useful medium for destruction. Of
course floods and storms actually do present very real dangers for
the farmer, but in addition Vergil has again taken advantage of the
natural tendencies of liquids to shape his argument. Solids, for
instance, dissolve in them, and generally speaking they are unstable.
So while they can represent a level of least possible organization
from which to move toward more and more complex structure, just
as easily they embody the end of destruction beyond which nothing
can descend. Thus the tendencies mentioned earlier may be seen as
directions of motion along the path of the natural cycle, but
individual points on that path will not have absolute values, for they
are dependent upon a perspectival evaluation of progress toward a
chosen goal; whether or not the glass is half full or half empty may
be a question of whether water is currently going in or out rather
than whether one is optimistic or pessimistic. Liquidity is neither
creation nor destruction but both simultaneously, as when fertility
itself shows potential for destruction (*a, nimium ne sit mihi fertilis illa...*, 2.252), and the seeds of both aspects can be found in each use of *labor*. Thus Vergil selects vocabulary and deploys imagery in his discussion to exhibit the fluid tendencies of his topic.

Finally, we treat humans’ involvement in manipulating their environment. Earlier I noted that Vergil characterized this manipulation with military imagery, which in many contexts was prominent. Primarily, though, my focus has been on the control of boundaries. The farmer, as mediator and working in conjunction with the natural cycle, exaggerates the cycles of growth and decay in order to enhance the products of his labor. To do this sometimes he has to compromise boundaries so as to enhance fertile potential and sometimes has to impose limits to maintain the manageability of his endeavor or to protect it from external threats. In fact, the literal definition of fields in the theodicy marked the advent of the Jovian Age of competition, which displaced the communal Golden Age.

As long as the human agent controls the limits and boundaries of the liquids within the natural cycle, he can expect success, whether this control means maintaining or disrupting boundaries. The Achillean irrigator deftly maneuvers liquid waters out of their artificial channel into dry fields (and so brings forth a healthy crop),
and the bugonia, following the pattern of scientific discussion, provides a paradigm for the successful manipulation of boundaries for the purpose of containing and controlling liquid potentialities. Successful control, however, is never guaranteed nor can one hope always to overcome forces of destruction. At such times as the agent’s vigilance falters or natural forces simply overwhelm him, control of boundaries is wrenched from him and they are crossed, definition is lost, and his project is ruined. Rivers break free of their channels and wipe out towns and fields in their mad rush; sometimes these rivers are water, sometimes molten rock. Again, a storm arises and brings destruction from outside the *termini* of a field or flock—crosses the boundary against the desires and beyond the control of the human agent—whereupon failure of the human endeavor in the form of liquid dominates the scene.

Within the scope of this argument I discussed Ross’ contention that the farmer’s great scientific achievement was a balancing of opposing elements. Indeed the *pinguis arista*, Ross’ primary example, does represent a combination of wet and dry, but Ross leaves us thinking that this blend of opposites persists once it has been attained. We have seen throughout, however, that nature is never so static as to allow any such precarious balance to remain for
long; in fact, it is intrinsic to the very nature of Jovian reality that the balance be fleeting. Ross seems to have overlooked this, for the ‘elements’ are not the only components of existence; we might say, in fact, that they are qualities that shape or characterize the substance of life, but that substance’s shape is ever fluctuating according to the principles we have discussed. The natural cycle flows constantly, and the grain, having assumed a complex, structured form and a combination of elements that match its season’s (spring’s) combination, begins its descent through decay, digestion, and destruction as it passes through other seasons. Meanwhile our farmer also must move with the cycle, now plowing, now sowing, now harvesting and eating, then plowing under or burning the stubble left from the last crop of *pingues aristae*. Vergil gives us the law of Jovian existence: *redit agricolis labor actus in orbem,/ atque in se sua per vestigia voluitur annus* (2.401-2). Needs change in cycles; actions respond in cycles.

Lastly, I have noted briefly the poet’s efforts in the context of the Iron Age. He equated himself to the farmer and the sailor, icons of the Jovian era, and he also sought out potential in the fertility of waters, which he would like to contain within the metrical bounds of his poetic lines. He showed restraint and control, however, whereas
certain others became greedy. He couched his triumphant procession at the beginning of Book 3 in terms of an Olympic victory, which established a formal and thus presumably acceptable context for the pomp and ceremony. With his banishment of inuidia he infused a moment of vaunting and glory with the epinician admonition of pious restraint and a warning about excessive greed, which we have seen to be both a natural outgrowth of Jove-given competition as well as deadly when it evolves to its natural extreme.

In Book 2, though, he gave perhaps the clearest statement of his poetic goals (475ff.). He asked that the Muses show him the ways of the world, but, if that proved beyond his abilities, he asked merely that he appreciate what the world offers. Vergil would like an understanding of the mechanisms of existence— that is to say the workings of the primary labor, of the liquid natural cycle. It seems that he thus asks for the knowledge required for composing the Georgics, and his product demonstrates for us that the Muses granted his wish. His alternative, though, shows us that he was never without a certain grasp of the knowledge he sought. He desires the simple satisfaction and secura quies enjoyed by the rustic he praises both before and after his plea to the Muses (458ff., 495ff.). These work to support their needs, not to sate their desires
(524-5):

hic anni labor, hinc patriam paruosque nepotes
sustinet, hinc armenta boum meritosque iuuenos.

By finding simple satisfaction they avoid the endless striving that
steals the sweet things of life from the avaricious urbanite (*dulcia
limina mutant*, 511); instead they enjoy such delights (*dulces
pendent circum oscula nati*, 523). His desire for such simple
satisfaction shows that our poet already understood the potential in
the Iron-Age for human responses to the exigencies of Jove-given
*labor* to develop dangerously--into competition leading to greed and
violence: the extreme of the other *labor*. 
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