COLUMELLA'S *GEORGICS*: FORM, METHOD, INTERTEXTUALITY, IDEOLOGY

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Abstract

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This dissertation consists of a study of Columella's georgic poem in the context of the technical treatise on agriculture of which it is an integral part. I consider four aspects in order to arrive at an interpretation of this work: form, method, intertextuality, and ideology. The form both of the technical books and of the poem is taken into consideration in this analysis. The same principle applies to the other aspects under scrutiny. These aspects are also considered in relation to each other. With respect to form we have concluded that the poem follows a ring–composition scheme around the farming calendar. The form of the technical books follows the dictates of the subjects under consideration, with the exception of horticulture which is left to be presented almost at the end and framed between the book on apiculture (9) and the two complementary books on the duties of the *vilicus* and *vilica* (11 & 12).

With respect to method we argue that the principle of *usus et experientia* (trial and error) constitutes the foundation of the discipline of agriculture and animal farming according to Columella; and that the aim of any agricultural activity or animal husbandry task is invariably the acquisition of profit. I study the intertextual relationships of the poem with respect to other authors and consider the technical books, as well as other books on agriculture or kindred subjects, as part of the bank not only of words or expressions, but of themes through which different texts connect with each other.

Last, I consider the ideological content of Columella's treatise as it pertains to the traditional Roman ethics associated with agriculture, especially in what it concerns the continuity of the class division maintained by the equestrian order. I invite an analysis of Columella's ideological assumptions in contrast to those of his Neronian literary contemporaries. I state that reading Columella's work is necessary in order to have a better understanding of the literary, cultural, political and scientific developments of the Neronian period.

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DEDICATION

Parentibus meis

INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation we propose a study of book 10 of Columella's *Res Rustica* within the context of the whole treatise. The reason to take this route is Columella's own statement, in the preface to book 10, to the effect that the poem can only be understood in the context of the technical books, and that it should not undermine in any way the content or scientific rigor of the latter. The analysis proposed is formed, so to speak, of two vectors. One is the relation of the poem to the technical treatise. The other points towards the structure of the poem itself, something which will be addressed in detail in chapter 4. The second task should be self–evident. The first one will present more challenges because, with the intersection of the prose and poetry parts, there will be multiple elements of critical inquiry from which to choose. In order for this choice to become as focused as possible we will concentrate on four aspects that affect both parts more or less equally. These are: form, method, intertextuality, and ideology. By form we mean the relationship between the parts and the whole. We will consider aspects of internal organization within the technical treatise; we will pay special attention to the form of the poem; and we will consider the decisions involved in, and the structural result of, including a georgic poem within the technical work.

Under the rubric of method we will identify the most significant parameters used by Columella with respect to technical and scientific approach and, especially, we will identify the underlying motive or motives for his use of certain methodologies and concepts. The next aspect under consideration will be intertextuality. Intertextuality has to be understood in two ways. First we should study the intertextual relationships of the poem, in a strict sense, with the work of other poets, including that of Hesiod. It also needs to be considered in a broader

sense: the intertextuality of the poem with respect to the technical parts of the work and to other technical treatises. Within the first kind, the concept of intertextuality will be considered paying attention to specific allusions to words, expressions and, especially themes. Columella frequently resorts to allusion of other poets in complex interrelationships. Intertextuality will also be considered insofar as it illuminates recurring themes in Columella's epistemological and ideological constructs.

The fourth aspect we will consider is ideology. This aspect is not easily identifiable except at a very basic level: before reading the treatise we can expect to read about the virtues of agriculture and its ties to the *mores maiorum*, as well as some reference to the elder Cato. More importantly, identifying the ideological component which underlies Columella's work will contribute to our understanding of the social dynamics of the early Principate, especially during the reign of Nero, the time when this treatise was written. The abstract term ideology will thus be narrowed to those elements which influence or are conditioned by the social dynamics of the time and which are inherited from the ideological constructs of previous epochs in Roman history.

The fact that we put ideology in dialogue with the third category – intertextuality – shows that these four elements are frequently connected among themselves. The form Columella chooses to present his treatise is connected to his own methodological considerations. We foresee that methodological constructs will come to be through intertextual interaction with previous or contemporary writers of georgic literature as well as in other more or less related disciplines. The fact that Columella quotes Hesiod and Virgil in his technical books brings up the necessity to address these authors as sources of method.

There may also be formal aspects of the work which are in intertextual dialogue with other authors and works. All three aspects will inform the fourth aspect – ideology. The choice of a particular genre with its own formal characteristics may inform us of the relation Columella's work may have, in ideological terms, with the social and political idiosyncrasies of the time. These should be of particular importance when we consider contemporary intellectual and literary tendencies. They will help us position this work, unfortunately often neglected by modern critical scholarship, *vis–à–vis* the literary and intellectual production of Nero's time. Certainly intertextual choices will illuminate particular ideological principles. These four aspects will be considered, therefore, in connection with each other.

Our hope is that these aspects will help elucidate and open a path of interpretation for this work within the period of its composition, the reign of Nero. That this work exists gives us hope to understand some developments of this period beyond what the interpretation and discussion of more frequently studied contemporary authors may have contributed.

CHAPTER I: COLUMELLA AND THE TRADITION OF AGRICULTURAL TREATISES

Columella's work on agriculture and poetry

Except for one inscription, a few quotes from the elder Pliny, and mention by later writers such as Palladius on the field of agronomy, all information we have about L. Junius Moderatus Columella comes from his own extant work, the *Res Rustica*. Richter argues that he was born around 4 a.D., was alive at the time when T. Clodius Eprius Marcellus was consul suffect (62 a.D.) and even after the Pisonian conspiracy of 65.[1] One remarkable feature about this work is that its 10th book,[2] the one assigned to horticulture, is written in hexameters, an unusual gesture in a purely technical treatise typically expressed in prose. The appeal of this book increases when we read from the author himself that there is in it a close association with Virgil's *Georgics*.

Lundström–Josephson–Hedberg's (1897–1968) is the standard modern critical edition. There is an *O.C.T.* edition by Rodgers (2010). Ash–Forster–Heffner's (1941–1955) is the standard modern edition with English translation (Loeb). Richter's (1981–1983) is the standard German modern edition with translation. Book 1 has a commentary in doctoral dissertation format.[3] Books 3 (on the vine), 9 (on apiculture), 10, and 12 (on the duties of the *vilica*) and *De*

[1] See Richter 3, 1981, 593–600, & 168. Richter (3, 598) observes that Columella must have written the poem when Gallio was still alive, i.e. before the Pisonian conspiracy of 65. See also Reitz, 2013, 276.
[2] For the numbering of books, the book *De arboribus* (henceforth *Arb.*) and correction of the ms. tradition by Jucundus Veronensis see chapter 3.
[3] Hentz, 1978. The following summary of modern editions is not exhaustive.

arboribus have been published in separate volumes in *Les Belles Lettres* (Budé).[4] Boldrer (1996) published a commentary and Italian translation of book 10. Ahrens (1972), García Armendáriz (2004) are two recent translations in German and Castilian.[5] Book 10, on the vegetable garden in hexameters, has seen light in at least 7 separate critical editions. In comparison books 2, 4–8, and 11, are available in fewer critical editions.[6] Columella has been to date a source of lexicon, agronomy and animal husbandry, veterinary, economic theory, social history, as well as comparative literary material.[7]

Columella's work amounts to the most complete *vademecum* of agriculture in antiquity and a testimony to the practical, technical and scientific knowledge on this field at its time. We can adapt what Murphy states in the introduction to his work on Pliny to Columella, by placing the word 'agriculture' instead of the word 'nature' and 'manual' for 'encyclopedia': 'An exhaustive survey of the phenomena of [agriculture], this [manual] is also an unparalleled guide to the cultural systems which the ancient Romans used to understand their world.'[8] Columella

[4] See bibliography: Dumont (3: 1993, 9: 2001), Saint–Denis (10: 1969a), André (12: 1988), Goujard (*Arb*: 1986). Books 2, 4–8, 11 have not yet been published in this collection.
[5] García Armendáriz contains books 1–5 and *Arb.* See Rodgers (2010, v–xviii) for mss. and early editions. In 1993 J.C. Dumont (1993, xvii) was announcing a *Budé* edition of the first book with a study of the ms. tradition, but this has not yet appeared: *L'étude de la tradition manuscrite sera présentée dans l'introduction au livre I: je me bornerai ici à un bref rappel et à une rapide présentation des manuscrits utilisés pour l'édition de ce livre*. As a footnote, Dumont provides the available summaries of the ms. tradition (including S. Hedberg, 1968). Hentz (1978), in dissertation format, produces useful general background information. One recent translation of book 10 is included in Coppolino (1994) and a translation and commentary in White (2013).
[6] See the pertinent lists in Rodger, 2010, xx.
[7] Mynors (1990), e.g., resorts to Columella frequently in his edition of Virgil's *Georgics.*
[8] Murphy (2004, 2) states, however, that Pliny's *Natural History* 'owes more to literary tradition than empirical observation', which is for Columella the foundation of all agricultural activity.

shows in this field a degree of mastery rarely attained, but also a cosmic conception worthy of an encyclopedic writer.

Quintilian ignores the specialist Columella, while Cato, Varro, Cicero, and Celsus, who wrote about agriculture as well as other subjects – they fit better the model of 'encyclopedic' authors – have a place in his treatise. The rhetorical theorist from Tarraconensis praises these authors as examples of the polymath, or as Doody states, 'the man in complete possession of the knowledge of his culture', the archetype that guarantees 'the ideal of education that he has been advocating in the course of the *Institutio Oratoria*'.[9]

This apparent set–back leaves, paradoxically, ample opportunity for the application of critical approaches to a unique piece of literature and the intellectual history of the early Principate which has projections, because of its subject, as far back as the *archaic* poetry of Hesiod, the work of Cato and, forward in time, to the work of Palladius and the Byzantine *Geoponica*.

In this dissertation we propose a study of book 10 within the context of the whole treatise taking John Henderson's suggestion, who has named the act of treating this book as a separate entity from the rest of the books a 'sin of excerption'.[10] Columella has made a statement by writing one of the last books of this technical prose–treatise in verse, but this statement can only be understood as one organic part of the whole treatise.[11]

[9] Doody (2010, 55)
[10] Henderson (2002, 110)
[11] Postgate (1905, 206–209) exemplifies the (understandable) temptation of excerpting the poem and present it among other samples of Latin poetry.

The tradition of didactic poetry to which book 10 certainly belongs is one of the traditions that supports Columella's presentation of his own work. He experiments not only within his technical field of expertise but with the means of presentation of that body of knowledge. His conception is not much different from that of another technical writer of the late Republic: M. Vitruvius Pollio – a writer of encyclopedic scope within the single field of architecture. What Rawson expresses with respect to Vitruvius – that he 'reduces the mass of the subject to a perfect *ordinatio* and explains in [its] several books the nature of the parts, *genera*, assigned to each of them' – can just as well be applied to Columella.[12]

Columella writes book 10 only after having developed completely all essential areas pertaining to *res rusticae*, except for horticulture. The contents of the 9 previous books are: choice and preparation of land (1), agriculture proper (2–5), *res pecuaria* or animal husbandry (6–7), *pastio villatica* or minor farm animals, fowl and fish (8),[13] apiculture, an appendix to *pastio villatica* (9). Columella, therefore, has covered all *res rusticae* proper before he arrives at the poem on horticulture. Book 10 does not end the treatise: further auxiliary areas – the calendar, a list of duties of the *vilicus* complementing those exposed in book 1, and a discussion of the *hortus* in prose – are presented in book 11. Book 12 contains the duties of the *vilica*, consisting mainly of the organization of the *villa* and food preservation.

Columella follows a careful design: each book in its own place has its content clearly specified. An *index* at the opening of each book shows its order of contents. The literary,

[12] Rawson (1985, 140)
[13] The category *pastio vilatica* is Varro's (perhaps Tremelius') contribution to the field.

scientific, technological, didactic, and rhetorical aspects of the treatise are carefully balanced to offer a thoroughly organized presentation of the subject.

The prefaces to books 1, 6, 9, 10 and 12 offer separate introductory discussions of general nature and show simultaneously the author's *elocutio* and his practical adherence to the rhetorical principles which he claims to inherit from Cicero and which are tightly woven into his larger outlook and objective. As Richter states '*die große Einleitung zum ersten Buch seines Werkes ist eines der bemerkenswertesten Zeugnisse des Ciceronianismus im 1. nachchristlichen Jahrhundert.*[14]

Historical framework

Over 110 years have elapsed from the death of Cato in 149 to Varro's publication of his *Rerum Rusticarum Libri III* in 37 b.C.[15] In turn, between 93 and 102 years elapse from the time of publication of the latter to the publication of Columella's main treatise. The content of one of the books attributed to Columella which he likely wrote earlier – *De Arboribus* ('about trees', henceforward also *Arb.*) – provides instruction developed in greater detail in books 3–5 of the treatise's full version.[16] Columella must have been writing for quite some time, judging from the length, organization and substance of the work. Jucundus of Verona, in Aldus Manutius'

[14] Richter (1981, 591): 'The great introduction to the first book of his work is one of the most remarkable testimonies of Ciceronianism in the 1st century a.D.'
[15] Nelsestuen (2015, 74)
[16] For discussion of authorship of *Arb.* and the interpretation that this was part of a separate treatise see Goujard 1979 & 1986. Goujard (1986, 7) agrees with Josephson on the authentic authorship of *Arb.* See Josephson (1955, v–xvi). Richter (1981.3, 600), however, has tried to prove that Columella is not the author.

edition of 1514, excerpted *De Arboribus* from the rest, even though it had been transmitted as book 3, as we have stated, in the whole manuscript tradition. The date of its inclusion is impossible to determine, as Goujard states:

> *Ce qui est certain, c'est qu'elle remonte très haut dans la tradition manuscrite, avant l'ancêtre des trois manuscrits de base, S, le Sangermanensis, A, l'Ambrosianus, et un troisième, perdu, utilisé par les copistes des manuscrits du XV^e^ siècle*.[17]

One clue for determining the chronology of the whole treatise comes from Columella's own mention of the name L. Annaeus Seneca. After summarizing, in book 3, the opinions of several agricultural writers – the two Sasernae (father and son), Tremelius Scrofa, Cato, and Varro – regarding the profits yielded by the cultivation of vines – Columella gives the name of Seneca, a man '*of our times* and of outstanding character and wisdom who possesses, *as is well known*, highly productive *praedia'* [3.3.3]:

> *His certe temporibus Nomentana regio celeberrima fama est inlustris, et praecipue quam possidet Seneca, vir excellentis ingenii atque doctrinae, cuius in praediis vinearum iugera singula culleos octonos reddidisse plerumque, compertum est.*
>
> *These days* the Nomentana region certainly is of shining reputation, and especially that [region] owned by Seneca, a man of most excellent intellect and learning, whose every *acre* of vine estates is said to have produced more than eight *cullei*.[18]

[17] Goujard (1986, 7): 'What is certain is that [the inclusion] goes back far in the ms. tradition, before the ancestor of the three basic mss., S, Sangermanensis, A, Ambrosianus, and a third, lost, used by the copyists of the 15th–century mss.'

[18] One *iugerum* is roughly the equivalent of an acre. A *culleus* (*O.L.D.* (2)) is roughly equivalent to 120 gallons. As we will see, Columella's concern with productivity is one of the main driving forces of his view of the agricultural enterprise. Translations from now on are from Ash (1941) or Forster–Heffner (1955) (Ash–Forster–Heffner 1941–1955) unless otherwise noted.

Columella also talks about Seneca's brother, once proconsul of Achaea, as *noster* L. Annaeus Gallio, at the end of book 9 on apiculture.[19] Both Gallio and P. Silvinus, the addressee of Columella's work, have requested that he write the following book in hexameters [9.16.2]:

> *Sed iam consummata disputatione de villatici pecudibus atque pastionibus, quae reliqua nobis rusticarum rerum pars subest, de cultu hortorum, Publi Silvine, deinceps ita, ut et tibi et Gallioni nostro complacuerat, in carmen conferemus*.
>
> Having finished off the discussion about livestock of the farmer and its feeding, the part remaining for us to form the foundation of farming, that about the cultivation of vegetable–gardens thus, Publius Silvinus, next we shall discuss in song, as both you and our Gallio would like.

Incidentally, this passage shows the typical formulaic language of a book–end juncture, which always falls neatly and plainly between books.[20] Columella also speaks of A. Cornelius Celsus, an encyclopedic writer whose books on medicine have survived and who lived between 25 b.C. and 50 a.D., as another contemporary of his.[21] A.D. 65, the date of Seneca's death after the failure of the Pisonian conspiracy, and the present indicative *possidet*, where Columella refers to his possessions, has led scholars to accept this as the *terminus ante quem* of publication.

White (2013) gives the year 56 as the *terminus post quem* because the *consularis* P. Volusius Saturninus has been identified as the consul suffect of 3 a.D. who died at an advanced age in 56 [1.7.3]:[22]

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[19] Fontan (Maestre Maestre, 1997, 25) assumes from this and the quote above (3.3.3) that Columella had a personal acquaintance with both L. Annaeus Seneca and L. Annaeus Gallio.
[20] Columella finishes and starts each book with an annotation addressed implicitly or explicitly to P. Silvinus. There is an etymological connection of his name with *silva*, which resembles the function of Varro's names in his own treatise: his 'wife' *Fundania*, and three of the interlocutors in book 1 of his own *R.R.*: *Agrius*, *Agrasius*, and *Fundanius*.
[21] Ash (1941, xiv)
[22] Columella 1.7.3. See White (2013, 10) for the suggestion of 56 as the *terminus post quem*.

> *Sed et ipse nostra memoria veterem consularem virumque opulentissimum P. Volusium adseverantem audivi felicissimum fundum esse, qui colonos indigenas haberet…*
>
> And I myself even recall hearing the senior ex–consul and very wealthy man *P. Volusius* proclaiming that a estate is most productive if it has native farmers…

The R *mss*[23] preserve the '*P.*' of the *praenomen*, while the 16th– 18th–century printed editions, including Gesner's (1735), follow Jucundus Veronensis's correction in the Aldine edition of the *praenomen* to '*L.*'.[24] Both Lundström (1917) and Ash (1941) restore the '*P.*' and Lundström gives no variants in the *apparatus criticus*. Columella's wording of the sentence reveals that at the time he heard this from Volusius he had, in fact, reached advanced age and that at the time of writing the *consularis* was no longer alive.[25] Richter gives the years 61–65 as those in which Columella wrote the *Res rusticae.*[26]

Building on the tradition of agricultural writing in Rome

Columella owes much to Cato, whose *De agri cultura* is the earliest complete Roman prose monograph to have been preserved. Columella establishes also the fact that Cato is the first to 'teach *agricolatio* the Latin language, in order to give it Roman citizenship' [1.1.12]:

> *Et ut agricolationem Romana tandem civitate donemus (nam adhuc istis auctoribus Graecae gentis fuit) iam nunc M. Catonem Censorium illum memoremus, qui eam latine loqui primus instituit*.

[23] R = *recentiores,* one of which, ms. E (*Escurialensis*) R.1.7, was consulted for this dissertation.
[24] Gryphius (1535: BNE R/21850), Comelinus (1545: BNE 2/23743), Gesner (1735) follow Jucundus Veronensis' (Aldine) emmendation.
[25] Hentz (1978, 2), based on 1.8.20, on how the *pater familias* will attain old age and still be respected by his *servi* if he observed day in and day out that the farm is in good standing and functioning properly, thinks that Columella had reached 60 by the time he is writing his treatise.
[26] Richter (1981.3, 598)

> And that we may *endow agriculture* at last *with Roman citizenship* (for it has belonged thus far to writers of the Greek race), let us now recall that illustrious M. Cato the Censor, *who first taught her to speak Latin.*

Not many Greek treatises on agriculture from the list given by Varro (*sunt plus quinquaginta*) have survived complete, except for Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* and the Byzantine *Geoponica.* Columella's list of Greek writers is very similar to Varro's.[27] The latter makes the most important Roman authors characters in his dialogue, rather than listing them as he did with the Greeks. Columella lists the Roman names: the Sasernae (father and son), C. Licinius Stolo, Cn. Tremelius Scrofa, C. Julius Hyginus, J. Atticus, A. Cornelius Celsus, J. Graecinus, and Varro.[28]

The extant treatises – Cato, Varro, Columella's, and the late 4th–century a.D. by Palladius – span a long stretch of time and this fact has been used by Diederich to write a study on 'specialized science, literature and ideology'.[29] What Cuypers states about the necessity of including Hellenistic scientific texts in intellectual, cultural and literary narratives, could be applied to Roman intellectual history as well:[30]

> There is a growing interest in scientific texts not merely as repositories of factual information but also as forms of discourse, and more generally in their position within the intellectual, cultural, and literary space of their time… Modern demarcations between disciplines are clearly of limited value for assessing Hellenistic 'intellectual profiles'… Hellenistic poets read around, and it is clear that they were not bound by the distinction between scholarship and science

[27] Varro *R.R*. 1.1.8–9. Cf. Col. 1.1.7–14. The content of Theophrastus' *H.P.* and *C.P.* is related and important sections of his books are devoted to agriculture.
[28] Col. 1.17–14. See Reitzenstein (1884) and Baldwin (1963) for the lost treatises as well as for accounts of the Roman contributions in each one of the areas of *res rusticae*: *agri cultura, de vitibus, res pecuariae, pastio villatica, de apibus*. For the Greek sources see Hentz (1980).
[29] For the lost Roman treatises see especially Reitzenstein (1884), and Baldwin (1963).
[30] Clauss–Cuypers (2010, 332)

> which defines the modern academic world – and which has perhaps restricted our understanding of the Hellenistic literary space more than we care to admit.

The Roman technical authors listed by Columella, just as all actors in late Roman republican intellectual history, are heirs themselves of their Hellenistic predecessors. Both Cato and Varro, unlike Columella, write works in other genres and fields. Cato, besides writing speeches and a history – the *Origines* –, was an active (and prominent) participant in the political and social events between the second and third Punic wars. Varro's treatise was published the year Octavian and Mark Antony were battling against Pompey.[31] The time of Columella himself is one of profound social and political change: Nero in 56 a.D., early at the beginning of his reign and possibly a year in which Columella was already at work on his treatise, was replacing the *quaestors* at the *Aerarium* with two imperial prefects, ex–praetors, with the intention to improve the financial administration. *Ipso facto* he was increasing the emperor's influence over this institution.[32] These were also the years when the younger Seneca flourished, a man whom, we have read, Columella describes as 'of excellent intellect and learning'.[33]

Columella grew up during the Principate of Tiberius and his life spanned the reigns of the Julio–Claudians. The political climate of the period, as Lopez Moreda states in his work on Valerius Maximus, contributed to an increase in technical writing as he explains: 'Only the *domesticated* writer can develop his work while the historian has no choice but either to praise

[31] Conte (1994, 211) suggests that it may have taken Varro 20 years to write it. That would mean that it was written during the turbulent period of the Roman Republic between the years 57 and 37.
[32] Scullard (1982, 306)
[33] 3.3.3. See quote above, p. 7.

the living *Princeps* or write on uncontroversial matters, which explains the fertile development of technical and scientific literature during this century.'[34] The historian A. Cremutus Cordus, as a counter–example, paid dearly for praising both republican ideals and personalities in his writings. His fate is told by Tacitus, who narrates the historian's defense in the Senate in a.D. 25. Tacitus tells us by the end of the narrative that the historian's books were burned, and makes a political side–commentary on the effects of political repression of intellectuals:

> *Quo magis socordiam eorum inridere libet, qui praesenti potentia credunt extingui posse etiam sequentis aevi memoriam. Nam contra punitis ingeniis gliscit auctoritas, neque alliud externi reges aut qui eadem saevitia usi sunt, nisi dedecus sibi atque illis gloriam peperere*.[35]
>
> All the more reason why it is pleasing to laugh at the stupidity of those who believe it is even possible to extinguish the memory of future times with the present power. For, on the contrary, authority swells in punished intellects, and rulers alien to the matter who use the same fierceness, gain for themselves nothing other than shame and for those [intellects] glory.[36]

The principle that political repression on intellectuals, as Tacitus says, achieves the opposite effect than the one intended by those who exert it, might well be applied to Nero, who dictated the deaths of the younger Seneca and his younger nephew Lucan for their alleged participation in the Pisonian conspiracy.[37] If he lived to witness the fates of Seneca, Lucan and (possibly) Calpurnius Siculus, Columella's choice of subject and his life–time dedication to the

[34] Lopez Moreda (2003, 13)
[35] Tacitus *Ann.* 4.35.5–7. See also Conte, 1994, 382–383. For a discussion of the significance of this event with respect to the official selective use of republican *memoria* during the Principate, see Gowing (2005, 25–27).
[36] Translations of Tacitus are M. Grant's (1956).
[37] Conte (1994, 440 ff.) for Lucan; 409, for Seneca, whose death is narrated by Tacitus in *Ann.* 15.60–64. The dating of Calpurnius Siculus is controversial. See Amat (1991, vii–xvii) in this respect.

field of agriculture, at exclusion of other topics, his military service, and his decision not to follow the *cursus honorum* must have felt justified.[38] Richter summarizes his career thus:

> *So bietet Columella das Bild eines begabten und gebildeten, mit wachem Sinn für realität ausgestatteten und der praktischen Arbeit wohl nie entfremdeten Mannes aus der Provinzialaristokratie, der in jungen Jahren auch gewisse politische Erwartungen rechtfertigen mochte, aber im letzten Grunde für eine unpolitische Existenz geschaffen war.*[39]

And just a few lines later:

> *Zum Kaiserhof scheint er keinerlei Beziehungen besessen zu haben, und wenn er sich – was wohl verständlich wäre – kritische Gedanken über die kaiserliche Politik seiner Zeit gemacht haben sollte, so spiegeln sie sich auf jeden Fall nur verhalten und ohne offene Polemik in dem, was er geschrieben hat.*[40]

Columella *tribunus militum* and an inscription at Tarentum

It is, therefore, not completely surprising that the only external information about Columella's public life is the record of an inscription (*C.I.L.* 9.235) at one time found in Tarentum.[41] This reveals that, although he did neither pursue the *cursus honorum* nor hold any

[38] Sullivan (1985, 42) connects writing and power in the time of Nero so: 'All this illustrates the sometimes dangerous connection between writing and power, a connection Seneca had seen long ago.'

[39] Richter (1981.3, 598–599): 'Columella offers thus the image of a gifted and educated man, with a keen sense for reality–filled and practical work, of a never–alienated man from the provincial aristocracy, who at a young age might justify certain political expectations, but who was ultimately created for an unpolitical existence.'

[40] Ibid., 599: 'He seems to have had no relations with the imperial court, and if he, as would be understandable, had made critical assessments about the imperial policies of his time, they were, in any case, merely reserved and not openly polemical statements in what he wrote.'

[41] Hentz, (1978, n. 16): the inscription is *C.I.L.* 9.235 and was discovered in 1685 during the construction of the foundations of a chapel in the church of S. Cataldi at the archbishopric palace in Tarentum, lifted by Pacichelli, and registered by L.A. Muratori in his *Novus Thesaurus veterum inscriptionum*. Mediolani, 1740, vol. 2, p. 826, no. 5. *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*

specific public offices beyond the military tribunate, a substantial part of his life was spent at this post, mostly in the East, and that he travelled to or stayed during the latter part of his life in Tarentum.

The inscription states that L. Junius Moderatus Columella was the son of Lucius Galerius, and *tribunus militum* of the *Legio VI ferrata*.[42] Gades, in *Baetica*, was assigned to the *Tribus Galeria*, which extended far beyond this province, and was granted Roman citizenship by Caesar, according to Livy, in the year 49.[43] The *VI ferrata* was at the time stationed in Syria, where it remained from the times of Augustus throughout the early Principate and possibly continued there well into the 3rd century.

The name *Moderatus* was common in Spain, as can be seen in many inscriptions. Columella may have been related to the Pythagorean philosopher contemporary of his who also carried the name *Moderatus*.[44] We also know that Columella was in Syria during the year

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consilio et auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Regiae Borusicae editum. Volumen nonum. Inscriptiones Calabriae Apuliae Samnii Sabinorum Piceni Latinae, edidit Theodorus Mommsen. Berolini apud Georgium Reimerum. MDCCCLXXXIII

[42] See Ahrens (1972, 8) and, especially, Hentz (1978, n. 3). See also Ash (1941, xv). For the *Tribus Galeria*, Kubitschek (1889, 173–174): 'Gades ⇔ Galeria: *C.I.L.* 2, 229: *de foedere inter Gaditanos et Romanos icto cf. Livius* 32.2.5 (ad a. 199) *et Cicero pro Balbo* 14.33 *sqq.; Dio Cassius* 41.24.1 *ad a.* 705 = 49: (*Καῖσαρ*) *τοῖς δε Γαδειρεῦσι πολιτείαν ἅπασιν ἔδωκεν, ἣν καὶ ὁ δῆμος σφισιν ὕστερον ἐπεκύρωσε*. *Livius epit*. 110 (*ad a*. 705 = 49): (*Caesar) Gaditanis civitatem dedit', etc*. The first inscription Kubitschek (1889, 174) cites is α *C.I.L.* 9 (Tarenti), '*L. Iunio L. f. Gal. Moderato Columellae, trib. mil. leg. VI ferratae'; Columella rei rusticae scriptor celeberrimus Gadibus natus est, cf. quae ille in libris de re rustica scripsit* 7.2.4 *et* 8.16.9 *et* 10.185'. 7.2.4 makes reference to the *municipium Gaditanum* where his uncle M. Columella used to tame wild rams which came from Africa. 8.16.9 is about the dory (fish) of Gades. In the poem (10.185) Columella calls Gades *mea.*

[43] Kubitschek (1889, 173–174): Livy *epit*. 110 (*ad a*. 705 = 49)

[44] Hentz (1978, n. 3): a branch of the Moderati is found in Spain (*C.I.L.* 2: *passim*), there were also three inscriptions found in Africa (*C.I.L.* 8: 1125, 3199, 3914), and two in Gaul (*C.I.L.* 12: 208, 3725). To this branch also belonged the Pythagorean philosopher Moderatus 'Gaditanus', a contemporary of the agronomist mentioned by Porphyrius in his *Vita Pythagorae* (48): *Ἡ δὲ*

36, when Vitellius, governor of this province sends an expedition to Cilicia Trachea, which the Roman army does not occupy.[45] Hentz comes to this conclusion confronting Columella's own statements in 2.10.18, where he talks about the sowing season for sesame in Cilicia and Syria, and 5.1.2 (see below) with Tacitus' 6.47(41):

> *Per idem tempus Cietarum natio Cappadoci Archelao subiecta, quia nostrum in modum deferre census, pati tributa adigebatur, in iuga Tauri montis abscessit locorumque ingenio sese contra imbelles regis copias tutabatur, donec M. Trebellius legatus, a Vitellio praeside Suriae cum quattuor milibus legionarium et delectis auxiliis missus, duos collis, quos barbari insederant (minori Cadra, alteri Davara nomen est), operibus circumdedit et erumpere ausos ferro, ceteros siti ad deditionem coegit.*
>
> At this period the Cietae, a tribe subject to the Cappadocian prince Archelaus the younger, resisted compulsion to supply property–returns and taxes in Roman fashion by withdrawing to the heights of the Taurus mountains where, aided by the nature of the country, they held out against the prince's unwarlike troops. But the divisional commander M. Trebellius, sent by L. Vitellius (imperial governor of Syria) with 4,000 regulars and picked auxiliary forces, constructed earthworks round two hills held by the natives (the smaller called Cadre, the larger Davara). After killing some who attempted to break out, Trebellius forced the rest to surrender.

Hentz assumes that this '*M. Trebellius* legatus, a Vitellio… missus' is the '*M. Trebellius noster*' of the beginning of Columella's book 5 who used to request advice about field–measurement methods [5.1.2]:

> *Quippe cum ea velut omissa desiderentur, quae non sunt propria nostrae professionis, ut proxime, cum de commetiendis agris rationem M. Trebellius noster requireret a me, vicinum atque adeo coniunctum esse censebat*

περὶ τῶν ἀριθμῶν πραγματεία, ὡς ἄλλοι τε φασὶν καὶ Μοδέρατος ὁ ἐκ Γαδείρων πάνυ συνετῶς ἐν ἕνδεκα βιβλίοις συναγαγὼν τὸ ἀρέσκον τοῖς ἀνδράσι διὰ τοῦτο ἐσπουδάσθη. ('And on the occupation of numbers, as others also say, Moderatus of Gades very intelligently putting together in 12 books, zealously pursued the pleasure of men through this.')

[45] Hentz (1978, 3, & n. 19)

> *demonstranti, quemadmodum agrum pastinemus, praecipere etiam pastinatum quemadmodum metiri debeamus*.[46]
>
> For indeed subjects, which do not properly belong to our profession, are demanded as though they had been left out; for example, only recently, when my friend M. Trebellius required from me a method of measuring land he expressed the opinion that it was a kindred and indeed closely connected task for one who was showing how we ought to measure the land thus trenched.

It appears, therefore, that, after having devoted most of his life to agriculture and military service, Columella writes his treatise on a subject which not only offers little margin for political controversy, but which also connects with a conservative literary tradition, began by the husbandman and statesman Cato at least 200 years earlier. He does so by choosing to write in an unapologetic rhetorical style, and defending the same moral principles of his ancestor. Columella comes across, therefore, as a conservative writer at time when expressing politically controversial views could prove fatal. Especially in Rome, in great part because of Cato's influence, the art of agriculture has attained an almost institutionalized prestige, arguably more symbolic than real, especially among the landed higher orders. By writing this treatise Columella is, in turn, positively contributing to the social prestige and symbolic status of the subject.[47]

Vir rusticus vs. *vir urbanus*

[46] 5.1.2. Hentz (1978, 9 n. 20). Hentz (1978, 3) concludes that after serving in the East, Columella might have retired in Tarentum in the 60th year A.D.

[47] See elder Pliny, 18.3 & 18.35. This prestige that agriculture has acquired has been exploited by Spencer (2010) in the subchapter entitled 'Columella and the body of history'.

Cato's preface to his treatise shows the author's rhetorical expertise. Columella's technical organization and development of the matter is in sharp contrast to Cato's somewhat haphazard organization. The introductory book (1), the books devoted to grains and legumes (2), and those devoted the vine and trees (3–5 and *De Arboribus*), worlds apart from Cato in this regard, may still show signs of coming to terms with organizational detail; books 6–9 (large cattle and small farm animals (*pastio villatica*), and bees), book 11 including its section on horticulture, and book 12 on food preservation, are example of technical orderliness.

The simple but effective arrangement of Cato's preface, nevertheless, allows the author to discuss with verbal and rhetorical economy the profitability of three trades – or *artes*: those of the *mercator*, the *fenerator*, and the *agricola.*[48] Right at the center of the *exordium* Cato makes clear the moral superiority of the trade of the farmer *vis–à–vis* the other two with his now famous *sententia.*[49] This *sententia* has become paradigmatic by the time of the elder Pliny who quotes it literally [18.11]: *et ut refert Cato, cum virum laudantes bonum agricolam bonumque colonum dixissent, amplissime laudasse existimabantur*.[50] Pliny adds before this statement the reprehensibility of bad farming (*probrum iudicabatur*) – a negative counterpart which did not occur in Cato's text.[51] He is also the first to explicitly make the connection between the ruin of Italy and the large size of farms a few chapters later [18.35]:

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[48] Conte (1994, 88) gives prominence to both the practical and lucrative aspects of Cato's treatise by stating that he 'shows that agriculture is more than anything an acquisitive activity.'
[49] *De agricultura* 1.2: 'Et *virum bonum quom laudabant, ita laudabant, bonum agricolam bonumque colonum. Amplissime laudari existimabatur qui ita laudabatur*.'
[50] Pliny, 18.11: 'as Cato says, when praising a man they would call him good farmer, good husbandman, they were praising him in the broadest possible way.'
[51] Pliny, 18.11: *Agrum male colere censorium probrum iudicabatur, atque, ut refert Cato…* ('Bad husbandry was judged an offence within the jurisdiction of the censors, and, as Cato tells us…')

> *Modum agri in primis servandum antiqui putavere, quippe ita censebant, satius esse minus serere et melius arare, qua in sententia et Vergilium fuisse video. Verumque confitentibus latifundia perdidere Italiam, iam vero et provincias…*
>
> The ancients thought that, first of all, the size of the field ought to be observed; since, they thought, it was better to sow less and to plow better, and this was the opinion of Virgil as well. And truly now, we confess, it is the large estates that have ruined Italy, and are now ruining the provinces as well…[52]

White is of the opinion that *latifundia* never took over completely, that the extension of these meant for the population only a change from independence to tenancy, and that there was still room for small land–holders.[53] Neither Cato nor Columella worry about the development of *latifundia* (at least not explicitly in the case of the latter) but Cato elaborates on the physical and moral gains that come from practicing agriculture as well as on the quality of its practice [1.4]:[54]

> *At ex agricolis et viri fortissimi et milites strenuissimi gignuntur, maximeque pius quaestus stabilissimus consequitur minimeque invidiosus, minimeque male cogitantes sunt qui in eo studio occupati sunt.*
>
> But out of farmers both the strongest men and most vigorous soldiers are born; and they follow the most morally upright and stable gainful occupation, and they, devoid of hatred, are dedicated to it and do not entertain wicked thoughts.

While for Cato the moral distinction falls between the categories of the *agricola*, the *mercator* – whose profession is *periculosa et calamitosa* – and the *fenerator* – whose dishonorable profession deserves double the punishment of the thief – for Columella the praise of the *agricola* is stressed in opposition to the decadence assigned to the inhabitants of the city. This *doctrina* agrees with Varro's, who states that the person who lives in the city is *ignavior*

[52] The Virgilian line alluded to by Pliny is *Georgics* 2.412: '*Laudato ingentia rura, exiguum colito*.'
[53] White (1970, 70 & 74–75)
[54] Cato pr.2 & pr.4

(lazier) and *desidior* (lazier) than one who cultivates the fields.[55] Varro also explains that the Roman ancestors tried to bring the people out of the cities back to the country because agriculture is both *antiquior* and *melior*.[56] In contrast, he narrates how the *patres familiae* of his time have run away and, after abandoning the tools, have crept into the city to use their hands instead to applaud at the public spectacles.[57]

Columella, early in the preface and without mention of Greek influence, says that 'Varro already complained 'in the time *of our grandfathers*' about the *patres familiae* who have crept inside city walls to applaud at theaters and circuses'. Thus he establishes the trope of decadence following the late republican writer [1.pr.15]:[58]

> *Omnes enim, sicut M. Varro iam temporibus avorum conquestus est, patres familiae falce et aratro relictis intra murum correpsimus et in circis potius ac theatris quam in segetibus ac vinetis manus movemus.*
>
> Just as M. Varro was complaining during the time of our grandfathers, we all *patres familiae* having abandoned the sickle and the plow crept inside the city–walls and we move our hands in circuses and theaters, rather than in the fields and vineyards.

The change to *correpsimus* where Varro uses '*correpserunt*' *ad orationem variandam* is, as we shall see a standard intertextual technique used by Columella.[59] The change to first from third person to assign blame for the decadence of agriculture, may show a higher degree of investment in this occupation in comparison to his predecessor. Judging from the depth in

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[55] See Varro *R.R.* 2.pr.2.
[56] See Varro *R.R.* 3.1.4. Pliny the elder also states the opposition between field and city, when he states that during the period of Servius Tullius the rural tribes were *laudatissimae*, in contrast with those of the city (18.13). See Connors (1997, 74): 'Rusticity is traditional, native and hardworking; theatricality is newer, at least partly a Greek import, and often construed as decadent and effeminate.'
[57] *R.R.* 2.pr.3
[58] Col. 1.pr.15. (Henceforward, if no author is specified, Columella should be understood.)
[59] See Stettner (1894, 13) for the term *ad orationem variandam*.

material treatment, organization of subject and his own autobiographical statements (concerning especially his uncle Marcus Columella), he may actually have a firmer claim as practitioner of agriculture.[60]

Columella also gives the theme of decadence a more prominent position than Varro, who waits until the preface of book 2 (on *res pecuaria*), by presenting it at the very start of the treatise.[61] He opens book 1 by blaming those *principes* and fellow–citizens who attribute the decadence of agriculture not on themselves but on *infecunditas agrorum* and *noxiam intemperiem* [1.pr.1]:

> *Saepenumero civitatis nostrae principes audio culpantes modo agrorum infecunditatem, modo caeli per multa iam tempora noxiam frugibus intemperiem*.
>
> Frequently I hear the leaders of our state blaming now the barrenness of the fields, now the intemperance of the skies, harmful to the crops now through many seasons.

Columella not only establishes the theme appealing to *civitas nostra* in the manner of a rhetorical *exordium* but also echoes the very beginning of Cicero's *De oratore.*[62] After establishing that these complaints are unfounded and the impiety of denying the *fecunditas* of

[60] Columella is not implicitly criticizing Varro. He hardly ever quotes his predecessor in critical terms.

[61] Varro's book 1 is devoted to agriculture proper, book 2 to animal husbandry, and 3 to *pastio vilatica* (small animals and luxury items).

[62] *De or.* 1.1.1: *Cogitante mihi saepenumero, et memoria vetera repetenti, perbeati fuisse, Quinte frater, illi videri solent.* More to the point is *De or.* 1.2.6: *Ac mihi quidem saepenumero in summos homines, ac summis ingeniis praeditos intuenti, quaerendum esse visum est, quid esset, cur plures in omnibus artibus, quam in dicendo admirabiles exstitissent.* Varro also tells his reader in the preface to book 2 that one of the advantages of *agricultura* is that, through its practice, the fields are kept *fecundissimi*.

nature, he restates the accusation against the leaders of *our* state of having neglected agriculture, something alien to the best of our ancestors [1.pr.3]:

> *Nec post haec reor violentia caeli nobis ista, sed nostro potius accidere vitio, qui rem rusticam pessimo cuique servorum velut carnifici noxae dedimus, quam maiorum nostrorum optimus quisque et optime tractaverat*.
>
> And on top of this I do not think it is this violence from the skies, but rather our falling into vice, the reason why we gave farming away to the worst of our slaves, as if to a hangman for punishment, a field which the best of our ancestors had treated with the greatest care.

At the outset of the treatise we have a clearly balanced statement formed of three sentences. The first (1.pr.1) states the complaints of the *principes*, who deny the fertility of the land and its inability to produce *alimenta.*[63] The second (1.pr.2) states the counter argument addressed to P. Silvinus that this complaint is neither *fas* nor *prudens* because the creator (*ille mundi genitor*) gave Nature perpetual fecundity and she has been assigned everlasting youth. The third (1.pr.3 quoted above) turns the blame of the decadence of agriculture from the *violenta caeli* to *nostrum vitium*. Columella organizes this *exordium* in an ABA form corresponding to each one of the sentences: A. statement of the *principes*' complaint; B. statement of the principle that saying that Nature is endowed with *perpetua sterilitate* is *nefas* and imprudent; C. refutation of the premise and evocation to the *maiores nostri*, with the implied allusion to Cato's preface.[64]

Form: rhetorical allusion and Catonian *brevitas*

[63] See below, p. 35–40, '*Ars* imitating nature'.
[64] Each one of these parts is divided in two, in an a.b. structure. There is also an echo of Cato's preface in this first paragraph of Columella's own. Cf. von Albrecht (1989, 1–8).

Just as Cato had compared the trades of the *mercator* and the *fenerator* with that of the *agricola*, in the section following the previous quote, Columella expands on the decadence *trope*: cities abound with *oratores, geometrae*, *studiosi saltationis ac musici, fabri et architecti, periti navigias gubernandi, gnari armorum et militiae,* as well as some who hold training–schools for *contemptissima vitia* – such as extravagant cooks and hairdressers –, those who cultivate the *artes ludicrae* and the *causidici*, while there are neither *doctores* (teachers) nor *discipuli* (students) of agriculture.[65]

Columella's preference for Cato's style is illustrated by a *crescendo* through his own description of the trade of the *mercator* to the trade of *faeneratio* at [1.pr.8]:

> *An maris et negotiationis alea sit optabilior, ut rupto naturae foedere terrestre animal homo ventorum et maris obiectus irae fluctibus pendeat semperque ritu volucrum longinqui litoris peregrinus ignotum pererret orbem? An faeneratio probabilior sit, etiam his invisa quibus succurrere videtur?*
>
> Or is the hazard of the sea and business more desirable, that humans, an earth animal, having broken the law of nature, being thrown to the wrath of winds and sea hangs on the waves and always a foreigner in far–away shores in the fashion of birds wanders through an unknown earth? Or is usury more commendable, odious even to those to whom it seems to bring relief?

The hyperbolic elaboration of the perils of the trade of *negotiatio* is in stark contrast with the direct *brevitas* and simplicity of Cato. The contrast is made even starker by the brevity of the second (rhetorical) question. In actual speech, an aposiopesis would sound natural at the end of this second question, and would mark even more clearly the allusion to Cato's

[65] 1.pr.3–6. By stating the theme of decadence at the outset in contrast to Varro, and by comparing trades, Columella connects more directly to Cato rather than his more immediate predecessor.

faenerator with an implicit allusion to his characteristic *brevitas.*[66] The paragraph, however, does not end there, as Columella proceeds, after this brief pause, with his characteristically more elaborate Ciceronian style and abundance of description by adding, after the trade of the usurer (*faenerator*) that of the lawyer, using the common derogatory expression *caninum studium.*[67] He then describes the custom of the *salutatio* as another example of lowly pursuit.

In conclusion, Columella seeks in Cato both stylistic inspiration and a moral foundation for the practical discipline as was transmitted from the *maiores nostri*. He imitates not only the formal principles of Cato's much briefer model, which has its roots in the spread of rhetoric to literature at large during Hellenistic times, but expands by virtue of later rhetorical developments and influences, especially Cicero's.[68]

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[66] Von Albrecht (1989, 40) discusses the narrative technique of *brevitas*, one that differentiates the prose of, e.g., C. Gracchus and Cicero. The example given in the note for the technique, however, cites Plutarch's *Cato Maior* 12.7(5) (and *Caesar* 50.3). In *Cato Maior* Plutarch describes precisely Cato's *brevitas*: *θαυμάσαι δε φησι τοὺς Ἀθηναίους τὸ τάχος αὐτοῦ [τοῦ Κάτωνος] καὶ τὴν ὀξύτητα τῆς φράσεως, ἃ γὰρ αὐτὸς ἐξέφερε βραχέως, τὸν ἑρμηνέα μακρῶς καὶ διὰ πολλῶν ἀπαγγέλλειν, τὸ δ᾽ὅλον οἴεσθαι τὰ ῥήματα τοῖς μὲν Ἕλλησιν ἀπὸ χειλέων, τοῖς δὲ ῥωμαίοις ἀπὸ καρδίας φέρεσθαι*. 'And he says that the Athenians were astonished at the speed and pungency of his discourse. For what he himself set forth with brevity, the interpreter would repeat to them at great length and with man words; and on the whole he thought the words of the Greeks were born on their lips, but those of the Romans in their hearts.' Whether the allusion to Cato's *eloquentia* is intentional is another matter. But knowing about Columella's rhetorical leanings and his familiarity with Cato makes it highly likely.

[67] 1.pr.9–10. Ash (1941, 8) addresses in n. a the origin of the derogatory expression of the 'snarling *causidici*'.

[68] See Cuypers in Clauss–Cuypers (2010, 324) quoting and translating Kühnert (1993, 666). Von Albrecht (1989, 3) interprets the structure of Cato's preface, with its emphasis in the *utilitas* of farming, its freedom from *periculum*, and its value as *honestum*, as 'a *suasio* in miniature, in which the reader is exhorted to take an interest in agriculture, the traditional activity of the Roman'. He also sees in 'the deliberate redundancy and in its repetitions and contrasts something approaching figures of speech'. (See also von Albrecht's (1989, 2) quote of Friedrich Leo's *Geschichte der römischen Literatur*, I, Berlin 1913, 274.)

From form to method: the principles behind agriculture as *scientia*

Columella's is a technical treatise, similar to those on rhetoric, but on *agricolatio*: the cultivation of grains, legumes, vines, and trees (i.e., vegetables, from *triticum* to *cytisus*); on *res pecuaria* and *pastio villatica*: husbandry from the *bos* (ox) to the *exiguus gobio* (a fish), with a full book on bees before returning to agricultural matters (horticulture) in book 10).[69] The different techniques applicable to virtually all vegetables are generalized throughout the first five books covering the subject of agriculture proper and become nominalized by the abstractive –*tio* ending: *ablaqueatio, adligatio, aratio, emplastratio, extirpatio, impedatio, inoculatio, insitio, obloqueatio, occatio, pampinatio, pastinatio, pastio, propagatio, putatio, runcatio, satio, sartio, sarritio, stercoratio*,[70] etc. While Columella may form a noun such as *ablaqueatio* from the verb *ablaqueare*, a common verb form may suffice to describe the technique and Columella avoids forming the corresponding neologism. [71] Even concrete nouns such as *viviradix* or *malleolus* by themselves are used to denote specific techniques.[72]

[69] For a discussion of the distinction between *res pecuariae* and *pastio villatica* from *agri cultura* see Nelsestuen (2015, 46 ff.).

[70] See White (1970, 263–266) & Betts–Ashworth (1971) for taxonomies of technical terms. Despite the symbolic importance of the *aratrum*, the noun *aratio* occurs only twice in Columella: 1.pr.24 (on the necessity of instruction in this activity), 11.2.64 (in the farmer's calendar, on the advisability to plough the field for a second time between the Kalends (1st) and the third day before the Ides of September (11th)).

[71] The term *ablaqueatio* is used exclusively in books 4, 5, and 11. There are discrepancies on whether this term is used in *De Arboribus*. Lundström, 1897, and Goujard consistently produce the spelling *oblaqueatio* is this book. Forster–Heffner change the spelling to *ablaqueatio*. Lundström also has one instance of *oblaqueare* in book 11.

[72] The terms *viviradix* and *malleolus* recur *passim* in books devoted to the vine, trees (3, 4, and 5), and the *hortus* (11).

The use of technologically specific vocabulary to describe practical operations is always dictated by practical considerations.[73] Diederich points to this fundamental principle in Columella's approach to agriculture which, consequently, cannot be replaced by book knowledge, and in which there is no place for *curiositas*.[74] The measure of practicality is reflected in financial results as Diederich states: [Columella] *zweckfreie Detailforschungen ohne finanziellen und praktischen Nutzen lehnt er überhaupt ab.*[75] This financial principle applies to the treatment of plants and animals as well as to how to choose a field, the types and nature of ground, orientation, inclination, geographical situation and measurements, adequate crops, food–preservation techniques, a complete agronomical calendar, lists of duties for *vilicus* and *vilica*, duties allowed to be performed in feast days, and complete tables of contents for each individual book (except 10 & 11) as well as for the whole treatise.[76]

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[73] See chapter 2, p. 76–81 'On method'.

[74] Diederich (2007, 61): *Trotz seines weiten Horizontes spricht sich der Agrarexperte aber wiederholt gegen eine unnötige Auswinung des Stoffs aus bloßer curiositas aus (2.6.2; 3.2.31). Denn bei all seinem hohen gelehrten Anspruch, der sich allenthalben äußert, bleibt Columella ein 'Praktiker aus Prinzip'.* ('Despite his wide horizon, the agrarian expert repeatedly argues against an unnecessary expansion of material from mere *curiositas.* For with all his high learned claim, which is expressed everywhere, Columella remains a 'practitioner by principle'.') This strict avoidance of what does not belong to agriculture or *res rustica* is not only fundamental for Columella's method but is distinct from the manner in which the elder Pliny will manage the information in his *Natural History*, one in which it is assumed that 'knowledge is to be used and valued for its own sake'. See Murphy (2004, 14). Beagon (1992, 161–164) finds several important points in which Pliny agrees with Columella's approach or positions: 'As to the size of the farms… Pliny and Columella are close to each other in both moral and practical considerations. It was clearly a commonplace of contemporary moral censure to list possession of large tracts of land among luxuries and excesses, as Seneca does in *Ep.*88.10 and 89.20–21.' Beagon gives the example of 1.3.12.

[75] Diederich (2007, 61): [Columella] 'completely rejects any detailed and pointless research without financial and practical benefits'.

[76] See chapter 2, p. 82–93 '*Quaestus* by the statue of Vertumnus'.

Systematizing *res rusticae*

Hentz sees greater Hellenization in Varro than in Cato.[77] Nelsestuen, in turn, has shown how Varro systematizes the practical science of agriculture, and that he is first to use the very term *agri cultura* consistently: he devotes persistent attention to 'its definition, the articulation of its principles and parameters, and the theoretical explication of its efficacy', especially in his first book: all this, continues Nelsestuen, 'renders [Varro's] *R.R.* 1 distinct from the other two books, which are invested more in description and less in theorization'.[78]

Cato's treatise, a remote model, is also heir to the syncretism of Hellenistic learning. The difference between the three treatises is more one of stages in the evolution than one of discontinuity. Such a carefully organized practical 'manual' on the *ars* of agriculture as Columella's can only be a consequence of Hellenistic influence and evolution in the subject. Only in appearance Columella seeks the ethical connection with the elder Cato, and the scientific and technical with Varro and the other lost Roman treatises, which have established the boundaries of the practical *scientia*.[79] Two characters in Varro (Stolo and Tremelius Scrofa) establish the theoretical inclusion of animal husbandry within *res rusticae.*[80] Varro thus gives

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[77] Hentz (1980): '*Comme nous entrons avec Varron dans l'ère du syncretisme culturel gréco–romain, l'apport grec mérite d'être examiné chez lui avec une attention particulière. Celui que ses contemporains appelaient 'le plus savant des Romains' occupe en effet une position privilegiée pour ce qui est de la transmission des connaissances du monde grec au monde romain dans le domaine qui nous occupe, parce qu'il en est notre premier témoin et qu'il y a fait oeuvre de pionnier*.'

[78] Nelsestuen (2015, 66 ff.)

[79] See Reitzenstein (1884) for a discussion of the authors of works on agriculture now lost.

[80] Varro 1.2.12–13. Rawson (1985, 126) quoting Varro *D.L.L.* 5.11 understands that Varro himself in the *De lingua Latina* applies Pythagorean principles when he states that 'all things

Tremelius credit for a distinction between its different parts. He states that not only Latin but also Punic and Greek authors have wandered widely (*latius vagatos*) and that there is a pressing need for clear divisions. Later Varro (or Tremelius) further divides *res pecuariae* into two categories: *pastio pecuaria* and *pastio villatica*, which will form the second and third branches of *res rusticae* and correspond to books 2 and 3 of his work. Nelsestuen interprets the analytical division in the following terms:

> For however much the individual definitions of *agri cultura, res pecuaria*, and *pastio villatica* contribute to the understanding of each particular object of inquiry, the broader implication that these analytical and definitional excursuses should also be clear: the collective distillation of a field of *res rusticae*. And by tying this theoretical and systematic account of *res rusticae* to his understanding of the changing material conditions of human existence, Varro also historicizes the intellectual discipline of agronomy.[81]

Columella does not need to develop this subdivision. While Varro's three books correspond to agriculture, animal husbandry and *pastio villatica*, Columella's books 1–5 correspond to the first, 6–7 correspond to animal husbandry, and 8–9 to *pastio villatica.* The later author adopts Varro's subdivision implicitly. In contrast, Varro does not have a section on horticulture as a separate subdivision, which Columella discusses in books 10 and 11.

Practicalities of agriculture as *scientia*: analogy

Columella's organization is straightforward, with the exception that horticulture is treated out of order. One way in which he organizes the treatment of different subjects is

start from pairs'. Varro presents thus the division between agriculture and animal husbandry as a binary distinction.

[81] Nelsestuen (2015, 51–52)

through analogy. Because the vine is particularly profitable he devotes almost three whole books to its technique of cultivation. At 5.6 he abandons the vine proper to pay attention to trees on which the vine can be propped: *populus, fraxinus, ulmus, rumpotinum, cornus, carpinus, ornus, salix*. In book 5 he includes the olive–tree, which needs much less technical care than the vine [5.8.1]:

> *Omnis tamen arboris cultus simplicior quam vinearum est, longeque ex omnibus stirpibus minorem impensam desiderat olea, quae prima omnium arborum est*.
>
> The cultivation of any kind of tree is simpler than that of the vine, and the olive–tree, the queen of all trees, requires the least expenditure of all.

Columella seems to be reading Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* who did not adduce as a reason for dealing more briefly with other fruit trees that the vine is the least simple, unlike the olive tree, but rather the fact that the principles of cultivating vines apply to all other trees:

> *Καὶ περὶ ἀμπέλων ἄρα σύγε, ἔφη, φυτείας, ὦ Σώκρατες, τὰ αὐτὰ ἐμοὶ πάντα γιγνώσκω τυγχάνεις.*
> *Ἦ καὶ συκῆν, ἔφην ἐγώ, ὅυτως δεῖ φυτεύειν;*
> *Οἶμαι δ', ἔφη ὁ Ἰσχόμαχος, καὶ τἆλλα ἀκρόδρυα πάντα. τῶν γὰρ ἐν τῇ τῆς ἀμπέλου φυτείᾳ καλῶς ἐχόντων τί ἂν ἀποδοκιμάσαις εἰς τὰς ἄλλας φυτείας;*
> *Ἐλαίαν δὲ πῶς, ἔφην ἐγὼ, φυτεύσομεν, ὦ Ἰσχόμαχε;*
>
> 'About vine planting then, Socrates, your views are again exactly the same as mine.'
> 'Does this method of planting apply to the fig too?' I asked.
> 'Yes, and to all other fruit trees, I think; for in planting other trees why discard anything that gives good results with the vine?'
> 'But the olive – how shall we plant that, Ischomachus?'

Columella's actual treatment of the vine is more complex than that of any other plant or tree. While he does not explicitly state the principle of analogy, he applies it in both the plant and animal realms. He follows it, e.g., when he has to deal with veterinarian directions. After having discussed in book 6 how to cure certain diseases in oxen, bulls, cows and horses, when he arrives at the corresponding section about mules he simply states [6.38.1]:

Medicinas huius pecoris plerumque iam in aliis generibus edocui: propria tamen quaedam vitia non omittam, quorum remedia subscripsi.

Though, in dealing with other classes of animals, I have already described most of the medicines which mules require, I will not omit to mention certain maladies which are peculiar to these animals, the remedies for which I have here subjoined.[82]

Classification of trees

Besides the tripartite division of the subject, Columella inherits other theoretical principles. In the following example we see how he resorts to Virgil for much of this transmitted knowledge. Thus, and as Dumont appropriately points out, he opens book 3 with a binary classification of trees:[83]

Sequitur arborum cura, quae pars rei rusticae vel maxima est. Earum species diversae et multiformes sunt: quippe varii generis, sicut auctor idem refert:

nullis hominum cogentibus ipsae
sponte sua veniunt;

multae etiam nostra manu satae procedunt. Sed quae non ope humana gignuntur, silvestres ac ferae, sui cuiusque ingenii poma vel semina gerunt; at quibus labor adhibetur, magis aptae sunt frugibus.

There follows the management of trees, which is a most important part of rural husbandry. They are diverse in kind, and of many shapes; for trees of various sorts, as the same author relates,

of their own accord will come forth,
by mortals not constrained;

and many, too, grow from seed planted by our own hand. But those that are propagated without human aid, the wild and untamed, bear fruits or seeds according to their several natures; while those on which labor is spent are fitted for a greater yield.

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[82] This principle is restated at the very end of book 6 [6.38.4]: *Cetera exequemur in mulis sic, ut prioribus huius voluminis partibus tradidimus, quae curam boum equarumque continent.* ('In all other respects in dealing with mules we shall follow the method which we have prescribed in the earlier parts of this book which deal with the care of oxen and horses.')

[83] Dumont (1993, 7–8)

The three first words allude, by literal repetition, to Virgil's opening of *Georgics* 2, and the two partial verses shortly afterwards are extracted from *Georg.* 2.11–12. Columella quotes Virgil's verses at important junctions in his treatise – here, at the opening of the first book on vines.[84] In the first quoted sentence he explicitly states the importance of arboriculture: *quae pars rei rusticae vel maxima est.*

If we compare Virgil's approach to the subject in the alluded passage we are referring to, Columella's prose is much briefer and to the point. The technical exposition presents a sharp boundary between the trees that grow *sponte sua* and those which *nostra manu satae procedunt*, and does not develop with the characteristic freedom that poetry allows. Virgil, however, also follows a scientific *doctrina* that has its origin in Theophrastus. Columella, more importantly, uses Virgil as link to the ancient tradition of georgic poetry and, therefore, to georgic wisdom at whose origin is Hesiod.

Peripatetic distinctions

Two authors figure prominently at the beginning of Columella 'great throng of Greeks who give instruction on husbandry': the *Peripatetici* – Aristotle and Theophrastus [1.1.7]:

> *Magis deinde eam iuvere fontibus orti sapientiae Democritus Abderites, Socraticus Xenophon, Tarentinus Archytas, Peripatetici magister ac discipulus Aristoteles cum Theophrasto*.
>
> It was then further assisted by men who have come from the well–spring of philosophy – Democritus of Abdera, Xenophon the follower of Socrates, Archytas

[84] 3.1.1

of Tarentum, and the two Peripatetics, master and pupil, Aristotle and Theophrastus.[85]

The influence of these philosophers in scientific developments can hardly be over–stated, not even in the subject of *res rusticae*.[86] Columella follows Theophrastus in general terms in the discussion of the generation of trees at the opening of book 3. The peripatetic botanist, unlike Columella, however, is concerned with a rigorous and systematic explanation and classification according to epistemological and metaphysical principles both in the *Historia Plantarum* and the *Causae Plantarum*.[87] Theophrastus learned the principles of classification from his first teacher at the Academy, Plato, and developed them later at the Lyceum, in whose garden he was able to conduct empirical observation.[88]

Varro actually quotes Theophrastus on several occasions. Although Columella does not quote him directly, he has inherited some of his scientific principles.[89] Theophrastus, e.g., establishes eight different modes of generation of plants at the opening of book 2 of *H.P.* [2.1.1]:

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[85] Notice, in contrast, that Varro leaves Hesiod for the end of the list, which is headed by a less elaborate introduction (1.1.7–8): '*In quis quae non inerunt et quaeres, indicabo a quibus scriptoribus repetas et Graecis et nostris. Qui Graece scripserunt dispersim alius de alia re, sunt plus quinquaginta. Hi sunt, quos tu habere in consilio poteris, cum quid consulere voles:…*'. (And if matters in which you are interested are not treated, I shall indicate the writers both Greek and Roman, from whom you may learn them. Those who have written various separate treatises in Greek, one on one subject, another in another, are more than fifty in number.' (Trans. Hooper–Ash, 1934, 165).)

[86] Martin (1971, 65–66) insists that neither Aristotle nor Theophrastus can be considered *scriptores rerum rusticarum*. Varro cites Theophrastus 6 times (besides mention in the list of Greek authors). Both Varro and Columella quote Aristotle twice.

[87] Henceforth *H.P.* and *C.P.* (*Περὶ φυτῶν ἱστορίας* & *Περὶ φυτῶν αἰτίων* respectively.)

[88] See Hort (1916, vol 1, xxi).

[89] He quotes Aristotle explicitly in 7.3.12, in reference to the ideal mating time for ewes. The passage referred to is *G.A.* 766a35 ff., which is devoted to the natural distinction of the sexes. He quotes *H.A.* 553b9 ff. in 9.3.1, on types of bees.

Αἱ γενέσεις τῶν δένδρων καὶ ὅλως τῶν φυτῶν ἢ αὐτόμαται ἢ ἀπὸ σπέρματος ἢ ἀπὸ ῥίζης ἢ ἀπὸ παρασπάδος ἢ ἀπὸ ἀκρεμόνος ἢ ἀπὸ κλωνὸς ἢ ἀπ᾽ αὐτοῦ τοῦ στελέχους εἰσιν, ἢ ἔτι τοῦ ξύλου κατακοπέντος εἷς μικρὰ. καὶ γὰρ οὕτως ἔνια φύεται. τούτων δὲ ἡ μὲν αὐτόματος πρώτη τις, αἱ δὲ ἀπὸ σπέρματος καὶ ῥίζης φυσικώταται δόξαιεν ἄν. ὥσπερ γὰρ αὐτόμαται καὶ αὐταί. δι᾽ ὃ καὶ τοῖς ἀγρίοις ὑπάρχουσιν. αἱ δὲ ἄλλαι τέχνης ἢ δὴ προαιρέσεως.

The ways in which the trees and plants in general originate are these:– spontaneous growth, growth from seed, from a root, from a piece torn off, from a branch or twig, from the trunk itself; or again from small pieces into which the wood is cut up (for some trees can be produced even in this manner). Of these methods spontaneous growth comes first, one may say, but growth from seed or root would seem most natural; indeed these methods too may be called spontaneous; wherefore they are found even in wild kinds, while the remaining methods depend on human skill or at least on human choice.[90]

At the opening Theophrastus grants all paths of generation equal merit: from spontaneous growth to the cutting up of small pieces of wood.[91] These modes are rough equivalents to some of Columella's cultivation techniques. Thus the technique of transplanting by *viviradix* (books 3–5 *passim*) corresponds to Theophrastus' generation *ἀπὸ ῥίζης*; the technique of transplanting *malleolus* (also *passim* 3–5) could correspond to Theophrastus' generation *ἀπὸ παρασπάδος*, and so on.[92]

[90] Translation by Hort (1916, vol. 1, 105)

[91] 'For some even grow this way.' There may be a touch of humor in Theophrastus' reaction.

[92] Cato and Varro use sporadically some of this terminology (e.g. *vive– or vivi–radix*), but not nearly to the extent to which Columella uses it. Cato, for instance, uses the term *viveradix* once at 33.3: *Si vinea et vite calva erit, sulcos interponito ibique viveradicem serito, umbram ab sulcis removeto crebroque fodito.* ('If there are gaps in the rows, run furrows and plant rooted cuttings, keep the furrows clear of shade, and cultivate frequently'.) Varro uses the term *viviradix* once at 1.35.1: *Quae iam egit radicem rosa, ea conciditur raditicus in virgulas palmares et obruitur, haec eadem postea transfertur facta viviradix.* ('A rose which has already formed a root is cut from the root up into twigs a palm–breadth long and planted; later on the same twig is transplanted when it has made a living root.) Columella develops the term *viviradix* as a specific technique for cultivation 32 times.

The main distinction in the second sentence of *H.P.* quoted above, however, is that between natural generation (*τούτων δὲ ἡ μὲν αὐτόματος πρώτη τις*) and that which depends on human skill (*τέχνη*). Theophrastus refines his division by stating that, from among the other modes of generation, those from seed or root 'seem to be most natural', just the same as the spontaneous growth of the wild *genera*.[93]

Theophrastus wants to establish a clear distinction between spontaneous generation and generation which depends more explicitly on *τέχνη* and *προαίρεσις* and this classification makes a sharp break between absence and presence of human intervention. Theophrastus also observes that ultimately nature follows its own internal principles and humans can only manipulate it through *τέχνη* and *προαίρεσις*. The classification is not a symmetrical opposition in what pertains strictly to generation; rather, the human factor is super–imposed, through *plan* or *deliberation* (*προαίρεσις*), to exert a certain degree of influence or manipulation of nature's internal dynamics. In *C.P.* Theophrastus leaves behind the multiple modes of generation, and arrives at the simplified version similar to the one Columella will take from Virgil [2.1.1]:

> *Περὶ δὲ τὰς βλαστήσεις καὶ καρποτοκίας τῶν δένδρων, καὶ ἁπλῶς τῶν φυτῶν, ὅσα μὴ πρότερον εἴρηται πειρατέον ὁμοίως ἀποδοῦναι, διαιροῦντας χωρὶς ἕκαστα, τά τε κατὰ τὰς ἐνιαυσίους ὥρας γινόμενα καὶ ὅσα κατὰ τὰς γεωργικὰς θεραπείας.*
>
> We must endeavor to present similarly all that has not previously been said about the sprouting and fruiting of trees and of plants in general, dealing separately with two sets of phenomena, those that follow the annual seasons and those associated with the care bestowed in husbandry.[94]

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[93] *Φυσικώταται δόξαιεν ἀν ⇔ ὥσπερ γὰρ αὐτόμαται καὶ αὐταί. δι᾽ ὃ καὶ τοῖς ἀγρίοις ὑπάρχουσιν.* From this statement it appears that the first three modes of generation belong to the same group (all as *γένεσις αὐτομάτη*) against the last five which would be of rarer occurrence unless human intervention is involved (*αἱ δὲ ἄλλαι τέχνης ἢ δὴ προαιρέσεως*).

[94] Translation by Einarson–Link (1976, vol. 1, 199).

Here he has shifted from the *γένεσις* (genesis) of the *H.P.* to the more *botanically*–specific *βλάστησις* (sprouting) and *καρποτοκία* (fruiting of trees); and he establishes a clearer division between the two – *διαιροῦντας χώρις ἕκαστα* – between *τά τε κατὰ τὰς ὥρας γινόμενα καὶ ὅσα κατὰ τὰς γεωργικὰς θεραπείας*.[95] The reference to the seasons introduces a new element, which was not present at the start of the *H.P.* and which he identifies with the natural side of his two–fold model. While presenting a narrower specificity absent in the more general term *αὐτόμαται* of the *H.P.*, Theophrastus is also pointing to aspects that will gradually become of greater interest to the writers of the science of agronomy: the natural sequence of the seasons and its implications in agriculture.[96] The expression *γεωργική θεραπεία* makes the factor of human intervention more specific than the modes of generation of the *H.P*. In the distinction following the quotation above Theophrastus adds that the relationship between nature and human inventiveness is that the function of the latter is to aid (*βοηθεῖν*) the former.[97]

[95] 'Those that follow the annual seasons and those associated with the care bestowed in husbandry.'

[96] We shall see in chapter 4 that Columella organizes the poem (book 10) according to seasons. He also has a yearly calendar by month encompassing an important section of book 11 (11.2). Palladius organizes his treatise in 14 books: the first on the standard preliminaries, one book for each month of the year, and one book on *veterinaria medicina.*

[97] The text is the following [*C.P.* 2.1.1]: *δὺο γὰρ δὴ μέρη ταῦτ᾽ ἐστίν, τὸ μὲν ὥσπερ φυσικὸν καὶ αὐτόματον, τὸ δὲ τέχνης καὶ παρασκευῆς βουλομένης τὸ εἶναι εὖ. λόγος δ᾽ ἀμφοῖν ἐστιν ουχ ὁ αὐτός, ἀλλ᾽ ὁ μὲν οἷον φυσικός, ὁ δὲ ἐπινοητικός, οὔτε γὰρ ἡ φύσις οὐθὲν μάτην, ἥ τε διάνοια βοηθεῖν τῇ φύσει.* ('For these constitute two divisions of the subject, the one natural (so to speak) and spontaneous, the other belonging to art and preparation, which aim at excellence. But the kind of explanation is different in each: the first is what one might call an explanation from nature, the second an explanation from inventiveness, nature doing nothing idly and human thought proposing to go to its aid.')

The fact that Varro is in closer dialogue with Theophrastus shows the level of engagement that the agricultural writers have with the Peripatetic author whose principles and classifications pervade the literature even when he is not explicitly quoted.[98] Columella owes the distinction between trees at the beginning of book 3 to Theophrastus' opening of the *C.P.* 2.1.1, and there is a clear echo of Theophrastus' *ἥ τε διάνοια βοηθεῖν τῇ φύσει* in Columella's statement '*at quibus labor adhibetur, magis aptae sunt frugibus*' we have read with respect to the generation of trees (3.1.1).

Just as he made a distinction between trees which grow *sponte sua* and those which are planted, Columella allegedly invokes a principle of opposition of *species* and *genus* (*τὸ εἶδος–τὸ γένος*) in order to facilitate a classification of soils (2.2.2):

> *His autem generibus singulis senae species contribuuntur, soli pinguis vel macri, soluti vel spissi, umidi vel sicci, quae qualitates inter se mixtae vicibus et alternatae plurimas efficiunt agrorum varietates. Eas enumerare non est artificis agricolae; neque enim artis officium est per species, quae sunt innumerabiles, evagari sed ingredi per genera, quae possunt et cogitatione mentis et ambitu verborum facile copulari. Recurrendum est igitur ad qualitatum inter se dissidentium quasi quasdam coniunctiones, quas Graeci συζυγίας ἐναντιοτήτων, nos 'discordantium comparationes' tolerabiliter dixerimus.*[99]

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[98] In *R.R.* 1.5.1, e.g., Varro values the botanist's practical advice at the same time he dismisses him on the grounds that he is more a philosopher than a practitioner. Elsewhere, in order to stress the importance of making a good choice of land, he gives Theophrastus' example of some trees which are not by nature evergreen, but become so under certain locational conditions (*R.R.* 1.7.6): *Itaque Cretae ad Cortyniam dicitur platanus esse, quae folia hieme non amittat, itemque in Cypro, ut Theophrastus ait*. ('Thus near Cortynia, in Crete, there is said to be a plane tree which does not shed its leaves in winter, and another in Cyprus, according to Theophrastus.' (Trans. Hooper–Ash (1934, 195).) Later Varro offers examples from Theophrastus, most from *H.P.* and the last one from *C.P.*: 1.7.7, shortly *R.R.* 1.37.5 (= Theophrastus *H.P.* 1.7.1), *R.R.* 1.40.1 (= *H.P.* 3.1.4; this time in reference to Anaxagoras and philosophical explanation), *R.R.* 1.40.3.

[99] Aristotle discusses the *συζυγία τῶν ἐναντιοτήτων* in *Top. β* 7.113$^{\alpha}$12, *G.C. β* 5.332b3, and *S.S.* 1.436a13.

> Furthermore, under each of these classes there fall six species of soil – fat or lean, loose or compact, moist or dry; and these qualities, in combination and in alternation with one another, produce a very great variety of soils. To enumerate them is not the mark of a skilled farmer; for it is not the business of any art to roam about over the species, which are countless, but to proceed through the classes, for these can readily be connected in the imagination and brought within the compass of words. We must have recourse, then, to certain unions, as we may call them, between qualities which are at variance with each other – what the Greeks call *συζυγίας ἐναντιοτήτων*, and which we may fairly render 'the couplings of opposites.'

This principle of relationships between opposites invoked by Columella is rather an attempt at simplifying the description of the ground according to qualitative categories (*pingue–macre*, *solutum–spissum*, *umidum–siccum*) than part of a conscious systematization such as that of Theophrastus. He shows no interest in metaphysical or epistemological explanations. Columella is even less prone to theorizing than Varro, who in *R.R.* 1.5.2 already warned against paying too much attention to the *libri* of Theophrastus *non tam idonei iis qui agrum colere volunt, quam qui scholas philosophorum.*

Ars imitating nature

The Peripatetics' influence contributes a certain amount of optimism about human action on nature. The need to know the workings of nature is necessary not as knowledge for knowledge's sake but as one whose immediate practical application produces advantageous results. Thus *labor*, in its first instance, comes precisely in relationship to a practical *scientia* (1.pr.22):

> *Nam qui se in hac scientia perfectum volet profiteri, sit oportet rerum naturae sagacissimus, declinationum mundi non ignarus, ut exploratum habeat quid cuique plagae conveniat, quid repugnet. Siderum ortus et occasus memoria*

repetat, ne imbribus ventisque imminentibus opera incohet laboremque frustretur.

For one who would profess to be a master of this science must have a shrewd insight into the works of nature; he must not be ignorant of the variations of latitude, that he may have ascertained what is suitable to every region and what is incompatible. He should tell over in his mind the rising and setting of the stars, that he may not begin his operations when rains and winds are threatening, and so bring his toils to naught.

Agriculture is not the only discipline (*ars*) whose mastery requires a vast amount of knowledge. In all disciplines of human learning the student is eager to imitate their teacher.[100] In rhetoric, as in painting and sculpture imitation is also the route to acquiring learning (*doctrina*). In rhetoric the ultimate authority is Cicero, whose advice – to concentrate on subjects of utility for the human race, try everything and carefully weigh out the findings, and teach them to future generations – Columella quotes as *exemplum* for those who want to learn.[101] The second set of *exempla* Columella uses are the '*opifices*' who imitate with unceasing '*labor*' the works of the great masters. These *opifices* are not, however, those who devote themselves to agriculture, but to the fine arts (1.pr.31):

Ac ne minoris quidem famae opifices per tot iam saecula videmus laborem suum destituisse, qui Protogenen Apellenque cum Parrhasio mirati sunt, nec pulchritudine Iovis Olympii Minervaeque Phidiacae sequentis aetatis attonitos piguit experiri Bryaxin, Lysippum, Praxitelen, Polyclitum, quid efficere aut quousque progredi possent.

And we observe that even artists of lesser fame, who through these many generations have been admirers of Protogenes and Apelles and Parrhasius, have not ceased from their own labours; and, though stunned by the beauty of Phidias' Olympian Jove and of his Minerva, men of the

[100] 1.pr.5

[101] 1.pr.28–30. With this and the next example Columella tries to dissuade the *principes* from abandoning agriculture because of its complexity and the requirement of a knowledge in many subjects which could prove overwhelming to the learner. See also 1.pr.3, and what follows the first paragraph of the *exordium.*

> succeeding age, Bryaxis, Lysippus, Praxiteles, and Polyclitus, were not reluctant to try what they could do or how far they could advance.

Through *labor* these *opifices* of lesser fame were so eager to imitate the works of the great masters that they pushed the limits as far as they could. They did not desist in their *labor* of *μίμησις*, even if this was of the works of other masters.[102] Agriculture is just another *τέχνη*, and the *agricola* another *opifex* who works directly in the realm of nature. Columella will repeat the trope of mimesis and the plastic arts in the first mention of the statue of Priapus in the garden of book 10.[103] Of the three names of sculptors which he gives in the poem – Polyclitus, Phradmon and Ageladas –, only Polyclitus appears in the preface of book 1.[104]

Within the subject of agriculture there are as many examples of mimesis as there are techniques.[105] Just as some *opifices* imitate others more experienced, certain (agricultural) techniques such as *pastinatio* (trenching) can be imitated by deep *aratio* and different spacing between vine stems, if the first technique is too costly for the kind of land in which it needs to be performed.[106] *Aratio* is invoked by Columella as one of the main techniques with which the

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[102] Balme (1962, 93–94) has pointed out that Aristotle, paradoxically, sometimes gives examples from art (*τέχνη*) to elaborate metaphysical conceptions such as that of *δύναμις–ἐνέργεια*. Balme's position is that this is a paradox because when talking about nature Aristotle should have produced examples from nature, not as in the known example of the Hermes latent in the block to explain the relationship between *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια*. Even though this theorizing does not concern Columella in the least, he considers the examples, especially from rhetoric and the plastic arts, analogous to the learning of agriculture.

[103] 10.29–31

[104] The sculptors excluded from the poem and present in the preface to book 1 are Phidias, Bryaxis, Lysippus, Praxiteles, Polyclitus. Cf. Varro 3.2.6 where the author mentions sculptures of Lysippus and Antiphilus, or rather the absence of these in place of which there are sculptures of hoers (*sartores*) and shepherds (*pastores*), in the context of luxury in the villa.

[105] The verb *imitor* appears five times in the poem and twice in the prose treatises.

[106] 3.13.4

agricola ought to return the soil, 'wearied and exhausted by cultivation', to fertile land again.[107] Columella makes this argument against Tremelius, who in his now lost treatise argued that earth becomes irremediably worn out by cultivation.[108] Tremelius, as Columella presents him at the beginning of book 2, is the voice of the *principes* of the treatise's opening. This voice has been identified by Martin not only with Tremelius, but with Lucretius, through an allusion from the very opening of the treatise: Columella's *defatigatum et effetum solum* (1.pr.1) is an allusion to Lucretius' *iamque adeo fracta est aetas, effetaque tellus / vix animalia parva creat* ('Even now indeed the power of life is broken, and the earth exhausted scarcely produces tiny creatures', *D.R.N.* 2.1150).[109] Only a few lines after Columella singles out Tremelius he points to

[107] 2.1.1: *Quaeris ex me, P. Silvine, quod ego sine cunctatione non recuso docere, cur priore libro veterem opinionem fere omnium, qui de cultu agrorum locuti sunt, a principio confestim reppulerim, falsamque sententiam repudiaverim censentium longo aevi situ longique iam temporis exercitatione fatigatam et effetam humum consenuisse.* ('You ask me, P. Silvinus, and I have no hesitation in informing you at once, why in the preceding book I immediately at the start rejected the long–standing opinion of almost all who have discoursed on the subject of agriculture, and repudiated as mistaken the views of those who hold that the soil, wearied and exhausted by age–long wasting away and by cultivation now extending over a long period of time has become barren.')

[108] In 2.1.2 Columella states: *Nec te ignoro cum et aliorum inlustrium scriptorum tum praecipue Tremeli auctoritatem revereri, qui, cum plurima rusticarum rerum praecepta simul eleganter et scite memoriae prodiderit, videlicet inlectus nimio favore priscorum de simili materia disserentium falso credidit parentem omnium terram, sicut muliebrem sexum aetate anili iam confectam, progenerandis esse fetibus inhabilem.* ('And I am not unaware that you hold in reverence, not only the authority of other renowned writers, but particularly that of Tremelius, who, in handing down to posterity a very great number of agricultural precepts set forth with refinement as well as learning, being obviously misled through too great deference to the ancients who treat of a like subject, held the mistaken belief that the earth, the mother of all things, like womankind now worn out with old age, is incapable of bearing offspring.') White (1970, 21) states: 'The loss of Scrofa's work is particularly to be regretted; to judge from the citations made by Columella, he represents a distinct advance in technical knowledge over his predecessors, especially in viticulture. He also gave some thought to the question of declining fertility, though his conclusions, as Columella points out, are not acceptable.'

[109] ('Even now the power of life is broken, and the earth exhausted scarce produces tiny creatures.') See Martin (1971, 289–310) '*La pensée économique de Columelle'.*

the mimetic technique of *aratio* (ploughing) by quoting *Georg.* 2.204 where Virgil states that *aratio* is the farmer's means to imitate the fertile qualities of the ground.[110] Virgil has become the source for the counter–argument against Lucretius, just as Columella is, only with respect to this ideological position, the anti–Tremelius.[111]

Theophrastus' formulation in *C.P.* of the capacity of human intelligence to aid nature (2.1.1) – *ὁ ἐπινοητικός ἡ τε διάνοια Βοηθεῖν θελοῦσα τῇ φύσει* – has an optimistic connotation. In Virgil mimesis through human intervention takes the form of the *labor improbus* of *Georg.* 1.116, which, in turn, derives from Hesiod's *χαλεπός πόνος* of the post–Pandora ages (*Op.* 91).[112] This grievous toil (*χαλεπός πόνος*) belongs at the same time to the good strife (*ἔρις*), stated at the beginning of *Works & Days* (11–16).[113] 'Gloomy Night' bore first and Zeus planted in the roots of earth grievous toil, and one much better for men than the strife which fosters wars and conflict.[114]

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[110] In 2.2.4. See chapter 2 under the subtitle 'An approach to formal analysis', 'Pressure of the *aratrum*, pressure of the *caltha*' and chapter 4 under '*Labor improbus*'.

[111] Columella always has words of praise for Tremelius' agricultural methods.

[112] *Op.* 90–91:
Πρὶν μὲν γὰρ ζώεσκον ἐπὶ χθονὶ φῦλ᾽ ἀνθρώπων
νόσφιν ἄτερ τε κακῶν καὶ ἄτερ χαλεποῖο πόνοιο.
('For previously the tribes of men used to live upon the earth entirely apart from evils, and without grievous toil and distressful diseases, which gave death to men.') (Trans. of all Hesiod by Most (2006, 95).)

[113] *Ὄυκ ἄρα μοῦνον ἔην Ἐρίδων γένος, ἀλλ᾽ ἐπὶ γαῖαν*
εἰσὶ δύω. τὴν μέν κεν ἐπαινήσειε νοήσας,
ἣ δ᾽ ἐπιμωμητή. διὰ δ᾽ ἄνδιχα θυμὸν ἔχουσιν.
('So there was not just one birth of Strifes after all, but upon the earth there are two Strifes. One of these a man would praise once he got to know it, but the other is blameworthy; and they have thoroughly opposed spirits.')

[114] *Op.* 17–19:
Τὴν δ᾽ ἑτέρην προτέρην μὲν ἐγείνατο Νὺξ ἐρεβεννή,
θῆκε δε μιν Κρονίδης ὑψίζυγος, αἰθέρι ναίων
γαίης τ᾽ ἐν ῥίζῃσι καὶ ἀνδράσι πολλὸν ἀμείνω.

Hesiod's good strife yields in Virgil the idea of *labor*, which, in turn, becomes in Columella the motivation for the itemized development of the *téchne* of agriculture.[115] Some of the specific techniques were already described to some extent by Theophrastus when explaining the origin of plants (*ἀπὸ σπέρματος* (from a seed)*, ἀπὸ ῥίζης* (from a root)*, ἀπὸ παρασπάδος* (from a piece torn off) etc.) Columella gives his own set of techniques which do not differ much from Theophrastus, from *aratio* (ploughing) to *stercoratio* (manuring). Thus he states at the beginning of book 2 where the technique best suited to *refovere* the land, and one to combat *nostra inertia* (our lack of *ars*), expressed here in the first chapter of book 2, is *stercoratio.* [2.1.7]:

> *Non igitur fatigatione, quemadmodum plurimi crediderunt, nec senio, sed nostra scilicet inertia minus benigne nobis arva respondent. Licet enim maiorem fructum percipere, si frequenti et tempestiva et modica stercoratione terra refoveatur.*[116]
>
> It is not, therefore, because of weariness, as very many have believed, nor because of old age, but manifestly because of our own lack of energy that our cultivated lands yield us a less generous return. For we may reap greater harvests if the earth is quickened again by frequent, timely, and moderate manuring.

Determinants in the choice of genre of the prose treatise

('But the other one gloomy Night bore first; and Cronus' high–throned son, who dwells in the aether, set it in the roots of the earth, and is much better for men.')

[115] See Thomas (1980.1, 16–17) for *labor* as a central theme in Virgil. The noun '*labor*' occurs once in Cato's treatise, ten times in Varro, 60 in Columella's treatise and once in *Arb*.

[116] The sense of *inertia* (see *T.L.L.* entry), in connection with the previous discussion, is conveniently reflected by its literal translation – *lack of art*.

Columella, in his campaign against the decadence of agriculture, attempts to exclude as much as possible products associated with luxury.[117] He thus echoes themes from Cato's preface: the *viri fortissimi* and *milites strenuissimi* are reflected in the following paragraph from the general preface, while he insists that nothing positive is derived from life behind city walls [1.pr.17]:

> *At mehercules vera illi Romuli proles assiduis venatibus nec minus agrestibus operibus exercitata firmissimis praevaluit corporibus ac militiam belli, cum res postulavit, facile sustinuit durata pacis laboribus semperque rusticam plebem praeposuit urbanae. Ut enim qui in villis intra consaepta morarentur, quam qui foris terram molirentur, ignaviores habitos, sic eos, qui sub umbra civitatis intra moenia desides cunctarentur, quam qui rura colerent administrarentve opera colonorum, segniores visos.*
>
> But, by heaven, that true stock of Romulus, practiced in constant hunting and no less in toiling in the fields, was distinguished by the greatest physical strength and, hardened by the labors of peace, easily endured the hardships of war when occasion demanded, and always esteemed the common people of the country more highly than those of the city. For as those who kept within the confines of the country houses were accounted *more slothful* than those who tilled the ground outside, so those who spent their time *idly* within the walls, in the shelter of the city, were looked upon as *more sluggish* than those who tilled the fields or supervised the labors of the tillers.

Columella also paraphrases here Varro's introduction to his second dialogue as we see in the adjectives *ignaviores* and *desides* to which he now adds *segniores.*[118] But Columella's statement early in the treatise, unlike Varro's which comes at the beginning of the second book, does not allow him to return to city–inspired matters. Varro, in contrast, may introduce motives or themes associated with urban leisure, as he does, e.g., in the preface to his first dialogue when he compares their discussion with a horse race (*R.R.* 1.3.1). By not following the

[117] See chapter 3, '*Turdi*'.
[118] See Varro, *R.R.* 2.1.

dialogue format of Xenophon and Varro it is easier for Columella to offer a straight–forward technical presentation, to avoid staging distractions and prolonged Socratic arguments.[119] Varro devotes one whole book (3) to the production of luxury items for the gourmet but, unlike Columella, he devotes no space at all to the 'humbler vegetables which had been part of the staple diet of his distinguished ancestors'.[120] The reasons why Columella separates horticulture, however, have little to do with luxury.

Specialization

Diederich has stated that Varro avoids narrow specialization.[121] Columella is a specialist and makes only one exception by request of M. Trebellius to deal with land survey (*agri*

[119] For discussion of irony in Varro's treatise see especially Kronenberg (2009). There are certain humorous moments in Columella (the first quote of Aristotle could be one of them. See also Richter (1981.3, 630–631) who states that in the passage in 7.3.11–12 on the mating of sheep and the advantages of facing certain winds, Columella is following the written tradition without consideration to actual empirical evidence. Nelsestuen (2015, 69, n. 104) criticizes Varro for not being practical: 'One possibility is that the highly circumscribed and overly tidy bounds of Varronian *agri cultura* simply did not fit the practical Roman *agricola's* messier reality, which Columella's *agricolatio* more closely seeks to capture; that it did not take off either is perhaps a testament to the way that Roman agricultural manuals may be divorced from the actual practitioners of actual agriculture.' Columella gives a very different impression about this 'messy reality', e.g. when techniques such as *stercoratio*, the pairing of farm animals, or their diseases and cures are dealt with.

[120] White (1970, 246)

[121] Diederich (2007, 53): *Varro vermeidet daher auch den Eindruck eines engen Spezialistentums: Das Heranziehen von Argumenten und Beispielen aus den Disziplinen Etymologie, Kulturgeschichte, Rechtskunde, Medizin, Geometrie, Astrologie, Musik, Religion und Mythologie steckt einen weiten 'enzyklopädischen' Rahmen ab, in den die Landwirtschaft integriert wird.* (‚Varro therefore avoids the impression of narrow specialization: the use of arguments and examples from the disciplines of etymology, cultural history, jurisprudence, medicine, geometry, astrology, music, religion and mythology covers a wide ‚encyclopaedic

mensura).[122] He, therefore, does not outwardly join the Roman trend of cultivating an *encyclios disciplina*, which aimed at the unity of all knowledge, as expressed, e.g., by Vitruvius (1.1.12) and which was cultivated by other writers on agriculture such as Celsus and the elder Pliny.[123] He, nevertheless, within his one subject, and especially in the prefaces, displays more than adequate knowledge of other disciplines such as rhetoric and the plastic arts. His adherence to one single subject of expertise allows him, in turn, to offer a clear ideological message without distractions.

The science of *agricolatio*

According to Columella's own testimony in book 11, immediately before he is about to start the agricultural calendar, he published a series of books 'against the astronomers'. Although these books have not survived, this observation has important methodological ramifications. Columella makes the following statement immediately after a quote of Virgil on the observation of the stars during sailing season [11.1.31]:

> *Contra quam observationem multis argumentationibus disseruisse me non infitior in iis libris, quos adversus astrologos composueram*.[124]
>
> And against this observation I do not deny I have disputed in many arguments in those books which I wrote against the astronomers.

framework in which agriculture becomes integrated.') Columella only in one passage tries to explain the etymology of *iumenta* and *armenta* in Varronian fashion (6.1.3).

[122] 5.1

[123] See Rawson (1985, 117).

[124] 11.1.31. The passage quoted from Virgil is *Georg.* 1.204–207.

Shortly after this statement (11.2.2), he stresses the distinction between theoretical astronomy and practical agricultural science: the *agricola* needs to avoid the sort of detached–from–practical observation and objective methods of the astronomer, who is only concerned with assigning accurate dates to beginnings and ends of seasons. He, in contrast, recommends considering first what might be more profitable from a purely agricultural point of view, in order to obtain the best results. The *agricola* should give greater consideration to meteorological conditions [11.2.2]:

> *Novi autem veris principium non sic observare rusticus debet, quemadmodum astrologus, ut expectet certum illum diem, qui veris initium facere dicitur: sed aliquid etiam sumat de parte hiemis, quoniam consumpta bruma, iam intepescit annus, permittitque clementior dies opera moliri*.
>
> But the husbandman ought not to observe the beginning of spring, in the same way as the astronomer, by waiting for the fixed day which is said to mark the entry of spring, but let him even take in something also from the part of the year which belongs to winter, since, when the shortest day is passed, the year is already beginning to grow warmer and the more clement weather allows him to put work in hand.

Excessively rigid exactitude is thus rejected in favor of practicality. But there may also be another object which Columella may have addressed *in iis libris, quos adversus astrologos composuerat*: their tendency to entertain certain superstitions, which have no place in the practical day–to–day performance of agricultural duties. On two occasions he recommends that the *vilicus* avoid *sacrificia*, *haruspices*, and *sagae*, because they push the uneducated minds to unnecessary expenses and vain deeds. At the same time he recommends that the *vilicus* stay away from cities and markets (*nundinae*) unless he needs to make purchases to perform his duties (1.8.6):

> *Haruspices sagasque, quae utraque genera vana superstitione rudes animos ad impensas ac deinceps ad flagitia compellunt, ne admiserit, neque urbem neque ullas nundinas noverit, nisi emendae vendendaeve pertinentis ad se rei causa*.[125]
>
> Let he not admit diviners and sorcerers, who compel with either kind of vacuous superstition the rude minds to expenses and then to shameful acts, and let him not know any city or any ninth–day fair, except to buy or sell merchandise pertaining to himself.

In a well–functioning farm there is little room for superstition and this makes his treatise particularly resonant for modern–minded audiences.[126] Dallinges sees in his systematic approach the characteristics of a forward looking thinker deeply invested in scientific progress and direct practical application of his discipline, as well as an author who, with respect to moral (individual and social) principles, is quite conservative:

> *Columelle est ce qu'il est convenu d'appeler un auteur technique. Et ce qui fait sans doute l'intérêt majeur de son traité, c'est bien l'extraordinaire curiosité d'esprit dont il témoigne. Alors que, par sa morale, par son éthique individuelle et sociale, Columelle est encore tourné vers le passé – par la richesse, en revanche, de son information technique et scientifique, il s'affirme résolument tourné vers l'avenir.*'[127]

Dallinges does later rightly point out that this 'scientific progress' is inspired by Greek and Hellenistic influence.[128] He sees this progress, which Columella advances forward, as fitting the period of transition from a traditional national conformism to new universalist tendencies:

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[125] The passage is virtually repeated later at 11.1.22: '*Sacrificia nisi ex praecepto domini facere nesciat: haruspicem sagamque sua sponte non noverit, quae utraque genera vana superstitione rudes animos infestant. Non urbem, non ullas nundinas nisi vendendae aut emendae rei necessariae causa, frequentaverit.*'

[126] For contrast with Varro see *R.R.* 1.40.5.

[127] Dallinges (1964, 140)

[128] Rawson (1985, 141) points (on the development of the practical sciences under the umbrella of dialectic) to the taxonomies of an intermediary: Cloatius Verus, who in the late republican or Augustan era lists 'the different varieties or *genera* of nuts, apples, pears and other fruits, possibly other vegetables and plants too' in a work under the title *Ordinata Graeca*'.

> *C'est l'époque elle–même tout entière qui porte en elle ce ferment de contradiction féconde et de bouleversement qui sont, pour la pensée, les signes évidents d'une étape de transition, laquelle conduit d'un conformisme traditionnel et national à des tendances universalistes absolument nouvelles*.[129]

Rawson points out that this evolution is a consequence of an accession of Greek intellectual influence on Rome which starts with Cato.[130] Also, what Dallinges calls general 'Greek influence', is colored by the Punic Mago, whose vast treatise was ordered translated (into Greek, as Varro states (1.1.11)) by Cassius Dionysius of Utica, and abbridged and re–organized by Diophanes of Bythinia. What the organization and translations entailed, just as the contents of the original, is impossible to surmise, but there is no doubt that this treatise to the writer from Gades was well known.

Columella knew and read Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* – he quotes him five times – either in its original version or in Cicero's translation (or both), where he states that he learned the arts of *χρυσοχοεῖν, αὐλεῖν, ζωγραφεῖν* not by being taught but by watching the practitioner of each art, just the same way he learnt the art of farming [*Oec.* 18.9]:

> *ἐδίδαξε γὰρ οὔτε ταῦτά με οὐδεὶς οὔτε γεωργεῖν. ὁρῶ δ᾽ ὥσπερ γεωργοῦντας καὶ τὰς ἄλλας τέχνας ἐργαζομένους ἀνθρώπους*.[131]
>
> For nobody taught me either these things or to farm; on the contrary, I watched the men working the earth as well as those working the other arts.

Xenophon shows in this passage that the practical and empirical mind–set akin has been there from the beginning. It would be mistaken to think that practicality with respect to the agricultural field is a quality exclusive to the Romans. This constitutes a continuity, not only

[129] Dallinges (1964, 141)
[130] Rawson (1985, 134 ff.)
[131] Xenophon, 18.9

from Xenophon to Columella, but also a continuity from Theophrastus' observations which he was able to realize at the garden of the *Lyceum.* Columella, as he gives examples throughout the treatise, learned the art of farming from watching his uncle. In 2.15.4 he explains what to do if manure is not available to cultivate grain or vines:

> *Si tamen nullum genus stercoris suppetet, multum proderit fecisse quod Marcum Columellam patruum meum, doctissimum et diligentissimum agricolam, saepe numero usurpasse memoria repeto, ut sabulosis locis cretam ingereret*.[132]
>
> If, however, no kind of manure is available, it will be very helpful to follow the practice which I remember my uncle, Marcus Columella, a very learned and painstaking farmer, frequently employed: that is, to heap clay on gravelly ground.

In this chapter we have assessed the biographical, historical, and scientific background behind Columella's treatise. We have placed emphasis on methodological and ideological aspects. Columella's provincial origin and service as *tribunus militum* in an eastern province should be taken in consideration when compared to his predecessors Cato and Varro. From a methodological and scientific point of view we have also seen that Columella draws from Theophrastus' work on botany and that he inherits, through Varro and a series of now lost mostly Roman treatises, concepts that configure the discipline as Columella understands it. We have also seen that agricultural science has a practical aspect and that an ethical component is always present throughout junctural sections in the treatise. In the next chapter we will focus on the literary aspects of this treatise and their relationship with this ethical substratum in order to understand the ideological constructs that motivate Columella's composition of the treatise.

[132] 2.15.4. Ash (1941, 203)

CHAPTER II: POETIC EXPRESSION OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

Virgil's breach

Emily Gowers starts her recent article on Columella by stating that 'in 65 C.E., a Spanish writer appointed himself Virgil's heir and *stepped into a breach* that did not really exist.'[133] Since the nineteenth century literary critics have almost invariably considered the Neronian writer a second–rate follower of Virgil who composed a book in hexameters on the curious subject of horticulture.[134] Gowers attributes the inception of this critical view to Nisard, who stated in 1844: '*Le bon Columelle, prosateur assez pur, eut le tort de croire que Virgile lui avait laissé, comme un legs d'héritier, l'obligation de remplir lès lacunes des Géorgiques… Il fut poète comme on est exécuteur testamentaire'*.[135]

Saint–Denis names others, besides Nisard, who have followed and perpetuated the tradition, and concludes that '*le poème de Columelle a été delaissé par les érudits français et italiens.*'[136] This critical tradition, Saint–Denis adds, grew under the influence of Romantic prejudices and an obsession with the concept of *decadence* by certain *érudites* who see in our author's work little poetic talent and one more manifestation of the decadence of the times.

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[133] Gowers (2000, 127)

[134] Gowers (2000), following Saint–Denis, seeks to 'rehabilitate' Columella as a poet who has been quite often considered an author of ''second–rate' Latin literature'. A poet and writer of the 'Neronian renaissance', to use Sullivan's words, deserves more detailed attention than general, and potentially unfounded, *a priori* disqualifying statements.

[135] Quoted by Saint–Denis (1969b): 'Good old Columella, a fairly neat prose–writer, made the mistake of believing that Virgil had left for *him*, as one of his heirs, the duty to fill some gaps in the *Georgics*… He became thus as much a poet as a testamentary executor.'

[136] Saint–Denis (1969b, 121–122) names the following: V. Barberet (1887), R. Pichon (1908), F. Plessis (1909), M. Rat (1936).

Saint–Denis' answer to these critics is that '*s'il est facile de se moquer d'un agronome qui s'avise de cataloguer en hexamètres les espèces de choux, de laitues, de pêches et de figues, il faut reconnaître aussi qu'il n'a pas manqué de virtuosité dans la mise en oeuvre d'une matière ingrate*'.[137] Blaming the content of the *georgics* for its less than satisfactory result, however, does not explain the fact that Virgil's *Georgics*, based exactly on the same material, were successful. Nevertheless, Saint–Denis' attempt to end the critical dead–lock, to question the assumption that Columella is a 'second–rate' Latin poet, and his suggestion to 'rehabilitate' him, has been an important step towards interpreting this author and his poetry in their own terms.[138]

Gowers, in contrast, focuses on the connection between the two poets when she designs her article around the Neronian poet's model: the Corycian farmer narrative in Virgil's *Georgics*, the *locus* from which Columella takes the idea of writing a book in poetry.[139] Comparing Columella to Virgil has been a constant approach, and understandably so, towards obtaining a critical outlook, especially since the poet himself expresses high respect for his predecessor. Thus Saint–Denis states that:

> '*avec une probité louable et plutôt rare chez les écrivains, Columelle a révélé qu'il devait beaucoup à Virgile. Souvent, dans ses livres en prose, il l'a cité,*

[137] Saint–Denis (1969b, 127). On p. 122 Saint–Denis quotes the statements of D. Nisard, for instance, the first translator of Columella in French.
[138] Ibid, (1969b, 123–125). Saint–Denis is specific about his assessment and goes beyond praising, for instance, Columella's use of Virgilian expressions in the same metrical positions, or the use of 'Vergilian periphrases' to design specific vegetables, to attempt a more thorough evaluation of the whole poem.
[139] *Georg.* 4.116–148. Gowers makes a tight connection between the two poets and is right to criticize Columella for appearing to be overly servile a pupil of Virgil. As we shall see in the selective analysis in chapter 4, however, the perception of this servility is the consequence of reading too close the prose preface to book 10, and is far from showing the true purpose of the poem itself, which can only be shown by careful analysis.

quelquefois pour le corriger, la plupart du temps pour l'approuver et pour admirer son savoir agronomique. Arrivant à la dernière partie de son ouvrage: de cultu hortorum, *il sent en lui son admiration pour Virgile se muer en dévotion.*'

For this reason, Saint–Denis follows the same approach, one difficult to avoid even for a critic who sees Columella as a writer deserving the name of poet *suo iure*,[140] who must have made a contribution to the poetic discourse in Neronian Rome if in later years Palladius, the 4th–century writer on agriculture, finishes his own treatise with a poem on grafting (*de insitione*) in elegiac couplets.[141]

For Gowers his poem is 'worth another look… because it exists and *is* average: it tells us how Virgil himself was read in antiquity'.[142] This, in turn, gives her motivation to 'go back to Virgil's 'unwritten' poem and to consider his *numerosus hortus* (10.6), a garden in verses which was also to be a display of abundance and fertility'.[143] Here lies one of the two recurring themes for Columella, although not one unfamiliar to Roman writers: *fertility* is not only a matter of secondary importance, but one around which other themes develop.

This theme, therefore, will be key to our investigation. The other key of our investigation will be to consider book 10 as part of a larger context. Columella's *Res Rustica* is a long and, to judge from its methodical arrangement and content, a technically accomplished work – also the most voluminous still extant on the subject from antiquity.[144] Henderson

[140] Saint–Denis (1969b, 121).
[141] See the recent edition of Palladius' treatise by Brodersen (2016, 674–691).
[142] Gowers (2000, 127)
[143] Gowers (ibid.) asks whether Columella 'was respecting the Virgilian model or consciously overshooting its limits'. The answer, which we will be developing in the following pages, is that Columella has a reason and method for his attempt at, as Gowers says, overshooting his limits.
[144] See Richter's praise of the work (1981, 602–603). If we discard Theophrastus as an agricultural writer, the closest in volume and methodological rigor would be Xenophon's

perhaps states it better when he writes that he [Columella] 'has more to say on [horticulture] than the rest of Classical Antiquity put together – literally more, in quantity, and also… more to the point.'[145] If this is true with respect to horticulture, it also applies to the practice of all other areas of agriculture, animal husbandry, and veterinary medicine, covered in the treatise. Columella wants us to understand from the poem that horticulture represents the whole of agriculture and that the poem's overarching themes apply to the discipline as a whole.[146] Thus

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Oeconomicus (which gets into the specifics of agriculture starting in chapter 16), Cato, Varro, Palladius and the Byzantine *Geoponica.*

[145] Henderson, 2002, 110. Saint–Denis (1969b) (who has also provided the Budé introductory study and translation of Columella's *Book 10* – henceforth Saint–Denis 1969a) offers a critical study of the poem as first approach and tries to redeem it through careful analysis and commentary from the many critics who after a superficial interpretation of his poetry condemn it. We shall follow his approach in chapter 4 through a close reading of the opening and ending sections of the poem, but not before considering Henderson's proposition not to divorce his *georgic* poetry from scientific agricultural literature. Henderson proposes a reading of the poem within the context of the whole treatise and this, we shall see, provides a completely different and more complete picture of its nature. More recently, Diederich (2007) has offered a reading of Columella and all scientific literature, including, or without excluding, its poetic parts (Columella's and Palladius'). Diederich's study, which otherwise follows much of the format of René Martin's study (1974), has explicitly addressed book 10 within the rest of his work. Her view of Columella is, however, conditioned by her evaluation of the agricultural writing tradition as a whole, which includes Cato, Varro and Palladius, a certainly worth–while enterprise but, for the interpretation of Columella, perhaps too ambitious. Diederich implicitly makes it a point to dispel the misleading prejudices of the critics of '*les poètes latins de la décadence*' and thus assumes, justly, the poem's worth at face value. As recently as 2011 Thibodeau contributes to a positive view by stating that 'foremost among these [who wrote on the topic of horticulture] is Columella, who composed a whole book on gardening in verse at the behest of his friend Silvinus and Seneca's brother Gallio (9.16.2).' Thibodeau addresses the influence of Virgil in Columella's work beyond book 10, and beyond the poet's image as imitator of Virgil. Because Thibodeau is interested in Virgil, and only indirectly in Columella, he does not address important aspects of our author's contributions or influences, such as those of Tremelius Scrofa or of Mago the Carthaginian. His reading of Columella, however, beyond the aesthetic strictures imposed on book 10 is a step forward and brings up very interesting insights. (See Thibodeau, 2007, 222–224.)

[146] This is stated by Henderson (2002, 125): 'As we saw, horticulture is agriculture and arboriculture writ small; and it shares with livestock management deep–seated sympathy

the rest of the treatise is supposed to be read in conjunction with the poem, and the poem as part of the treatise.

This is Henderson's suggestion, which we mentioned in chapter 1: the 'sin of excerpting' the book in hexameters from the rest of the treatise should be avoided if we are to understand and 'explore the role of gardening' in Columella's conception of the *villa*.[147] The question arises then of how to interpret and understand why the poet inserts the book that has claimed all the critical attention at the end of his otherwise strictly technical treatise.[148] The prose *praefatio* to the poem, however, makes it very clear that the poem belongs there, also from a strictly technical point of view.

Analysis, therefore, has to be two–fold, as the poem lies in tension between two forces: one *centrifugal*, connecting with the themes of Columella's technical project, and one *centripetal*, which, because of the different set of aesthetic and poetic principles of the poem, draws attention to its own structure and coherence. This centripetal force is a consequence of the fact that even the poem itself, despite the attention it has received, has seldom been interpreted analytically as a whole, as Diederich states:

> *Doch die Würdigungen Columellas als Dichter, so sie denn erfolgten, beschränken sich bislang auf Details hinsichtlich Metrik, Stil und Imitationstechnik, allenfalls auf einzelne Passagen. Doch bislang gibt es anscheinend keine Würdigung des dichterischen Gesamtentwurfes.*[149]

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toward pests, disease, and morbidity.' A few lines later he states: 'What verse brings the garden of book 10 is mimesis: intensified *writing*.'

[147] Henderson (2002, 110)

[148] Columella leaves horticulture for the end. Most of book 11 is the treatment of horticulture in prose, the calendar and some advice for the *vilicus*; book 12 is mostly an appendix on food preservation and some advice for the *vilica*.

[149] Diederich (2007, 232): 'But the appreciation of Columella as a poet, as it has resulted, has so far been limited to details regarding metrics, style, and imitation–technique, at most with certain passages. However, so far, there is no apparent appreciation of the poem as a whole.'

Distinctions

We should start by separating the two authors on some essential points: Columella, unlike Virgil the poet, produces a technical treatise on agriculture in the strictest sense so far experienced, and only at its very end – a small part by all accounts including his own – he decides to follow the steps of his forerunner and write a poem under his master's guidance, according to Columella. More importantly, however, Columella is responding to the aesthetic and ideological elements of a later period in Roman history – a period of 'continuity', as Columella himself would like to portray, but one in which social and political conditions have changed.

We shall take Henderson's advice to consider Columella's work in its entirety on the premise that georgic poetry owes much of its technical background, at this point in history as well as in the late Roman republic, to agricultural literary prose, of which Columella's treatise is in many ways a unique witness. Conversely, it will give some clues, if not explain, the presence of the poem as part of the larger work.[150] This contextual analysis is necessary if we want to arrive at an interpretation of the treatise as a historical and literary document with a minimum of scientific rigor. For the purpose of this project, it will elucidate much of the nature of the

[150] S, A, and the R mss. contain the whole work alongside the treatises of Cato and Varro. Some include Palladius' treatise. For this project only one of the *R* mss. was consulted: *E* R.1.7, which contains the first three treatises in inverse chronological order: Columella, Varro, Cato. Because the first catalogue of the Latin collection of the *Real Biblioteca del Monasterio del Escorial* was not published until the years 1910–1926 early 20th–century editions do not list this ms.

georgic poem and, probably, of other Roman georgic poems and their relationship to their technical sources. It will, along the way, we hope, discover and dispel unwarranted past prejudices.

The hybrid nature of Columella's text will require a traveling back and forth and crossing of generic and 'specialist' boundaries (those between poetry and prose, and those between 'literature' and technical writing). This does not mean that Columella is not aware of generic distinctions. On the contrary, he clearly states his intention to cross those boundaries. The purpose of this approach is up to the reader's interpretation.

Another subtle cultural distinction between Neronian (and ancient) times and modern readers should be taken into consideration from the start: the pervading presence in all written intellectual manifestations of another technical field in which Columella is well trained and, perhaps, a skilled practitioner (although there is no specific documentation in this regard other than the treatise itself): rhetoric. This is not a different use of this *techne* from that of any other Roman prose writer, starting with Cato. Columella makes this presence more obvious by multiple explicit analogies between the two fields – rhetoric and agriculture – when he states in the preface (1.pr.29), e.g., that practitioners of both learn by 'trial and error' and need, therefore, try (*temptare*) as many methods as possible to bring up satisfactory results.[151]

[151] 1.pr.29: *Verum tamen, quod in Oratore iam M. Tullius rectissime dixit, par est eos, qui generi humano res utilissimas conquirere et perpensas exploratasque memoriae tradere concupierint, cuncta temptare.* 'Nevertheless, as M. Tullius has very properly said in his *Orator*, it is right that those who have an earnest desire to investigate subjects of the greatest utility for the human race, and to transmit to posterity their carefully weighed findings, should try everything.' (Ash (1941, 23).) Columella's resort to rhetoric is pervasive in all the prose sections. One only needs to read a few lines of the beginning to notice his polished Ciceronian *eloquentia*. Von Albrecht (1997, 1241) states: 'Language and style are refined throughout; precision dominates in the factual parts, eloquence in the prefaces.' Connors' (1997, 71–89) analysis of the relationships

This idea is again revisited at the opening of book 11 when he compares explicitly both arts [11.1.10]: although the subject of agriculture is extensive and wide–spread (*Rusticationis autem magna et diffusa materia est*) this should not be cause for despair 'for neither is the art of oratory abandoned because no perfect orator has anywhere been found'.[152] An analysis of his prose style, however, would take us in a very different direction. For now, rather than theorize about how not to separate the worlds of poetry and prose, and of technical writing and literature, we shall take up Columella's explicit poetic principles and his method of *usus et experientia* in order to build a realistic hypothesis of how to read just his poetry in conjunction with some of the main themes of his treatise.

A roadmap

Gowers sees an imbalance between Columella's proclaimed self–adherence to Callimachean poetic principles and his propensity to 'expand to extremes' the subject under treatment – in book 10, the garden. The reader, she states, while expecting 'a frugal inconspicuous poem'… finds out that this 'framework of modesty turns out to be… misleading'.[153] She also states that while Virgil 'experimented with different scales and levels in

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between the two fields – agriculture and rhetoric – will certainly illuminate future projects on Columella's prose style.

[152] 11.1.10–11: *Nam nec oratoria disciplina deseritur, quia perfectus orator nusquam repertus est.* As we shall see shortly Columella refers to the prefaces of his own books as '*exordia*'. It is easy to underestimate the pervasive influence of rhetorical training and theory in Columella's treatise and in Roman education at the time. The rhetorical approach to his writing reveals much of the author's own intentions.

[153] On Columella's statement of adherence to Callimachean poetic principles in 10.40 and the problems derived from it see especially Gowers (2000, 134–135).

treating humble subjects… Columella, inside his small compass, follows this expansive style to extremes.[154]… The non–Virgilian '*numerosus*' anticipates a glut of novel adjectives signifying abundance.' This theme of abundance is certainly key in Columella's agricultural world–view, but should be understood, we argue, within a double frame–work: first, as we have already proposed, the framework of the prose treatise; second, the frame–work of the poem itself; its structure, style, its use of figures and images, etc., in other words, in the frame–work of poetic interpretation.

Diederich picks up on one of Gowers' descriptions when she paraphrases her saying that '*Columella überkompensiere sein wenig ergiebiges Thema, indem er etwas Neues und Monströses daraus mache; in seinem Wunsch, Vergil zu überbieten, werde er hyperbolisch, barock, morbide und makaber*'.[155] Gowers later uses other adjectives such as 'stringy', 'tortuous', 'vertiginous', 'serpentine' for the description of this poetry which she invariably compares to that of Virgil.[156] Clearly, we are in the presence of a Neronian poet with no fear of excess. But, how are we to interpret the *hyperbolisch* on poetic principles or on cultural, historical or *ideological* motivations? Will these exaggerations have the same effect when we read the poem as a whole?

Saint–Denis, surprisingly, praises Columella's virtues where others may see perhaps exaggerations:[157] *L'accumulation des noms propres, riches en sonorités, est un élément musical,*

[154] Ibid, 135
[155] Diederich (2007, 232, n. 1277). Gowers' words are: 'Columella gives the impression of wanting to out–Virgil Virgil, going above and beyond into hyperbole, baroque conceits, and morbid and macabre terrors'.'
[156] Gowers (2000, 138)
[157] Saint–Denis (1969b, 123–125)

cher aux alexandrins et fréquent dans les Bucoliques ou les Géorgiques, Columelle use fréquement du procédé, qui concourt à donner une impression de richesse, de profusion luxuriante, par exemple dans sa liste des espèces de choux (v. 127–139).[158] We will allow for two possible reasons for this profusion of terms: one is the (obvious, because of its direct effect on agriculture) intention to produce the impression of superabundance and fertility. This intention is closely tied with his cosmological view, one which Diederich treats at some length and which Saint–Denis discusses, especially around Columella's mythical digressions and allusions, such as the passage around the myth of Deucalion:[159] *Cet aperçu n'est pas indigne de l'exposé cosmogonique de Lucrèce ni du résumé de Silène dans la sixième Bucolique*.[160] The second reason is one we will have to show with specific examples: his technical knowledge leads him to use a rich range of agricultural elements in his poetry.[161]

Saint–Denis' analytical approach to Columella has broken away from the attitude of his predecessors, but we need to go beyond Saint–Denis to evaluate the internal characteristics of the poem and read it in reference to the rest of the treatise. For anyone familiar with Columella's penchant for organization it will not be surprising that an analysis of the poem (or, at least, its junctural sections) will show how and why, as Gowers has observed, the poet's versification techniques go 'hand in hand with lush fertility'.[162]

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[158] Ibid, 126

[159] See Diederich (2007, 233–247). For discussion of the Deucalion myth in the context of the myth of 'ages of man' see the discussion of this passage in chapter 4 under the sub–chapter heading 'Winter interludes: preparing the iron tools', where we explore the cosmological assumptions as part of Columella's intentions in the inclusion of the poem.

[160] Ibid (127–128): 'This insight is not unworthy of Lucretius' cosmogonic exposition, nor of the summary of Silenus in the sixth *Bucolic*.'

[161] Ibid (127)

[162] Gowers (2000, 138)

'The role of gardening in Columella's farm', as Henderson states, is better understood by paying heed to the function of the poem within the formal layout of the text and, we will argue, to its function as a vehicle of ideological content. Much of this content is already presented in the prose prefaces; and can also be surmised from the reading and analysis of the vast technical sections, if we pay special attention to Columella's methodological approach.[163]

Saint–Denis' suggestion to rehabilitate Columella and Henderson's 'to explore the role of gardening in Columella's farm', means to look at his poetry, or, at least, a few prominent themes in his poetry, both within the context of the larger work, and in the context of the treatment of such themes by previous agricultural authors and poets whose work is reflected in Columella's.[164]

This methodology is justified by the way in which the author introduces the poem itself by means of a prose *praefatio.* When Dumont reads the prose introduction to book 10 he goes as far as saying that the poem was probably not even included in the original draft of the treatise: *Le livre 10 sur les jardins, rédigé en hexamètres à la demande de Publius Silvinus, le*

[163] Columella does not use the noun *praefatio*, but he uses the verb *praefor*. The term *exordium* refers, in this context, to the beginning of the treatment of each area of agricultural knowledge. Thus the section on grains starts with an *exordium.* Columella's use of this noun, which is also used in the rhetorical treatises to label the first part of an oration, cannot escape notice, especially when he makes mention of the art of oratory as early as 1.pr.3 and when he makes parallels between the two technical fields (as we have seen in 1.pr.29 mentioned above).
[164] If Saint–Denis' approach to Columella's poetry is always informed by Virgil (see Saint–Denis, (1969a, 1969b)), his work on the later poet has, in turn, given very accurate insights into Virgil's own *georgic* and *bucolic* worlds and their relationship to previous agricultural literature. (Saint–Denis has followed his Budé edition of Columella 10 with the Budé editions of Virgil's *Georgics* (1974) and *Bucolics* (1992). See n. 150 above.)

dédicataire du tout, n'était probablement pas prévu dans le projet initial.[165] There is a purpose behind the decision to include this poem and this fact should inform the way we read it.

If, as Saint–Denis states, '*la critique a jugé sévèrement la tentative de ce disciple pieux, qui eut la naïveté de prendre au pied de la lettre la disposition testamentaire de Virgile; de cet excellent agronome, qui se crut poète*,' it might be necessary to read those parts in which Columella actually excelled.[166] If Nisard certainly judged Columella to be naïve to take Virgil's words as an invitation to write a poem or expand in verse the theme of horticulture, Saint–Denis clarifies, thus breaking a critical vicious cycle, that this is the consequence of the prejudices of Nisard's own times rather than the intrinsic value of the poetry itself: '*D. Nisard, obsédé par son dessein d'atteindre Hugo et les romantiques à travers 'les poètes latins de la décadence', a exécuté Columelle avec quel dédain.*'[167]

Diederich seems to justify Columella's stepping 'into a breach that did not really exist' when she states that '*Vergil hatte das Thema Gartenbau explizit einem Nachfolger überlassen*' – when he leaves the treatment of gardens to 'others to be remembered'.[168] Virgil's words in *Georg.* 4.147–148, certainly leave room for interpretation: '*Verum haec ipse equidem spatiis exclusus iniquis / praetereo atque aliis post me memoranda relinquo*'.[169] But rather than

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[165] Dumont (2001, 7): 'Book 10 on gardens, written in hexameters at the request of Publius Silvinus, the dedicatee of the whole work, was probably not foreseen in the original draft.'
[166] Saint–Denis (1969, 121)
[167] Ibid. (1969, 122): 'D. Nisard, obsessed with his attempt to reach Hugo and the romantics through the Latin poets of decadence, executed Columella with disdain.'
[168] Diederich (2007, 247): 'Virgil had left the topic of horticulture explicitly to a successor.' In a footnote (1318) Diederich quotes *Georg.*4.147–148 in which Virgil does state that he is leaving the task for a later poet.
[169] Fairclough–Goold's translation (1999, 229): 'But all this I must pass by, constrained by narrow bounds, and leave to others after me to record'. All translations of Virgil will be Fairclough–Goold's.

making aesthetic statements based on presuppositions, let us grant Columella a statute of limitations and investigate the reasons he adduces to take this path.

Silvinus' *postulatio*

Unlike Virgil, Columella introduces his poem with a prose *praefatio*, perhaps more accurately an *exordium* (or *prooimion* in the Greek rhetorical tradition), in the same fashion he has introduced some of his books: books 1 (with a preface 33 chapters long), 6 (the first book on animals), 9 (the book on bees), and 12, are introduced by similar prefaces or *exordia*, or at least they are labelled such in the ms. tradition.[170] The other books open with a rhetorical address to Silvinus of variable length in which he makes general remarks to introduce the particular subject of the book in question. The briefest is the introduction to book 7, on minor cattle, in which Columella immediately starts discussing the donkey – *vulgaris asellus* – without any initial diversion from the subject, and thus he begins (*exorditur*) by saying that this animal does not require excessive attention because he is content with little fodder. The other books are introduced with a passage of variable length about general considerations related to the specific subject under discussion.

In the prose preface at the opening of book 10 [10.pr.3–4], Columella announces that in the following pages he intends to complete Virgil's *Georgics* following his addressee's, P. Silvinus', request (*postulatio*):

> *Isque, sicut institueram, prosa oratione prioribus subnecteretur exordiis, nisi propositum meum expugnasset frequens postulatio tua, quae praecepit, ut*

[170] See above, especially p. 54 n. 156 & p. 55 n. 157.

> *poeticis numeris explerem Georgici carminis omissas partes, quas tamen et ipse Vergilius significaverat, posteris se memorandas relinquere. Neque enim aliter istud nobis fuerat audendum, quam ex voluntate vatis maxime venerandi: cuius quasi numine instigante pigre sine dubio propter difficultatem operis, verumtamen non sine spe prosperi successus aggressi sumus tenuem admodum et paene viduatam corpore materiam, quae tam exilis est, ut in consummatione quidem totius operis annumerari veluti particula possit laboris nostri, per se vero et quasi suis finibus terminata nullo modo conspici.*
>
> And I should be adding it in prose to my earlier books, as I have intended to do, had not your repeated appeals overruled my resolve and charge me to complete in poetic numbers those parts of the *Georgics* which were omitted by Virgil and which he, as he himself had intimated, left to be dealt with by later writers. For indeed I ought not to have ventured on the task, were it not in compliance with the wish of that greatly revered poet, at whose instigation, which almost seemed a divine summons – tardily, no doubt, owing to the difficulty of the task, but all the same not without hope of a prosperous result – I have undertaken to deal with material which is very meagre and almost devoid of substance and so inconsiderable that in my work taken as a whole it can only be accounted as a small fraction of my task, and taken by itself and confined within its own limits it cannot by any means make much of a show.[171]

Columella states first that his intention was to bind (*subnecteretur*) the subject of horticulture to the other *exordia* in the treatise, and that it is only under pressure from his addressee, Silvinus, that he is about to take up what Virgil could not have finished. Later he goes to lengths to state his lack of qualifications for this job (*neque enim aliter istud nobis fuerat audendum*), but not before implying that his priority, as an agricultural writer, was (and is) to bind (*subnectere*) the *hortus* just as another subsection of the rest in the manual.

He, not only appropriately but piously (*quam ex voluntate vatis maxime venerandi*), states his own devotion towards his predecessor and the difficulties that following such towering (literary) figure presuppose. His choice of matter is appropriately proportional to his status as poet: he tries to compensate the grand undertaking by minimizing the significance of

[171] Forster–Heffner (1955, 5)

the matter – this is a tenuous portion of agriculture when compared to the rest: *aggressi sumus tenuem admodum et paene viduatam corpore materiam*…

Columella gives the impression that he is taking a challenging literary enterprise, although strictly speaking, within the larger scheme of the science of agriculture, horticulture is only a small portion. By stating not only in this passage, but elsewhere in the prose introduction to book 10, that the proper treatment of horticulture will be presented in prose, Columella shows that in the poem he is going to depart from the methodology and arrangement of his treatise.

In the treatment of the *hortus* in book 11, the author certainly follows the same methodological principles exhibited in the previous books: one that proceeds in order, by type of plant and by methodical analogy. The order of subjects and methodology, certainly, are the same – or follow the same patterns – as those of the other subjects in the rest of the prose manual.[172] This shows that Columella's statement in 10.pr.3–4 – that the true treatment would come in the prose book – is sincere, and that he is playing with, at least, two levels of reality: that of the world of agriculture reflected in the methodical presentation of the manual, and a literary piece framed by the first. We also have to suspect that the position of the poem at the end of the treatise has *strategic* significance. He wants us to believe that his preference was to write the treatise in prose when he writes the contrary–to–fact conditional *subnecteretur*: *isque, sicut institueram, prosa oratione prioribus subnecteretur exordiis, nisi propositum meum expugnasset frequens postulatio tua.*

[172] On the other hand the decision to separate the treatment of garden vegetables from the rest of grains and legumes is arbitrary from a strictly technical point of view.

Perhaps the best argument for reading the poem in its prose context is Sullivan's statement that 'Columella, an earnest prose writer on agriculture and kindred subjects, should not be overlooked as a witness' of the literary and political world of the age of Nero (and, we may add, of the development of Roman technical writing during this period and in historical evolution).[173] Columella is, certainly, an important literary witness of the time, not only as a 'garden poet' but also, as Sullivan and Henderson state correctly, as a technical writer. This statement about the position of Columella within the literature from Neronian times has, unjustifiably, been overlooked too frequently.

In this manual, leaving to one side any understandable reluctance to read a technical book for its literary value, we find a substantial amount of information and an original contribution by this author to the cultural and scientific developments of his time. This is also a document that has contributed and can keeps contributing to the knowledge in modern times of the socio–economic dynamics of the early Principate:[174] as Sullivan has stated, it is a unique testimony to contemporary economic and political conditions and, even if its literary value were much diminished in the eyes of critics, it would still have a significant historical value. But the literary value of this work has been fairly and very succinctly described by Christiane Reitz, who considers both the prose books and the poem in the same breadth:

> 'Columella writes in an elegant Latin prose… The subject matter is well organized, not only… on the larger scale of structure, but also in the course of the argument… By using a consistent terminology for structural aspects of the

[173] Sullivan (1985, 82–83). By the expression 'kindred subjects' Sullivan may be referring to Columella's own lost treatise on astrology (as he states in 11.1.31), or the books on cattle and bees in books 1–9.

[174] Alföldy (1984), in his classic *Social History of Rome*, and Finley (1999), in his also classic *Ancient Economy*, quote Columella as a source for important aspects and documentation in the social and economic history of the time.

> work – like the skilled orator before an audience – the author lays bare his strategy for organizing the material. 'Signposting' formulae… not only function as structuring elements, but also impart a sense of the author's skillful choice and treatment of these huge masses of material. He does not shy away from using the exact and appropriate terminology… The language is always pleasant, the sentences well balanced,… even of a high rhetorical standard… In the poem, Columella demonstrates that he is an up–to–date poet. Its lucid structure, the large amount of information it conveys, and its concentration in length make it a fine piece of didactic poetry; the brevity itself, its modesty regarding the poet's own merits compared to the great Virgil… testify to the author's poetic ambition.[175]

Henderson agrees with Reitz's assessment of the organization of subject matter at the level of large structure, and at the consistent terminology of structural aspects, when he states that 'Columella is a systemic organizer to reckon with, concerned throughout to articulate, waymark, and hypertext his individual lessons into an effective programme of teaching'.[176]

Especially after Reitz's statement there is a pressing need to open up other venues of criticism of this text, not least of which is by evaluating the rhetorical and organizational qualities of the work.[177] But even Sullivan, or more recently Thibodeau, who understand well some of the issues around Columella's text and to whom they devote a few pages, give him relatively little space for discussion, within the topic of the Neronian literary renaissance and that of Roman agronomy, respectively.[178]

Tenuis admodum et paene viduata corpore materia

[175] Reitz (2013, 282–283)
[176] Henderson (2002, 113)
[177] See Connors (1997, 71–89).
[178] Sullivan (1985, 83–84). Thibodeau (2011, 218–224).

To return to the subject of the poem, in the passage from the *praefatio* quoted above (10.pr.3–4) Columella preemptively prepares his audience to accept the aesthetics of the bucolic and georgic worlds by presenting a correspondence to the tenuous subject: with the *tenuis admodum et paene viduata corpore materia*, Columella interweaves horticulture with the aesthetics of the *tenue carmen* presented in the invocation of the Muses in 10.35–35 & 40:

> *Ego age nunc cultus et tempora quaeque serendis*
> *seminibus, […]*
> *Pierides tenui deducite carmine Musae.*
>
> Come now, ye Muses, and in slender verse recount the culture and the seasons due for sowing seeds.

As early as verse 40, therefore, the poet subscribes to the Roman version of Callimachean aesthetics associated first with the followers of Parthenius, *poetae novi* – the *neoterics* – of the late Republic whose ideas pervade the post–Vergilian Neronian circle. While this gesture would certainly have been a controversial declaration in the times of Cicero, it has become expected, states Sullivan, from the Neronian poets, for whom the dominant 'Alexandrian' influences became part of the official grammar of poetic principles along with Virgil and Ovid.[179]

Columella's choice to become an epigone of Virgil is in line with the general trend, but, far from declaring Virgil 'archaic', the way Virgil had, implicitly, relegated the once innovative (*Hellenizing*) poets Ennius and Livius Andronicus to become 'archaic' poets, he acknowledges his predecessor as his master and follows his poetic (Callimachean) principles to the letter.[180]

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[179] Sullivan (1985, 34)

[180] Hinds (1998, 52–63) explains the complex dynamics of the title of poetic innovator between the first generation of Hellenizing poets (Ennius and Livius Andronicus) and the generation of Virgil, because the later poet, rather than bringing down 'the Muses' garland', as Lucretius

By stating in his invocation '*Pierides tenui deducite carmine Musae*' (10.40) he is both adhering to Hesiodic–Callimachean aesthetics through the towering figure of Virgil and, *ipso facto*, to the established poetics of the Neronian circle. Columella is continuing a tradition by now well established – one in which both Hesiod and the innovations of the Alexandrians and Virgil are fully embraced. Allegedly confronted with a poetic task by his peers, he is adamant in stating that Virgil is his master in matters of poetry, especially when he acknowledges that he does this, as we have pointed out, *ex voluntate vatis maxime venerandi, cuius quasi numine instigante pigre sine dubio propter difficultatem operis, verumtamen non sine spe prosperi successus aggressi sumus.* But, as he states in the second half of this statement, he also hopes (*verumtamen non sine spe*, and this hope is sincere) for his own success.

In contrast to Columella's conscious and careful self–positioning, Sullivan indirectly places another poet of Neronian times in an opposite and innovative place rather than one of continuity: Persius, by returning to the native Roman *satura*, a genre of 'purer' Roman pedigree, stands opposite the *Hellenic* and *Hellenistic* influences embraced by the earlier generations, including the official Neronian poetics of his own. [181] This tendency towards a

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reports, 'brings [the Muses] down 'in a specifically Callimachean manner', brings them down (through the Augustan poets' favorite buzz–word) in a *carmen deductum*, a fine–drawn song.' (Hinds, 1998, 54)

[181] Sullivan (1985, 78–79). Quintilian 10.1.93: *Satura quidem tota nostra est.* ('Satire, for its part, is entirely ours.') After naming Lucilius and Horace – the latter is *tersior et purus* – he says briefly of Persius [10.1.94]: *Multum et verae gloriae quamvis uno libro Persius meruit.* ('However, Persius, with his one book, has earned much fame, well justified.') Further, Quintilian promises a bright future for this Roman genre [10.1.94]: *Sunt clari hodieque et qui olim nominabitur*. ('And there are distinguished satirists even today, men who will one day be famous.') Persius is not isolated in his effort to continue on the path of Horace. Sullivan (1985, 78–79) also states 'Horace's dislike of neo–Callimacheanism, particularly that expressed in elegy… He [Horace] was to be followed in this set of prejudices by Persius, who thus found him

genre whose Roman identity Quintilian would later express in the famous *sententia* '*Satura quidem tota nostra est*' brings up a 'nativist' tendency in sharp contrast with the Hellenizing tendencies of the Neronian circle. Persius' statement becomes the counterpoint to the aesthetic tendencies of the period among whose poets may we can also count, given this perspective, Calpurnius Siculus (as well as the authors of the *Laus Pisonis* (possibly the same Calpurnius Siculus) and of the *Carmina Einsiedlensia*), that is, contemporary bucolic poetry.[182] Lucan, in historical epic, and Seneca, in tragedy, in different genres, add other counter–point lines to this polyphonic picture.

When Columella states that he has undertaking the task 'tardily, no doubt, owing to the difficulty of the task, but all the same not without hope of a prosperous result', he is also making a utilitarian statement, not about the technical difficulty of a section on agriculture which is, after all, smaller in comparison to the rest, but especially as he is responding to the demand for bucolic and georgic poetry of his time, something for which he feels less qualified.[183] To include a whole book in hexameters within a technical treatise, rather, is both an artistically and technically innovative gesture, which adds certain playfulness associated not only with the georgic genre, but also with the bucolic, as a way to attract a wider audience

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not only an excellent model but also an ally'. The paradox seems to have completed a full circle and gone, if only in an abstract sense, to a pre–*Ennian* / pre–Livio–Andronican 'aesthetic'.

[182] This if we assume that Calpurnius Siculus was active during the Neronian years. For this chronological assumption see Amat's introduction to the Budé edition of this poet (1991, xi–xvii). Sullivan (1985, 51ff.) makes this assumption when he writes of Calpurnius Siculus' poetry 'as one in place of many examples of the typical 'court' poetry of the period, that is to say, poetry one of whose aims is flattery of the emperor and whose motivation, besides fame, is social or political advancement and pecuniary reward.'

[183] That the tradition of bucolic poetry pervades throughout much of the history of western literature (and survives thus well beyond the Neronian circle) makes both Columella's choice of genre particularly significant as they become the links to later poetry in these genres.

towards his technical treatise and the message which it conveys.[184] It is therefore, also an excellent marketing strategy.

Columella, not necessarily conscious of Persius' 'new path', is more concerned about conveying this message to his audience than about making a poetic statement. Officially agriculture is his field, not poetry, as he clearly states in the prose preface to book 10 and he, therefore, does not give a second thought to the possibility that the poetic camp which he follows might be a bit *passé*. In his prose preface he states that the poem is to be read as an integral part of the manual, and that his claim to innovation, the very inclusion of a full–length georgic poem within a technical treatise, was in response to the demands of Silvinus and Gallio, as we read in 9.16.2.

Columella's *Weltanschauung* is otherwise conservative both from the point of view of poetic aesthetics and in his technical field of expertise, and he expresses it emphatically. If we are to believe him at face–value his declared modest innovation does little more than 'spice up' the presentation of an old moral message – that introduced by Cato who, in Columella's own words, [*agriculturam*] *Latine loqui primus instituit.*[185]

The somewhat playful, somewhat revolutionary, gesture of breaking the boundaries between two established genres has not been understood even to this day, even though another author, Palladius, in his attempt at creating a treatise himself in the strictest technical terms ends it with a book in verse.[186] Persius, in the opposite aesthetic camp, taking up one

[184] Diederich (2007, 256)
[185] 1.1.12. For a discussion of Cato see ch. 1, *passim*.
[186] Brodersen (2016, 674–691). Palladius criticizes others' (Columella must be understood) self–indulgence in rhetorical verbosity. Thus he states at the very opening of the treatise [1.1]: *Pars*

well–established Roman genre and, as Sullivan states, following the *classicizing* Horace, is the one who really represents a new tendency 'outside the established norm'.[187] Persius has the opportunity, through this thoroughly urban genre, to present a social critique of the period, much like Petronius', something for which Columella has little interest.

Inasmuch as Columella follows the accepted aesthetic principles of his time and subordinating his book in hexameters to the rest of the treatise, Gowers' criticism that 'vegetable love in this poem is not slow, but a process of frantic spring–time coupling, with mother Earth pictured as a Neronian bride, first raped, then decked for marriage before she spawns a brood of natural and adopted children',[188] cannot be taken as being as radical as it sounds *prima facie*. The key to understanding the 'frantic spring–time coupling' may be in following Saint–Denis' statement about Columella's use of personification: '*notre poète a suivi en cela l'exemple de Virgile et les cultivateurs eux–mêmes, dans leur parler quotidien, usent de*

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est prima prudentiae ipsam, qui praecepturus es, aestimare personam. Neque enim formator agricolae debet artibus et eloquentia rhetores aemulari, quod a plerisque factum est; qui dum disserte locuntur rusticis, adsecuti sunt, ut eorum doctrina nec a dissertissimis, possit intelligi. Sed nos recidamus praefationis moram, ne, quos reprehendimus, imitemur. ('The agricultural educator must not compete with the *rhetores* in the arts of style and eloquence, which has been done by many. Those who speak rhetorically to peasants, obtain the result that their teaching cannot be understood even by the most educated. But let us cut the delay of the preface short, lest we imitate those whom we reprehend.') Palladius, in contrast, does not consider it useless to end his work with a poem. A future project will have to address the case of Palladius in comparison to Columella's.

[187] Sullivan (1985, 79) points to the turning away from the *neoteric* brand by stating that 'Horace favored the principles we associate with classicism; he stood for public poetry, with meaning and message. The more esteemed genres, such as epic, drama, and lyric, he praises directly or by his own practice. Satire, like *epistolography* so congenial to the Roman genius for moralizing and self–revelation, he admits to its modest place in the hierarchy of literary forms'.

[188] Gowers quotes 10.68–76 to illustrate this point.

ces sortes de personnifications'.[189] His own experience as a farmer and a writer on farming does bring some degree of realism to the poem, as we shall see in the following example.

From technical narrative to didactic poetry

Columella is emphatically defensive, as we have seen in the preface to book 10, about his identity as a technical writer of agriculture when he states that he had decided to address horticulture in prose – *sicut institueram* – well before attempting the poem. He gives the impression, perhaps intentionally, of having already written the entire prose treatise, including the section on horticulture, before the poem. In book 10 he follows very closely his own classification of items, both in content and in mode of presentation, of the technical treatise: all of the items that appear at any given moment are treated in the corresponding section of the prose books. Thus the passage on the cultivation of flowers shows the very same organizational principles [10.94–109]:

> *Verum ubi iam puro discrimine pectita tellus,*
> *deposito squalore nitens sua semina poscet,*
> *pingite tunc varios, terrestria sidera, flores,*
> *candida leucoia, et flaventia lumina calthae,*
> *Narcissique comas, et hianti saeva lenonis*
> *ora feri, calathisque virentia lilia canis,*

[189] Saint–Denis (1969b, 133): 'In this, our poet has followed the example of Virgil, and of the cultivators themselves, in their daily conversation, use these kinds of 'personifications'.' We have already brought up Saint–Denis' praise of Columella's mythological references (see p. 10 above on the myth of Deucalion). These are usually concise. Even in the choice of its longest, the narrative of Proserpina to celebrate the return of spring, Columella shows that he has a well–defined purpose for the fairly straight–forward scheme and intention of the poem. When compared to the poetic expression of his contemporary fellow–poets and fellow provincials, Seneca and Lucan, Columella's experiment, in which, admittedly, he makes good use of *hyperbole*, pales in comparison.

nec non vel niveos vel caeruleos hyacinthos.
Tum quae pallet humi, quae frondens purpurat auro,
ponatur viola, et nimium rosa plena pudoris.
Nunc medica panacem lacrima, succoque salubri
glaucea, et profugos vinctura papavera somnos
spargite: quaeque viros acuunt, armantque puellis,
iam Megaris veniant genitalia semina bulbi,
et quae Sicca legit Getulis obruta glebis:
et quae frugifero seritur vicina Priapo,
excitet ut Veneri tardos eruca maritos.

Now when the earth, its clear divisions marked
as with a comb, shining, from squalor free,
shall claim her seeds, 'tis time to paint the earth
with varied flowers, like stars brought down from heaven,
white snow–drops and the yellow–shining eyes
of marigolds and fair narcissus–blooms,
fierce lions' gaping mouths and the white cups
of blooming lilies and the corn flag bloom,
snow–white or blue. Then let the violet
be planted, which likes pale upon the ground
or blooms with gold and purple blossoms crowned,
likewise the rose too full of maiden blush.
Next scatter all–heal with its saving tear,
and celandines with their health–giving juice,
and poppies which will bind elusive sleep;
let hyacinths' fruitful seed from Megara come,
which sharpen men's desires and fit them for the girls,
and those which Sicca gathers, hidden deep
beneath Gaetulian clods and rocket, too,
which, sown beside Priapus rich in fruits,
may rouse up sluggish husbands to make love.

White (2013, 177) rightly points to 9.4.4 (the advisable flowers to have next to an apiary) as the source for this botanical list. The classificatory technique is fairly straight–forward. The difference between the prose treatment and this example is that the mere classification of flowers apt for bees is now framed by two references to fertility: one in verses 94–95 in which shining 'combed' *Tellus* will claim (*poscet*) her seeds, and by the Megaran *genitalia semina bulbi*, in verse 106, which sharpen men's desires and make them fit for the girls – *quaeque viros*

acuunt, armantque puellis (verse 105). As a transition to vegetables proper, the *holera*, he continues with the theme of Priapus and with the *eruca*, which has the effect of inciting *Veneri tardos* husbands. With reference to the *eruca* (Linnaeus' *brassica eruca*)[190] Columella starts a similar itemization of vegetables.[191]

This listing of flowers starts building up on the fertility theme prevalent in the poem, even more so than the references to the combing of Tellus, by which it shines, or the appropriately exciting effect of the Megaran *genitalia semina bulbi* (hyacinths' fruitful seed) in the sluggish husbands. Gowers perceives this listing of elements as 'lists of things described *lovingly* for their own sake.'[192] This keen observation is true because the familiarity with his subject gives the poet the advantage of knowing how he can exploit it to convey the praise of fertility despite the unavoidable result of bursting the Callimachean principles to which he, in theory, subscribes.

And although, as Saint–Denis describes, and as we have seen, through this veneration '*non seulement il se présente comme le continuateur de Virgile, docile à « la volonté du poète le plus vénérable, mais il parle de son maître comme d'une divinité, « quasi numine instigante »*'[193]

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[190] Lewis & Short entry. Forster–Heffner translate it as 'rocket'.

[191] This level of acquaintance with the world of agriculture is one which distinguishes *georgic* from *bucolic* poetry. Diederich (2007, 256) adds that the difference between these two poetic worlds is the prominent role given not only to utility but also to *labor* in the former, in an attempt to distance itself from the literary alienation of nature characteristic of the *bucolics.*

[192] Gowers (2000, 138)

[193] Saint–Denis (1969, 7): 'not only does he present himself as the continuator of Virgil, docile to the will of the most venerable poet, but he speaks of his master as a divinity.' The ideological connotations of this attitude towards Virgil are definitely worth our attention and we shall return to them *Vertumno volente.*

his thorough training as an agriculturist gives him an advantage when it comes to the appreciation of abundance, glut and the uncontrollable dynamics of nature.

Columella's use of language perhaps owes a debt to what Diederich has described as the oral nature of agricultural training,[194] and at first sight he does not find a balance between the theme of fertility and his self–imposed poetic program in satisfactory terms. He indirectly seems to justify this unresolved tension in the prologue to book 10, when he states that the format of previous *exordia* is the format he always had established (*institueram*) for his book on horticulture.[195] The *recusatio* conceals rather an attempt, through a rhetorical device, at *captatio benevolentiae* for a very well planned project.

Hence, in the *exordium* quoted above (10.pr.3–4), Columella's description of the *materia* as *tenuis admodum et viduata corpore*, and justification of his experiment by stating that this area can only account for a small part of his whole work: *ut in consummatione quidem totius operis annumerari veluti particula possit laboris nostri*. As we shall see later and in chapter 4, Columella is a very conscientious, and perhaps, as Christiane Reitz states,[196] more than competent, poet, whose *recusatio* has to be re–interpreted as rhetorical explanations for the purpose of introducing the georgic poem. He does not want to risk misinterpretation of his highly organized, methodical and earnest agricultural treatise and, for that reason, he cannot

[194] Diederich (2007, 156) gives Cato credit for building the bridge between orality and literature.
[195] See 10.pr.3 (quoted above). In the preface to book 11 (11.1.10) he also refers to the preface of the first book as '*exordium*' [11.1.10]: *Quare satis admirari nequeo, quod primo scriptorum meorum exordio iure conquestus sum.* In this *exordium* Columella is referring to his complaint in 1.pr.5 about the lack of 'schools' in agriculture when all other fields are well represented, starting with the schools of rhetoric, always the first subject, then those of geometricians and musicians, and even those *officinas contemptissimorum vitiorum*, the seasoning of food to promote gluttony… and dressers of the head and hair (1.pr.5, after Ash's translation).
[196] See quote under the sub–chapter 'Silvinus' *postulatio*' above.

allow book 10 to tip the balance of his enterprise. He not only chooses a *materia tenuis admodum et viduata corporis*, but he frames it in such a way that whatever happens within its own dynamics, it is contained in the overall form of the poem and within the principles of his practical method. Horticulture does not necessarily have, in Columella's agricultural classification, less weight than some other fields in the context of the large–scale farming.[197] Although Columella's words should be taken with some skepticism, nothing could be farther from the truth than that the function of his literary attempt is 'ornamental'.[198]

The vast enterprise of the treatise could be very shortly summarized due to its organizational virtues. Books 1–9 cover preliminaries, grains (*triticum*, *adoreum*, *siligo, far Clusinum, far vennuculum rutilum, far candidum, far halicastrum*[199]), legumes (*faba, lenticula, pisum, phaselus, cicer, cannabis, milium, panicum, sesama, lupinum, linum, hordeum, medica, faenum Graecum, ervum, farrago*[200]), vines, olive–trees, oxen, bulls, cows, horses, mules, donkeys, pigs, dogs, hares, hens, thrushes, peacocks, geese, ducks, fish, bees, etc., and, although horticulture belongs, according to its botanical classification, with the other plants, following the legumes, he treats it separately. This little incongruity in the overall scheme is hardly perceptible, but for two plants (the *napus* and the *rapa*) which appear under the treatment of both legumes and garden vegetables in their respective books – 2.10.22–24 and

[197] Horticulture, however, does receive as much attention in book 11 as other areas such as grains, legumes, and poultry, which he dispatches in less space.
[198] Gowers (2000, 127) points to the false impression the attachment 'to his self–styled prose 'monument' of… an ornamental didactic poem on gardening' gives.
[199] 2.6
[200] 2.7. The *cicer aut cicercula* ('chickling–vetch' (Ash)) as Columella later explains in [2.10.19] is similar to the peas: *Cicer aut cicercula, quae piso est similis…* This *cicera* ('chickling–vetch' (Ash)) is given to the oxen in Hispania Baetica instead of *ervum* ('bitter–vetch').

11.3.59–64. This detail, perceptible only to the reader attentive to technical detail, begs explanation. Manifest in it is the fact that the author's decision to write a book on horticulture at the end has disrupted the natural order of presentation in an otherwise extremely methodical and orderly presentation of subjects of study.

On method

The book in hexameters, and the way in which the author designs its structural position, contrasts sharply with the practical nature of the treatise and with one aspect which ultimately conditions all other considerations: whether the section of agriculture or animal husbandry under discussion is a commercially profitable enterprise. Diederich has observed that this aspect contrasts sharply with Varro's approach, signaling thus a considerable difference between the two:

> *Während Varro, der doch immerhin bereits den Techne–Status der Landwirtschaft anerkannt hat, die Vorstellung eines kommerziellen agrartechnischen Schulbetriebs allenfalls als Witz ansehen kann, zieht der kaiserzeitliche Autor eine solche Institution ernsthaft in Betracht.*[201]

This is a defining trait and, in this respect, Columella's approach to the subject differs not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively from that of his predecessors. Qualitatively at least, from those of Xenophon and Varro. Diederich, again, states this important difference: *Zweckfreie Detailforschungen ohne finanziellen und praktischen Nutzen lehnt er überhaupt*

[201] Diederich (2007, 58–59): 'While Varro, who acknowledging the technical status of agriculture can consider the idea of a commercial technical–school enterprise a joke, the author from imperial times draws serious attention to such institution.'

ab.[202] The tendency to place financial gain above everything else (including, e.g., Varro's natural tendency to *etymologize*) goes hand in hand with what Diederich calls an *anti–intellectualizing* tendency: *Selbst bei Columella begegnen wir also noch Resten der alten antiintellektuellen Distanzierung vom Fachspezialistentum.*[203] The *anti–intellectualizing* tendency is no more than an application of a basic *empirical* principle: there is no other valid method than one based on *usus et experientia*, or 'trial and error':

> *Denn Buchwissen kann Übung und Erfahrung (usus et experientia) sowie das Lernen aus Fehlern nicht ersetzen. Deshalb mißt Columella dem Prinzip 'trial and error' (1.1.16 peccando discatur) eine große Bedeutung zu*.[204]

In 1.1.15 Columella expresses this principle by advising Silvinus to call into consultation the books by authors whom he has listed under the *magna Graecorum turba de rusticis rebus praecipiens* (1.1.7–14), but by stating that the precepts that one learns from them will not provide the knowledge of all he needs to know. The written *monumenta* instruct but do not make the farmer: practice, rather, makes the farmer. The empirical principle of 'trial and error' follows immediately this *magna turba* of theoretical wisdom [1.1.16]:

> *Usus et experientia dominantur in artibus, neque est ulla disciplina, in qua non peccando discatur. Nam ubi quid perperam administratum cessit improspere, vitatur quod fefellerat, illuminatque rectam viam docentis magisterium.*
>
> It is practice and experience that hold supremacy in the crafts, and there is no branch of learning in which one is not taught by his own mistakes. For when a venture turns out unsuccessfully through wrong management, one avoids the

[202] Ibid., 61: 'He rejects any detailed research without financial and practical benefits.'
[203] Ibid., 61: 'Even in Columella we still encounter the remnants of the old anti–intellectual distancing from narrow subject–specialization.'
[204] Diederich (2007, 61): 'For book–knowledge cannot replace practice and experience (*usus et experientia*) as well as learning from mistakes. Therefore, Columella attaches great importance to the principle of 'trial and error' (1.1.16 '*peccando discitur*').'

mistake that he had made, and the instructions of a teacher cast a light upon the right course.[205]

In a later book (3.10.8) Columella brings up the principle of *usus et experientia* again: '*Nos autem primo rationem secuti, nunc etiam longi temporis experimentum, non aliud semen eligimus…*' Occasions – *exempla* – in which Columella writes about his uncle, the very diligent practitioner of agriculture are numerous: in 5.5.15, e.g., he narrates how his uncle protects the vines from the east wind: *M. quidem Columella patruus meus, vir illustribus disciplinis eruditus, ac diligentissimus agricola Baeticae provinciae, sub ortu Caniculae palmeis tegetibus vineas adumbrabat.*[206]

Columella's insistence on the practical aspect of agriculture, of his treatise, and on the 'empirical' method he proposes, gives light to much of the technical literature of Roman antiquity. It also shows the difference between the conception of what 'didactic' literature might have been in the age of Hesiod,[207] and the nature of contemporary treatises demanded by the development and complexity of the *τέχνη* itself. The lapse of time between Columella and Virgil is shorter, but there is certainly a difference in the degree of experience in the field between the two, not because of the time difference, but because of Columella's experience as a farmer. Saint–Denis compares the two with the following words. '*On a dit souvent que Columelle parlait de l'agriculture en connoisseur. Il était certainement plus expérimenté que*

[205] Ash (1941, 37)
[206] 5.5.15: 'Indeed, my paternal uncle, M. Columella, a man learned in the noble sciences and most industrious farmer of the province of Baetica, used to shelter his vines about the rising of the *Dog star* with palm–mats.' See also 2.15.4 (quoted in chapter 1). The occasions when Columella writes about his uncle teaching him farming are numerous. See Betts–Ashworth (1971, 88).
[207] Columella names him *princeps celeberrimus vates […] Hesiodus Boeotius* in 1.1.7. In 11.1.29 he is *vetustissimus auctor Hesiodus.*

Virgile, plus près de la terre et des travaux de la terre.'[208] This is not a superfluous observation: as an agriculturist himself, as a practitioner who has a life–long experience in the field and in the fields, he is well qualified to write *georgica*, in what it concerns their content. What *georgica* are in poetic terms is a different question. For Columella it becomes an effective means of conveying a message that could get easily lost in the technicalities of the prose document.

We have already seen, as matter of example of the connection between technical and poetic treatment, how a classification of flowers 'makes its way' into the poem. We soon realize, however, that not only lists of flowers or vegetables make it to the poem. Columella brings up *doctrinae* which are significant in his system of presentation. That under discussion – *usus et experientia* – is closely related to one which he shares with Virgil – *labor.*

Thus, in his introductory study to book 10, Saint–Denis pairs *usus* with *labor* with yet another theme inherited directly from the ages–long tradition of *didactic* literature: '*<u>Labor</u> et <u>usus</u>, le travail et le besoin sont les maîtres des cultivateurs (v.339), qui sont de rudes gens (v.23, 303), endurcis par l'expérience (v.338) et par les brutalités de Jupiter (v.325–336)*.'[209] Part and parcel of *magister usus et experientia rerum* is both *labor* and the suffering of *monstra*; all ramifications of the myth of the golden age.[210] Verse 339 belongs to a wider and vivid description of how the peasants gain *experientia* and shows one ostensible characteristic of Columella's verse: its concentration of expression. The three *doctrinae – usus et experientia*,

[208] Saint–Denis (1969a, 13–14): 'It has often been said that Columella spoke of agriculture as a connoisseur. He was certainly more experienced than Virgil, closer to the earth and the work of the earth.'
[209] Saint–Denis (1969a, 10)
[210] See the discussion of the winter activities in chapter 4.

labor, and the *monstra* of the age of Jupiter, are admirably condensed in a few lines of the poem not without an addition: a brief religious reference to the Tuscan rites [10.337–341]:

> *Haec ne ruricolae paterentur monstra, salutis*
> *ipsa novas artes varia experientia rerum*
> *et labor ostendit miseris, ususque magister*
> *tradidit agricolis, ventos sedare furentes,*
> *et tempestatem Tuscis avertere sacris.*
>
> Lest rustics suffer from these monstrous pests,
> varied experience of herself and toil
> and use, their teacher novel arts have shown
> to wretched husbandmen, how to appease
> fierce winds and to avert by Tuscan rites
> the tempest.

Virgil (*Georg.* 1.125–128) describes the life of the *colonus* before the age of Jove, something which Columella does not narrate explicitly: the farmer was not subject to the need of *labor* in the previous ages: *ipsa tellus / omnia liberius nullo poscente ferebat* ('Earth of her own accord gave her gifts all the more freely when none demanded them').[211] The passage in Virgil, however, is encircled by the *laus laboris* in *Georg.* 1.118–146, whose program is clearly stated from the beginning, narrating the harsh reality of *labor* and the need for *ars* expressed in 1.121–124:

> *Pater ipse colendi*
> *haud facilem esse viam voluit primusque per artem*
> *movit agros, curis acuens mortalia corda,*
> *nec torpere gravi passus sua regna veterno.*
>
> The father (of the gods) himself has wanted to
> render the road of agriculture not easy; he who first moved the fields
> methodically, sharpening mortal hearts through distress; nor did he allow his
> kingdoms to languish with heavy torpor.[212]

[211] Columella (as we shall see as well in the reading of the ages of man during his narrative of the winter tasks (ch. 4)) does not entertain this picture of the previous ages.
[212] Fairclough–Goold (1999, 107)

Columella also takes up and elaborates this theme of *labor* from Virgil, but not literally. Instead he brings into his poetry and develops to a greater detail a theme briefly mentioned by Virgil, but also one which, since Cato's time, is of fundamental importance for agricultural economy.

Dapes inemptae

Columella's reliance on practical matters leads him to look at certain aspects of farm economy from slightly different angles. His (constant) preoccupation with profit contrasts *prima facie* with Virgil's *exemplum* of modesty personified in the Corycian farmer. Virgil needs to engage neither in the practical nor the financial *minutiae* of farming. For the first the practical farmer has the treatises already written – Varro, Saserna, Tremelius Scrofa, Stolo, etc. Financial aspects, as Thibodeau formulates them, in terms of cash economy, are excluded from the poem.[213]

The lesser significance that Columella attributes to horticulture with respect to other areas of agriculture (*tenuem admodum et paene viduatam corpore materiam, quae tam exilis est, ut in consummatione quidem totius operis annumerari veluti particula possit laboris nostri*) for which he takes inspiration from the modesty of the Corycian farmer, allows him to build a bridge between poetic, ethical, and technical principles. He also takes from Virgil – or more properly, exploits intertextually the earlier poet's theme – the trope of the *dapes inemptae*

[213] Thibodeau (2011, 64)

with its ethical and economic connotations: the horticultural product is associated with what is consumed within the farm and with what is not meant primarily for the market. [214] Columella acknowledges and consciously utilizes this poetic trope which belongs not only to Virgil but has become now a traditional *locus communis*.

We have seen above (from the repeated treatment of *napus* and *rapa* in both books 2 and 11), that the division between the categories 'legumes' and 'garden–vegetables' is arbitrary. The difference between horticulture and the other branches of agriculture with respect to the trope of the *dapes inemptae* is also just one of degree and not of substance: grains, legumes, oil, meats, poultry, eggs and cheese, just as the prescribed garden vegetables, can all be produced within the farm, provide sustenance for the household, and alleviate expenses. In turn, horticulture can be carried out with the purpose of earning market profits: it performs an essential function in the economy of the villa, as Columella confirms at the beginning of the prose book on the garden [11.3.1]:

> *Memores polliciti nostri subiungemus cultus hortorum, quorum aeque curam suscipere debebit, ut et quotidiani victus sui levet sumptum, et advenienti domino praebeat, quod ait poëta, inemptas ruris dapes.*
>
> Mindful of our promise we will next deal with the cultivation of gardens, of which [the *vilicus*] will likewise have to undertake the superintendence, in order to lessen the cost of his daily sustenance and provide his master, when he visits the farm, with what the poet calls 'the country's unbought feasts.'

Still the statement '*et advenienti domino praebeat, quod ait poëta, inemptas ruris dapes*' has ethical undertones that refer back to the Corycian farmer, but unlike the latter, who can still enjoy the profits of his enterprise. In verses 10.309–310 of Columella's poem we find a

[214] Virgil formulates this theme once in *Georg.*4.132–133: *seraque revertens* / *nocte domum dapibus mensas onerabat inemptis*.

possible image of the *vilicus*: the *gerulus holitor* in those verses is a middle man who earns profit, although in the poem there is no mention of a *dominus.* Elsewhere in Columella, the financial independence of the farmer, however, is imaginary and has been subsumed under overarching institutions: the farm – in reciprocity with the *familia* – and the *paterfamilias*. The villa is the fundamental unit and the *dominus*, above everyone else, benefits from and administers all its emoluments.

The trope of the *dapes inemptae* of Virgil's *Corycian* farmer, however, still lurks behind Columella's moralizing intentions when he states in the prose preface to book 10 that he is completing the parts that Virgil himself had detailed.[215] It also underlines Cato's basic economic principle: *patrem familias vendacem non emacem oportet esse.*[216] This principle, according to Finley, is 'less a moral judgment than an economic one (in our language)'. It was in place already in the time of Cato, who may not have drawn a sharp distinction between the two – moral and economic.[217] What Finley says of Cato is certainly applicable also to Virgil and Columella: the time elapsed has not changed fundamentally the economic structures, although it has changed with respect to volume and to trading routes.[218]

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[215] 10.pr.3: *nisi propositum meum expugnasset frequens postulatio tua, quae praecepit, ut poeticis numeris explerem Georgici carminis omissas partes, quas tamen et ipse Vergilius significaverat.* ('Had not your repeated appeals overruled my resolve and charged me to complete in poetic numbers those parts of the *Georgics* which were ommitted by Virgil.')
[216] Cato, *De agricultura*, 2.7
[217] Finley (1999, 109)
[218] Thibodeau (2011, 61–65) offers in this regard a discussion of the limitations of economics in Virgil's poetry. There are, obviously changes in trading routes. With the enlargement of empire some economic centers of production have yielded primacy to others. See, e.g., the discussions on 'production and exchange' by Curchin (1991, 130–153).

The line between the economic and the moral principle becomes, therefore, blurred also in the world of Columella's (georgic) poetry, one in which the two sides of the principle of self–sufficiency are mixed, but also one in which the agrarian economic reality is more forcefully present than in Virgil's poetry. Columella can do something analogous, in the realm of literary genres, as we have seen, with the technical aspects of his treatise, by rephrasing and reframing botanical classifications within poetic representations of fertility. This restructuring of principles – moral, cosmological, and economic – into the poem, and of genres – technical prose and poetry – not only affects the overall structure of his treatise, but enhances the expression of, at least, some of those principles.

Quaestus by the statue of Vertumnus

Diederich posits one fundamental question when she questions the value of the agricultural manuals as scientific literature.[219] Although this question should be clarified before any further interpretation, modern judgments, Diederich writes, about their practical value are often contradictory: *Sie reichen vom Vorwurf weltfremder Stubengelehrsamkeit oder rückwärtsgewandter Utopie bis hin zur Anerkennung einer erstaunlichen Modernität.*[220] The first type (the accusation of worldly stupidity), however, is potentially damaging in that they may disregard the direct reading of ancient authors at face value, and could randomly and

[219] Diederich (2007, 10): *Sind die römischen Agrarhandbücher wirklich Fachliteratur und, wenn ja, auf welchem wissenschaftlichen Niveau stehen sie?* ('Are Roman agricultural manuals really scientific literature and, if so, at what scientific level do they stand?')
[220] Ibid.: 'They range from the accusation of worldly stupidity or backward–looking utopia to the recognition of a remarkable modernity.'

wrongly dismiss much of the literature as useless. The second ought to be approached always with methodological caution in order to account for inevitable later chronological developments.

As an example of the latter, Diederich briefly assesses the interpretation of Columella and Roman agrarian literature in general as reflecting a pre–capitalist economic phenomenon.[221] On one side she places the *modernist* tendency of, e.g. Rostovtzeff, who sees no fundamental difference between ancient and modern 'capitalist' economic science and practice. On the other, she places Finley representing the *primitivist* tendency.[222] Diederich's position does not differ in principle from Finley's. This position warns against imposing modern concepts, such as 'market economy' on ancient economies, and of abolishing thus conceptions which are alien to us because they diverge from today's scientific understanding as obsolete. This, insists Diederich, would prevent us from understanding the peculiarity of ancient Roman thought which can only be understood by a close reading of the texts.[223]

Finley, however, is skeptical about reading the texts at face value and ultimately favors some level of economic model–construction above textual analysis.[224] He observes that in the

[221] Diederich (2007, 10); especially n. 21.
[222] Finley (1999, 50), also quoted by Diederich (2007, 10–11).
[223] Diederich (2007, 10, n. 21)
[224] Finley (1999, e.g. 19–22) plays down the merits of the ancient writers on 'economics' (in the modern sense) and states that they 'never rise above rudimentary common–sense observations'. Or 'basic terms, such as labor, production, capital, investment, income, circulation, demand, entrepreneur, utility,… market… at least… in the abstract form required for economic analysis… cannot be translated into Greek or Latin'. Or 'ancient society did not have an economic system which was an enormous conglomeration of interdependent markets'. This approach posits the problem of the nature of the models themselves, because these would have to respond to the idiosyncrasies of the societies under study. Ultimately, all texts and material evidence would have to be taken into account and so there would be no escape from a

pre–capitalist societies 'the structuring of [these] into castes and estates means that economic elements are *inextricably* joined to political and religious factors'; that 'economic and legal categories are objectively and *substantively so interwoven so as to be inseparable*''.[225] This phenomenon – the interweaving of a potentially varied spectrum of categories will be necessary for the construction of an analytical model, but with this end in mind there is no way around the interpretation of the textual evidence. Columella's treatise would certainly be at the center of such interpretation.

While in modern times there is a strict separation between abstract fields, such as that of economics and that of ethics, in Columella's world there are plenty of areas of intersection. We have seen that for agricultural writers of the time the *dapes inemptae* are associated (both in the prose and the verse treatment of the *hortus*) with the overall economy of the villa, and from Columella's statement in book 11, that the point of reference is that of this 'microeconomic' space, in which the *dominus* or *paterfamilias* is its highest authority. This narrative is already very different from Virgil's idealized Corycian farmer, who produces the *dapes inemptae* for himself. Columella's *vilicus*, as he is portrayed in the prose treatise, does not have the same level of independence.

Columella, who has offered quite a large amount of moral *doctrina*, allows himself to openly contradict, in book 10, the assumption that the *dapes inemptae* – the products of horticulture – are exclusively meant for consumption within the *villa* and this is an important

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detailed reading of all pertinent texts before selection and model construction could take place. Only then could other material or cultural evidence could be taken into consideration.

[225] Finley (1999, 50). The quote is, once more, from Luckács, 1971, *History and Class Consciousness*; p. 55–59.

differential factor between him and his poetic model. The products of horticulture have acquired, in his world, the identity of commodities for market exchange. At the same time, this new identity is not separated, at least not in this poetic context, from the religious symbolism contributed by the statue of Vertumnus. In 10.308 this god is invoked so that the farmer may return from the city market having earned a monetary profit from handling the commodity [10.306–310]:

> *Iam rosa distendat contorti stamina iunci,*
> *pressaque flammeola rumpatur fiscina caltha,*
> *Mercibus ut vernis dives Vortumnus abundet,*
> *tibubante gradu multo madefactus Iaccho*
> *aere sinus gerulus plenos gravis urbe reportet.*
>
> Pile high your baskets of hoar willow–twigs, let roses strain the threads of twisted rush and let the throngs of flaming marigolds their panniers burst, that rich in vernal wares Vertumnus may abound and that from town the carrier may return well soaked with wine, with staggering gait, and pockets full of cash.[226]

In these five verses Columella shows his approach to versification by developing one single idea. The first two verses present two different flowers – the *rosa* (306) and the *caltha* (marigold, 307)[227] – both performing a parallel action – *distendat* (strain, 306), *rumpatur* (burst, 307) – in relation to their respective containers – the *contorti stamina iunci* (hoar willow–twigs, 306) and the *fiscina* (a basket made of rush or broom, 307). This parallel construction is characteristic of Columella's versification. The three following verses comment on and amplify the effect of the previous two verses with a continuation of the hortatory subjunctives – those of 306 and 307 – followed by *abundet*, requested from Vertumnus (308), and *reportet* from the

[226] Forster–Heffner (1955, 35). The god's spelling – *Vortumnus* – shows certain propensity towards archaizing.
[227] *O.L.D.*: 'marigold'.

carrier (*gerulus*, 310). In between these two lines one verse, seemingly inserted for this purpose, presents a colorful description of the latter: 'with staggering gait, well soaked with wine' (*titubante gradu multo madefactus Iaccho*, 309). With the following verse (310) Columella ends the section devoted to the tasks of spring – the longest of the poem.

This poetic occurrence of the god Vertumnus is not exclusive to Columella who is constantly in intertextual dialogue with his predecessors in the Roman poetic traditions. Thus Vertumnus appears in other well–known poetic contexts. Ovid, within his own narrative of Vertumnus' unrequited love for Pomona, develops the figure of this god and his association with the *hortus*, as well as with the mutability of his character – quaintly fitting the theme of *metamorphoses* – but falls short of attaching explicitly mercantile qualifications.[228] All this after presenting him under the disguise of an agriculturist – equipped with a handy *corbis* (basket) – and using for the god the epithet *felicior.* This *felicior*, however, can be interpreted with openly ambiguous, in fact contradictory, connotations: one in which the *felicitas* ('fertility') expected by the agriculturist is not matched by the *felicitas* of winning Pomona's heart.[229] Vertumnus

[228] Pomona does not appear in Propertius' 4.2 (see below), but appears first in Ennius, and reappears in Calpurnius Siculus 2.33, Martial 1.49.8. (See Myers (2009, 164). For Propertius see Camps (1965), Richardson (1976), and Hutchinson (2006, esp. 86–89)). Pliny 23.1.ff makes Pomona an active deity in the protection of plants with medicinal properties.

[229] *Felicitas* perhaps both in the sense of 'good fortune' as much as of 'fertility of the earth' associated with the field of agriculture. *O.L.D.* 3b gives, alongside with two examples by Pliny, one example of Columella (3.3.2): *Interim studiosi agricolationis hoc primum docendi sunt, uberrimum esse reditum vinearum. Atque ut omittam veterem illam felicitatem arvorum, quibus et ante iam Cato Marcus, et mox Varro Terentius, prodidit singula iugera vinearum sescenas urnas vini praebuisse…* 'Meanwhile those devoted to the study of agriculture must be informed of one thing first of all – that the return from vineyards is a very rich one. And to pass over the old–time fertility of the land, of which Marcus Cato long ago, and Terentius Varro more recently, recorded that each *iugerum* of vineyard yielded six hundred *urnae* of wine…'

ultimately fails. Ovid, however, blends both traits in the rest of the passage as well [*Met.* 14.641–653]:

Sed enim superabat amando
hos quoque Vertumnus neque erat felicior illis.
O quotiens habitu duri messoris aristas
corbe tulit verique fuit messoris imago!
Tempora saepe gerens faeno religata videri;
desectum poterat gramen versasse videri;
saepe manu stimulos rigida portabat, ut illum
iurares fessos modo disiunxisse iuvencos.
Falce data frondator erat vitisque putator;
induerat scalas: lecturum poma putares;
miles erat gladio, piscator harundine sumpta;
denique per multas aditum sibi saepe figuras
repperit, ut caperet spectatae gaudia formae.

But, indeed, Vertumnus surpassed them all in love; yet he was no more fortunate than they. Oh, how often in the garb of a rough reaper did he bring her a basket of barley–ears! And he was the perfect image of a reaper, too. Often he would come with his temples wreathed with fresh hay and could easily seem to have been turning the new–mown grass. Again he would appear carrying an ox–goad in his clumsy hand, so that you would swear that he had but now unyoked his weary cattle. He would be a leaf–gatherer and vine–pruner with hook in hand; he would come along with a ladder on his shoulder and you would think him about to gather apples. He would be a soldier with a sword, or a fisherman with a rod. In fact, by means of his many disguises, he obtained frequent admission to her presence and had much joy in looking on her beauty.[230]

The language of mutability permeates the passage with expressions such as *habitu duri messoris* ('in the garb of a rough reaper', 643), *messoris imago* ('the image of a reaper', 644), *ut illum / iurares… disiunxisse iuvencos* ('you would swear that he had unyoked the cattle', 648). These expressions also stress the god's identity, with only a brief reference to his disguise as a

[230] The translation is Miller–Goold's (1984, 347). Ovid's narrative of Pomona and Vertumnus offers a unique poetic interpretation of the georgic world melded with that of myth in a fashion that only Ovid could achieve.

soldier and fisherman (14.651). This capacity for mutability allowed him the pleasures of contemplating beauty (14.654). Ovid, however, never brings up connotations directly identifiable as market exchange or commodity dynamics.

Propertius' second elegy in book 4, a monologue attributed by this poet to the god Vertumnus himself, is an even longer narrative about the divinity. In this elegy Propertius presents the themes associated with the god, such as his reputation for mutability, a negative trait, also brought up by Horace in *Sat* 2.7.14.[231] His mutability has also been associated with trade but only after Columella brought up this aspect in the god's narrative.[232] The closest hint at the association with trade is Horace's *Epist.* 1.20.1 where he mentions the statues of Janus and Vertumnus standing at the book–selling quarter in Rome where the poet's own book of epistles is ready to stand for sale.[233]

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[231] Cf. e.g. White (2013, 286–289), Richardson (1976, 427, n.40 ff), Hutchinson (2006, 86–89), and Camps (1965, 72), who states: 'We know hardly anything of Vertumnus beyond what we read in the present poem. Varro (*L.L.* 5.46) calls him *deus Etruriae princeps*. At Rome he had a temple on the Aventine, containing a picture of M. Fulvius Flaccus, who triumphed over Volsinii in 264 B.C. Horace (*Sat.* 2.7.14) says of an extravagantly mutable person that he is *Vertumnis quotquot sunt natus iniquis.*' (The complete expression in Horace (*Sat.* 2.7.14–15) is: '*Iam moechus Romae, iam mallet doctus Athenis / vivere, Vertumnis, quotquot sunt, natus iniquis.*' ('Now he would choose to live in Rome as a rake, now as a sage in Athens – a man born when every single Vertumnus was out of sorts.' (Trans. Fairclough (1961, 225)).) Hutchinson (2006, 86–89) stresses the association of this god with change and offers an excellent up–to–date interpretation of this poem. He concludes the introduction to the elegy by stating (p. 88): [Propertius'] 'eternal, but self–concerned, perspective gives a different look to the opposition in book 4 of past and present. Above all, the poem enriches and complicates the opposition basic to the book between divinity and mortal.'

[232] According to Camps (1965, 72), Porphyrius states on Hor. *Epist.* 1.20.1 that Vertumnus is a *deus… praeses vertendarum rerum, hoc est emendarum ac vendendarum*.' Echoes of Cato's *non emacem sed vendacem* can be heard in this statement.

[233] *Epist* 1.20.1–2: '*Vertumnum Ianumque, liber, spectare videris, / scilicet ut prostes Sosiorum pumice mundus.*' ('You seem, my book, to be looking wistfully toward Vertumnus and Janus, in order, forsooth, that you may go on sale, neatly polished with the pumice of the Sosii.') Propertius confirms the assignation of *mutability* (e.g. in 4.2.1), as well as the placement of the

Propertius implicitly dismisses market topics as inappropriate for poetry when he makes Vertumnus say that much of the lore of changeability is not true and that he is best known for his association with, specifically, horticulture [Prop. 4.2.39–46]:

Nam quid ego adiciam, de quo mihi maxima fama est,
hortorum in manibus dona probata meis?
Caeruleus cucumis tumidoque cucurbita ventre
me notat et iunco brassica vincta levi;
nec flos ullus hiat pratis, quin ille decenter
impositus fronti langueat ante meae.

Need I add, wherein lies my chief renown, that my hands are filled with the garden's choicest fruit?
The dark–green cucumber, the pot–bellied gourd, and the cabbage tied up with a frail rush mark me out; and not a flower opens in the meadows but will droop before my face in comely fashion when placed upon my brow.[234]

Propertius' listing of the *cucumis* (cucumber), the *cucurbita* (gourd), the *brassica* (cabbage), and the *flos* (flower) leave no doubt as to what is the domain of the *hortus* and of its divinity. The image of the *iuncus levis* tied around the cabbage is, especially both in Virgil and Columella, but also in Propertius, a metaphor for abundance. The *flos* is also a regular member of the *hortus.* Earlier in the poem, Propertius states that Vertumnus has been associated with the ripe fruits of agriculture, without confining it within the limits of horticulture [4.11–18]:

seu, quia vertentis fructum praecepimus anni,
Vertumni rursus credidit esse sacrum.
Prima mihi variat liventibus uva racemis,

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statue (e.g. in 4.2.3–6), but Horace, not surprisingly, is more explicit about the function of the place and statues.

[234] The translation is Goold's (1990, 373 & 375). Goold takes the liberty, however, to move verses 13–18 on the vine, grain, and fruits immediately after verses 41–42 – *Nam quid ego adiciam, de quo mihi maxima famast, / hortorum in manibus dona probata meis?* – and before the actual verses on horticultural products. Camps (1965) and Richardson (1976) are right to leave them where the tradition has them because, although they all belong to the vegetable kingdom, Propertius clearly made the separation, perhaps common by his time, of horticulture and its products from the rest. Columella's order serves as confirmation.

et coma lactenti spicea fruge tumet;
hic dulces cerasos, hic autumnalia pruna
cernis et aestivo mora rubere die;
insitor hic soluit pomosa vota corona,
cum pirus invito stipite mala tulit.

Because I receive the reverting annual first fruits, people believe this to be the offering due to Vertumnus. It is for me that the first grape darkens on the purpling cluster, and the spiky corn–ear swells with milky grain; at my feet you see sweet cherries, at my feet autumn plums and the mulberry blushing in the summertime; here the grafter pays his vows with a garland of fruit, when the pear's reluctant stock has borne him apples.

When the reader later encounters the passage on horticulture quoted above he is already warmed–up to the agricultural associations of this god in these earlier verses.[235] It is through the etymological derivation of his name from the verb *verto* following the first agricultural association during the change of season, that the god hints at disowning his association with the market as false [4.2.19–22]:

Mendax fama, vaces: alius mihi nominis index:
de se narranti tu modo crede deo.
Opportuna meast cunctis natura figuris:
in quamcumque voles verte, decorus ero.

Be quiet, lying rumor: there is another voucher for my name: just listen to the god when he speaks about himself. My nature suits any role: turn me to which you please, and I shall fit well.

This, however, does not preclude his association with the ripening of fruits – the *prima uva* change into *liventes racemi*,[236] the spiky ear of grain swells, the cherries are sweet, the

[235] The structure of *Elegy* 4.2 anticipates Columella's excerption of horticulture from the rest of agriculture, also in the prominent place given to the turning of seasons. The latter, in Propertius, takes place in the first instance of agriculture and the fruits of earth – *seu quia vertentis…* (verses 11ff.) – so the products of horticulture (verses 41ff.) signal the *other* identity of the god – *de quo mihi maxima fama est*.

[236] The first grape is darkening on the purpling cluster. The following expressions – *coma spicea tumens*, *dulces cerasi*, *autumnalia pruna*, and the *mora rubens* – are from Propertius 4.13–16.

plums are autumnal, and the mulberry blushes – as well as with the very place where the *insitor* (grafter) offers his vows after fertile fruition. We learn also from these passages that the separation of products of agriculture from those of horticulture has happened before Columella, at least in poetic contexts.

By associating with the ripening of fruits and denying his false reputation for his unstable, if not morally dubious, changing character, the god disassociates himself from the fruit of exchange – the type of profit derived from mercantile activity of Columella's flower *gerulus* (10.310). Propertius is careful, however, not to give the *fructus* verses (11–12), or those on the products of horticulture (40ff.), the cash connotation from which Columella does not shy away – *seu, quia vertentis fructum praecepimus anni, / Vertumni rursus credidit esse sacrum* – maintaining thus the sacred tone separate from financial gain.

Although Columella does not use the term *holitor* (gardener) in the passage of the *madefactus gerulus* we can certainly identify him with the *mercator* in the context of book 10 because of the association of the whole book with Virgil's Corycian farmer.[237] In verse 10.83 the *holitor* is performing strictly agricultural tasks, as well as in 10.148, and 10.177. But in 10.228–229 we find both the pruner and the gardener playfully singing Columella's own song: the pruner hanging amidst the trees (*putator pendulus arbustis*), the *holitor* (possibly also somehow *pendulus*) in the verdant gardens (*viridantibus hortis*). These are a prelude to the playful image of the *madefactus gerulus* of the later verses (10.309–310).

[237] Gowers' (2000) association between the two texts has contributed greatly to our understanding of the poem within these parameters.

The sacredness of Propertius' annual first–fruits (*fructus sacer*, 4.11–12), however, is not completely lost as is transferred in Columella's following lines to the vows of *Fors Fortuna* (10.325–327): after a visit to the temple of this divinity in verse 316, a few vegetables – *maturae aristae, allium, cepa, cereale papaver, anethus, ocimum, brassica, beta*[238] – and the plagues that threaten them, we have confirmation that the vegetables sung in the previous verses (10.309–326) constitute his own merchandise:

> *Sed cum iam valido pinguescit lurida caule*
> *brassica, cumque tument pallentia robora betae,*
> *mercibus atque holitor gaudet securus adultis.*[239]
>
> The yellow cabbage now begins to swell,
> and beet's pale stems increase and, free from care,
> the gardener in his rich, ripe merchandise, rejoices.

In verses 10.304–307 the listing of flowers gives Columella the grounds for the little humorous vignette – of the *gerulus* gardener. But that humor is short lived as the tone soon turns serious when the same gardener is advised to run back to the gardens at the beginning of the summer season – *hilaresque recurrite in hortos* – to press the basil (319)[240] before the heat scorches the seedings dissolved in dust (320); and to prevent the plagues of the tiny flea (*parvulus pulex*, 321),[241] the greedy ant (*formica rapax*, 322),[242] the snail, wrapped in its shell

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[238] Ripe ears of grain, garlic, onion, Ceres' blue poppy, dill, basil, cabbage, beet.
[239] 10.325–327
[240] Saint–Denis (1969a, 67): *variété cultivée du basilic (*ocimum*, transcr. de ὤκιvον*, Ocimum basilicum, *L.). Même prescription dans 11.3.34, pour la période des ides de mai au solstice.* The prose treatment is more detailed about the time of *satio* for the *ocimum* which should take place after the *Ides* of May and the summer solstice. The instrument used for sowing, the *cylindrus*, is the same in the poem and in book 11 and is mentioned in *Georg.* 1.178, albeit here to be used in the threshing floor.
[241] See Saint–Denis' (1969a, 67) note.
[242] *Georg.* 1.185–186: *atque inopi metuens formica senectae.* The list of pests is different in this *locus*, in which Virgil deals with *pestes* and *monstra*.

(*implicitus conchae limax*, 324), and the hairy caterpillar (*hirsuta campe*, 324);[243] and to attend to the yellow cabbage (*lurida brassica*, 325–326) and the beet's pale stems (*pallentia robora betae*, 326) as they swell. Only after these measures have been taken, can the gardener be free from care (*securus*, 327) in his ripe merchandise (*mercibus adultis*, 327). *Labor*, with its golden–age myth connotations, and abundance and fertility constitute the true world of the gardener.

Vertumnus' annual first–fruits (*fructus sacer*, Propertius 4.11–12), associated with the abundance of the garden – *Prima mihi variat liventibus uva racemis, / et coma lactenti spicea fruge tumet…* – has been transformed by Columella into the pockets (*sinus*, 310) of the *gerulus*, heavy with cash – *aere sinus gerulus plenos gravis* – in the last verses of the tasks of spring (10.308–310). The sacredness of the fruit, however, is recovered with the gardener's vows to *Fors Fortuna* (10.316), before he is enjoined to return to the *hortus* and perform his duties. The *labor* of the gardener (10.317–327), not visible in Propertius, is predicted by the *falce data frondator vitisque putator* in Ovid (*Met* 14.649), and will, in Columella, make him *mercibus gaudere… securus adultis.* The *fructus* (*uva, spicea, cerasus, pruna, mora, mala*) *sacer* of Propertius (4.13–18) has become *merx adulta* (10.327) in Columella.

Saint–Denis has described thus the figure of the *gerulus* at the end of the tasks of spring section in book 10 (10.309–310): *'un portefaix qui va vendre à la ville des fleurs printanières, et qui en revient, d'un pas titubant, après d'abondantes libations. Tous les travaux horticoles mentionnés dans le poème peuvent être assumés par un seul homme, qui fait tout de sa*

[243] Columella's lexical choice of *limax* (*λεῖμαξ*) and, especially, campa (*κάμπη*) (instead of the commoner *eruca* both in prose and poetry, perhaps not to confuse it with the vegetable *eruca*, of the same shape), shows an inclination towards lexical variety at this spot in the poetic environment. (See White (2013, 296).)

main'.[244] The profit of a garden which the *gerulus* and the *securus holitor* maintained and exploited as a *vilicus* shows the principle of *self–sufficiency* which in real time would have to be checked by the ultimate authority of the *familia* – the *dominus* or *possessor* as we have seen in 11.3.1.[245]

Inemptae dapes: historical *exempla*

The principle of self–sufficiency in Roman context plays alongside the traditional *exempla* of the *mos maiorum* whom Columella brings to the fore at the opening of the first prose book and which echoes, e.g., Cicero's own choice of agricultural *exempla* in the *Voluptates agricolarum* in *De sen.* (15.55–56): L. Quinctius Cincinnatus, C. Fabricius (Luscinus), and M' Curius Dentatus. Columella's ideological program at hand, as is to be expected, has instructional moral value against the corruption and luxury of *our* own times [1.pr.13–14]:

> *Verum cum complurimis monumentis scriptorum admonear apud antiquos nostros fuisse gloriae curam rusticationis, ex qua Quinctius Cincinatus, obsessi consulis et exercitus liberator, ab aratro vocatus ad dictaturam venerit ac rursus fascibus depositis, quos festinantius victor reddiderat quam sumpserat imperator, ad eosdem iuvencos et quattuor iugerum avitum herediolum redierit, itemque C. Fabricius et Curius Dentatus, alter Pyrrho finibus Italiae pulso, domitis alter Sabinis, accepta, quae viritim dividebantur, captivi agri septem iugera non minus industrie coluerit, quam fortiter armis quaesierat; et ne singulos intempestive nunc persequar, cum tot alios Romani generis intuear memorabiles duces hoc semper duplici studio floruisse vel defendendi vel colendi patrios quaesitosve fines, intellego luxuriae et deliciis nostris pristinum morem virilemque vitam displicuisse.*

[244] Saint–Denis (1969a, 10): 'a *gerulus* who is going to sell spring flowers to the city, and who returns with a staggering step after abundant libations. All the horticultural tasks mentioned in the poem can be taken by only one man, who does everything by himself.'
[245] Columella uses the word *possessor* exclusively to denote the owner of the land (which occur only in 1.pr.11 and 1.4.5). The word *dominus* is much more common.

> But when I am reminded by the records of many writers that it was a matter of pride with our forefathers to give their attention to farming, from which pursuit came Quinctius Cincinnatus, summoned from the plough to the dictatorship to be the deliverer of a beleaguered consul and his army, and then, again laying down the power which he relinquished after victory more hastily than he had assumed it for command, to return to the same bullocks and his small ancestral inheritance of four *iugera*; from which pursuit came also C. Fabricius and Curius Dentatus, the one after his rout of Pyrrhus from the confines of Italy, the other after his conquest of the Sabines, tilling the captured land which they had received in the distribution of seven *iugera* to a man, with an energy not inferior to the bravery in arms with which they had gained it; and, not unseasonably to run through individual cases at this time, when I observe that so many other renowned captains of Roman stock were invariably distinguished in this two–fold pursuit of either defending or tilling their ancestral or acquired estates, I understand that yesterday's morals and strenuous manner of living are out tune with our present extravagance and devotion to pleasure.[246]

[246] This use of moral *exempla* can be perceived in Pliny's shorter narrative for Cincinnatus (18.20–21). Pliny, however, is more realistic in the rendition of the contemporary conditions of agriculture, one which (against the historical (and to a great degree mythical) *exempla*) relies on slavery [18.21]: *Tales tum etiam viatores erant, quod ipsum nomen inditum est subinde ex agris senatum ducesque arcessentibus. At nunc eadem illa vincti pedes, damnatae manus inscriptique vultus exercent, non tam surda tellure quae parens appellatur colique dicitur ut ipso opere ab his adsumpto non invita ea et indignante credatur fieri.* ('That was what *apparitors* [*sic*] were like even at that time, and their name itself was given to them as summoning the senate and the leaders to put in an immediate appearance from their farms. But nowadays those agricultural operations are performed by slaves with fettered ankles and by the hands of malefactors with branded faces'). Cicero draws both an idealistic and personal picture in *De sen.* 16.55–56. E.g. when speaking of M' Curius (Dentatus) he states [*De sen.* 16.55]: *cuius quidem ego villam contemplans, abest enim non longe a me, admirari satis non possum vel hominis ipsius continentiam vel temporum disciplinam.* ('And I gaze upon his country house (for it is not far away from mine), I cannot sufficiently admire the frugality of the man or the spirit of the age in which he lived'). Cf. also Livy 3.26–29, where he frames the story of Cincinnatus thus [3.26.7–8]: *Operae pretium est audire qui omnia prae divitiis humana spernunt neque honori magno locum neque virtuti putant esse, nisi ubi effuse afluant opes. Spes unica imperii populi Romani L. Quinctius trans Tiberim, contra eum ipsum locum ubi nunc navalia sunt, quattuor iugerum colebat agrum, quae prata Quinctia vocantur.* ('What followed merits the attention of those who despise all human qualities in comparison with riches, and think there is no room for great honors or for worth but amidst a profusion of wealth. The sole hope of the empire of the Roman People, L. Quinctius, cultivated a field of some four acres across the Tiber, now known as the Quinctian Meadows, directly opposite the place where the dockyards are at present.')

The fact that these three men are the first proper names (after his addressee P. Silvinus) mentioned by Columella in his treatise, reflects the level of adherence by its author to the ideology of the *mos maiorum.* It is also a not very veiled criticism of Neronian extravagance. The historical figures of the republic seem to have become fossilized exempla for the citizens of the Principate surrounded by an aura of myth rather than humanly frail historical figures. This reflects what Gowing refers to as the 'historicizing account of the memory of the Republic in the early imperial period'.[247] As Cornell (1995, 392–393) puts it,

> 'the supposed poverty of men like M' Curius Dentatus and C. Fabricius Luscinus is a myth. The stories that were told about them are more revealing of later Roman ideology than of the economic conditions of the early third century; in any case the later tradition was less concerned with the economic status of these men than with the moral example they set.'

Cornell goes on to state that Cato's ideological constructs were responsible for inaugurating the tendency to 'mythologize' the poverty and, with it, the moral exemplarity of these historical figures for whom devotion to the State was only second to dedication to the fields.[248]

Abstinentia: a moral or a (*pre*–)*capitalist* principle?

Columella is interested as much as, or even more than, presenting a moral program, in guiding the reader through the practical aspects of farming. His fantastic and colorful depiction of the *gerulus* in the poem, however, wishing to return from the city *titubante gradu multo*

[247] Gowing (2005, 7)
[248] Cornell (1995, 392–393)

madefactus Iaccho (10.309–310) is surprising to the reader not only in the context of the high–tone *exempla* of Roman austerity in the preface (1.pr.13–14) but also to the reader of the technical books, where the *agricola* is repeatedly and specifically warned against the practical dangers of indulging in alcohol and other distractions that will disrupt the good functioning of the farm. The first time Columella recommends abstention from wine consumption is when he recommends that the *curator* of bees [9.14.3], the day before he approaches the bee–hive, remain

> *castus ab rebus venereis, neve temulentus, nec nisi lotus eas accedat, abstineatque omnibus redolentibus esculentis, ut sunt salsamenta, et eorum omnia liquamina; itemque fetentibus acrimoniis alii vel ceparum ceterarumque rerum similium.*
>
> chaste from sexual relations and does not approach them when drunk and only after washing himself, and that he abstain from all edibles which have a strong flavor, such as pickled fish and all the liquids which accompany them, and also from the acrimonious stench of garlic and onions and all other similar things.[249]

Prohibition is not limited to alcohol – *ne temulentus accedat.* By order of presentation the first abstinence, in this example, is from sexual activity. Gale, in her study of Virgil's *Georgics* and Lucretius, has pointed to the 'chaotic forces of sexuality' as one of the elements that constantly threatens 'the order and productivity of the agricultural landscape' a theme which has repeatedly been identified in studies of Virgil's *Georgics*.[250] Columella is well aware of the effect of these forces when he has to give practical recommendations in his manual.

[249] Forster–Heffner (1954, 483)

[250] Gale (2000, 79). Against this force Gale sets the portrayal of earth 'as a generous and hospitable habitat, which pours forth its fruits for the taking, like the lands of Hesiod's Golden Race. The tendency to disorder manifested on earth is also counterbalanced by the divinely–ordained regularity of the heavens.' For a commentary on the physical toll of sexual activity see also, eg., Slavitt (1991, 68ff).

There is no room for tipsy moments, celebrations, or periods of relaxation in his treatise; especially not among the activities prescribed during the *feriae* described at the end of book 2 (2.21.1–6).[251] After abstinence from sexual activity comes abstinence from wine; last come directions to be *lotus* (washed) and to abstain from *omnia redolentia esculentia* (all smelling edibles) for which he gives a detailed list: smells from food will unduly attract the bees and prevent the work of the bee–keeper to proceed successfully due to such avoidable inconvenience.[252]

In book 11, in the brief initial introduction with general directions for the *vilicus*, we find explicit instructions to abstain from excessive sleep and wine [11.1.13]:

> *Qui susceperit officium vilicationis… somni et vini sit abstinentissimus, quae utraque sunt inimicissima diligentiae. Nam et ebrioso cura officii pariter cum memoria subtrahitur; et somniculosum plurima effugiunt.*
>
> He who is to take up the duties of a *vilicus*… should be most abstemious in respect of wine and sleep, both of which are quite incompatible with diligence; for as a drunkard loses his memory, so he becomes careless in his duties, and very many things escape the notice of one who is unduly given to sleep.

Again showing the usual analogy of treatment, the principle of human abstinence is not limited to abstinence from alcohol, but is also based on practical *ratio* and applies to any substance, action, or activity that may impede or hinder the diligent performance of any task required for the well–functioning of the farm.[253] Immediately after warning against wine and sleep, he also warns again against *venerei amores* [11.1.14]:

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[251] Columella quotes here *Georg.* 1.268–272. Both Virgil and Columella limit themselves to list work–activities that are allowed during festivities.
[252] This, albeit curious, is also an example, as good as many others, of the plain practicality of the content of the technical books.
[253] These injunctions appear in that part of the treatise which directs the activity of the *vilicus*.

Tum etiam sit a venereis amoribus aversus: quibus si se dediderit, non aliud quidquam possit cogitare quam illud quod diligit. Nam vitiis eiusmodi pellectus animus nec praemium iucundius quam fructum libidinis nec supplicium gravius quam frustrationem cupiditatis existimat.

Further, he should also have an aversion to sexual indulgence; for, if he gives himself up to it, he will not be able to think of anything else than the object of his affection; for his mind being effused by vices of this kind thinks that there is no reward more agreeable than the gratification of his lust and no punishment more heavy than the frustration of his desire.

The need for human abstinence reappears also, as the reader might have expected, in the book about the duties and functions of the *vilica*, the *vilicus*' wife. In 12.4.3 the need for cleanliness is demanded from both husband and wife whenever they need to handle *pocula vel cibi*.[254] In an earlier passage, the same abstinence that the *vilicus* needs to observe, applies to the *vilica* as Columella formulates in 12.1.3, where an important principle of the *ethos* of the *villa* is succinctly formulated:

Nam in primis considerandum erit, an a vino, ab escis, a superstitionibus, a somno, a viris remotissima sit, et ut cura eam subeat, quid meminisse, quid in posterum prospicere debeat, ut fere eum morem servet, quem vilico praecepimus: quoniam pleraque similia esse debent in viro atque femina, et tam malum vitare, quam praemium recte factorum sperare.

For it is of the first importance to observe whether she is far from being addicted to wine, greediness, superstition, sleepiness, and the society of men, and whether she readily grasps what she ought to remember and what she ought to provide for the future, in order that she may in general maintain the manner of life which we have laid down for the *vilicus*; for the husband and wife ought to resemble one another in most respects and, they should as much avoid evil, as they hope for the reward of work well done.

[254] *Pocula* (wine cup) is, naturally, a synecdoche for wine: 'wine and food'. In contrast, for Columella, abstinence also acquires a similar connotation in the context of religious festivities, when one ought to abstain from certain types of work (11.2.98).

The things from which she should abstain are the same as those listed in the earlier books for the *vilicus* – *vinum, esca, somnus, viri* – now with the curious addition of *superstitio*, for the very same reasons as those ascribed to the *vilicus.*[255] Beyond a list of activities to be avoided there is a positive statement: the collaboration between *vilicus* and *vilica* afford the household a *praemium factorum.*[256]

The colorful image of the *titubante gradu multo madefactus Iaccho… gerulus* [257] under the sculpture of Vertumnus in the *Vicus Tuscus* acquires, in the environment of Columella's moralizing intentions and especially of the stern practicality of these examples of the treatise, an emphasized picturesque and comical character, one which stands out over the background of the author's invariably inflexible approach to abstention (from wine, sleep, sexual activity, etc.) in the prose books.[258] The verses of the carrier soaked with wine (*madefactus gerulus*,

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[255] For the question of superstition see chapter 1 under the subtitle 'The science of *agricolatio*'.
[256] Besides abstinence in the realm of general human activity, Columella applies abstinence to specific environments in agricultural activity – mainly pruning – and in animal husbandry.
[257] 10.309–310.
[258] The verb *abstineo / abstinere* itself is used in other environments by Columella. In fact, it predominantly has a technical application: In the field of agriculture it refers to abstention from pruning in certain circumstances. Columella uses it also especially when he prescribes diets for ailing animals, from food or water being fed to cattle, horses, chicken – in most occasions, when they are under the duress of certain diseases. Columella, as example of the first type, talks about '*Proxima deinde putatione melius existimat Celsus ferro abstineri*' (Celsus is of the opinion that at the next pruning–season it is better to refrain from using the (pruning) knife (5.6.22)); *biennio a putatione abstineri* (to abstain from pruning for the first two years [5.9.5]). In the case of ailing animals he states, e.g., *sed uno die abstinendum est alio cibo* (But the animal (the sick ox) must abstain from other food for one day [6.6.2]); *Quae (virides alvi) cum accident, prohibendus erit bos potione per triduum, primoque die cibo abstinendus* (When this happens (diarrhoea), the ox will have to be kept from drinking for two days and on the first day must be kept from eating.) 6.7.3; 6.9.1; 6.30.5 (where Columella recommends a remedy for headaches in horses: after a simple operation the horse needs to abstain from food for a day); 6.30.6 (here the horse should abstain from barley (*hordeo*) after a simple operation to cure a wounded shoulder; 7.8.5 (*Quod cum facit, totus grex tecto clauditur stabulo; atque uno die abstinetur potione et pabulo*); 8.5.15; 8.5.17, 8.5.23; etc.

309–310) is, in this respect, also in sharp contrast with Virgil's *Corycian* farmer, whose earnestness in cultivation and particularly modest surroundings do not leave room for indulgence, not even one celebratory sporadic drunkenness [*Georg.* 4.126–129]:

> *Namque sub Oebaliae memini me turribus arcis,*
> *Corycium vidisse senem, cui pauca relicti*
> *iugera ruris erant, nec fertilis illa iuvencis*
> *nec pecori opportuna seges nec commoda Baccho.*
>
> For I call to mind how once under the towers of the Oebalian citadel, where dark Galaesus waters the yellowing grain, I saw an old Corycian, who occupied a few acres of unclaimed land, not rich enough for ploughing, nor fit for pasturage, nor suited to the vine.

The potential loftiness of the *Oebaliae turres arcis* is soon reduced to the modesty by the reality of the *pauca relicti iugera ruris*. Virgil's fictional farmer does not only not represent a large land–holder, but his field is not large enough for the cultivation of grain or vines. Even the exclusion of *Bacchus* seems to hint at the exclusion of drinking. There are similarities between Virgil's *Corycian* farmer and Columella's *madefactus gerulus*: but while the *Corycian* farmer returns home (*domum*) from the *hortus*, Columella's *gerulus* returns to the villa from the city, as we saw above, with cash instead of flowers, and *multo madefactus Iaccho*.[259] Columella has suspended his advice of abstinence or allowed for a recreational license only after the ultimate purpose of agriculture has been achieved, albeit at a small scale: if the cultivation of garden–vegetables is, he writes, a legitimate part of *agri cultura* and deserves as equal care as the other parts – *quorum aeque curam suscipere debebit* – it is because this area of agriculture is meant to lessen the expenditure of the household – *ut et quotidiani victus sui levet sumptum.* The expression *quod ait poëta, inemptas ruris dapes* implies for Columella the

[259] Virgil's image in *Georg* 4.133 certainly provides an air of austerity and modesty.

commodity value either as the object of direct exchange or by virtue of lessening the cost, and therefore, increasing the net gains of the villa.

The *inemptae ruris dapes* and the principle of self–sufficiency have an ethical, beyond the merely economic, component in other literary environments. The moral principle, tied up with the theme of corruption of the city and praise of country life is already present, as Watson points out, in Aristophanes' character Dicaiopolis at the opening of *Acharnians*: [260]

> *στυγῶν μὲν ἄστυ, τὸν δ᾽ ἐμὸν δῆμον ποθῶν,*
> *ὃς οὐδεπώποτ᾽ εἶπεν "ἄνθρακας πρίω",*
> *οὐκ "ὄξος", οὐκ "ἔλαιον", οὐδ᾽ ᾔδει "πρίω",*
> *ἄλλ᾽ αὐτὸς ἔφερε πάντα χὠ πρίων ἀπῆν.*
>
> loathing the city and yearning for my own deme, that never cried 'buy coal,' 'buy vinegar,' 'buy oil'; it didn't know the word 'buy'; no, it produced everything itself, and the Buy Man was out of sight.

The city – *ἄστυ* – and the *δῆμος* are at opposite ends. The city is characterized by the action of buying – *πρίω*. The *δῆμος* is capable of self–sustenance. The self–sufficiency of Columella's *gerulus*, however, in slight contrast also to Aristophanes' immortal figure of Dicaiopolis, allows him to become the trader of his own product. The farmer's self–sufficiency is underlined, beyond the ethical grounds which will be exhibited at the beginning of book 11 –

[260] Watson (2004, 113, n.48). Translation by J. Henderson (1998, 59). Watson gives a quick survey of the traditional trope when he mentions Martial's characteristic humorous twist in 1.55.11–12 (*Pinguis inaequales onerat cui vilica mensas / et sua non emptus praeparat ova cinis.* ('While the bailiff's buxom wife loads the rickety table and unpaid–for ash cooks the eggs he owns?)) as well as Horace's *Sat.*2.2.118–121 (*Ac mihi seu longum post tempus venerat hospes, / sive operum vacuo gratus conviva per imbrem / vicinus, bene erat non piscibus urbe petitis, / sed pullo atque haedo; tum pensilis uva secundas / et nux ornabat mensas cum duplice ficu.* ('And if after a long absence a friend came to see me, or if in rainy weather, when I could not work, a neighbor paid me a visit – a welcome guest – we fared well, not with fish sent from town, but with a pullet or a kid; by and by raisins and nuts and split figs set off our dessert.'))

frugalitas – by the financial aims of horticulture, where 'horticulture' is a synecdoche for the whole of agriculture.

Pressure of the *aratrum*, pressure of the *caltha*

Columella resorts to intertextual references more directly through the voice of Virgil, than through other poets.[261] The prose treatise allows him also to be less specific about these references in the poem. Thus, unlike Horace or Propertius, it is not in the poem but in the opening paragraph of book 11 quoted above (11.3.1) where Columella explicitly provides the trope of the *dapes inemptae*; and this is, as with most references in the prose books, through a conventionally veiled reference to Virgil: *quod ait poëta*.[262] The quote is specifically from the description of the *Corycian* farmer's activity [*Georg.* 4.130–133]:

> *Hic rarum tamen in dumis holus albaque circum*
> *lilia verbenasque premens vescumque papaver*
> *regum aequabat opes animis, seraque revertens*
> *nocte domum dapibus mensas onerabat inemptis.*
>
> Even so, planting cabbages here and there among the brambles, and white lilies and *vervain* and fine–seeded poppies, in happiness he equaled the wealth of kings, and returning home late at night he used to load his table with an unbought banquet.

Columella has afforded himself the use of the prose books as intermediary between Virgil's *Georgics* (and other intertextual poetic references) and his own poem, in which we see that instead of the *dapes inemptae* he exploits other figures, words, images, etc. This allows

[261] We will explore some intertextual relationships between Columella and Hesiod in chapter 3.
[262] See 11.3.1 (reproduced above).

the reader to connect the intertextual relationships with great accuracy. It also allows us to see how Columella transfers images from one field to another. The participle *premens (holus, etc.)*, for example, has a forceful connotation with sowing that appears in the context of ploughing elsewhere in the *Georgics* 2.203–204.[263]

The connotations of the verb *premo* (*presso*) in both of Virgil's passages (one denoting the action performed on the plough, the other used for sowing) are transferred by Columella to the action of the *flammeola caltha* (a flower) on the *pressa fiscina* (basket): one which conveys abundance [10.306–307]:[264] *Iam rosa distendat contorti stamina iunci, / pressaque flammeola rumpatur fiscina caltha.*[265] Intertextual reference is much more complex for Columella, therefore, than simple evocation of Virgilian *loci.* References to the trope of *inemptae dapes*, although mediated by the quote of Virgil in book 11, could well have been inspired, e.g., by the opening of *Acharnians*, or Horace, as much as Virgil.[266]

Columella echoes a poetic *locus communis* now with the purpose of linking the world of agriculture and its product as exchange commodity – *faenus* or monetary profit. While Aristophanes' Dicaiopolis refused bought goods, the *gerulus holitor* desires *ut aere sinus gerulus plenos gravis urbe reportet.* The idea is confirmed by Columella at the very opening of 11.3.1 where he states the main purpose of horticulture: *ut et quotidiani victus levare sumptum et advenienti domino praebeat, quod ait poëta, inemptas ruris dapes* – i.e. by alleviating the daily

[263] See chapter 4 under the subtitle '*Labor improbus*'.
[264] In Fairclough–Goold (1999, 227).
[265] 'Pile high your baskets of hoar willow–twigs, let roses strain the threads of twisted rush and let the throngs of flaming marigolds their panniers burst.' We shall later make a connection between *premens* and *labor* – a strong connection in Columella with a subject prominent in the *Georgics.*
[266] *Georg.* 4.132–3: *revertens / nocte domum dapibus mensas onerabat inemptis*.

expenses of the farm to become, in fact, a contributor to its economy. The strictly cash–less world of Aristophanes' comedy belongs to a moralizing world, but Columella's reality of farm–life, is perfectly in line with Cato's principle that *patrem familias vendacem, non emacem esse oportet*.[267]

In Columella's manual (which attempts to attain a completeness which would not be fitting for the poetry) there is a realistic place for buying: when it is time to purchase a utensil, seed, or animal that will improve the conditions of production. As he states at the opening of book 7, when it is necessary to buy a beast of burden [7.1.1]:

> *De minore pecore dicturis, P. Silvine, principium tenebit minor in ora Arcadiae vilis hic vulgarisque asellus, cuius plerique rusticarum rerum auctores in emendis tuendisque iumentis praecipuam rationem volunt esse.*
>
> Since, Publius Silvinus, we are now about to deal with the lesser farm–animals, our first subject shall be that cheap and common animal, the lesser ass from the region of Arcadia, to which the majority of writers on agriculture consider that particular attention should be paid when it is a question of buying and tending beasts of burden.

The act of buying is repeatedly invoked at the beginning of each section. Especially when it pertains to animals, the election and purchase of which open every treatment and mirror that of the donkey in this passage. [268]

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[267] Cato's (2.7) *sententia*, with his characteristic brevity, is particularly memorable as it occurs at the end of chapter 2 of his own treatise.

[268] An important aspect of Columella's method is one of 'analogy', by which one practical application, technique or remedy is applied systematically to every item presented in order of consideration. E.g., after the treatment of the *vulgaris asellus*, Columella repeats the expression *in emendis tuendisque* when writing about sheep [7.2.5]: *Sed in utroque vel emendo vel tuendo plura communia, quaedam tamen sunt propria generosi, quae observari conveniat. etc.* Almost repeated also in 7.3.8: *Atque haec fere communia sunt in comparandis ovibus.* And with dealing with dogs [7.12.1]: *Quare vel in primis hoc animal (canis) mercari tuerique debet agricola, quod et villam et fructus familiamque et pecora custodit. Eius autem parandi tuendique triplex ratio est.* Generally the verb *comparandi* or *emendi* is reserved for cattle, as

Tasks after summer solstice

Columella closes the tasks of spring with the prayer to the statue of Vertumnus, and starts the song of summer harvesting around the same themes and with a reference to the star calendar. The ablative form of *merces* with which verse 308 starts reappears in the new season of verses 317 and 327 in the same grammatical case and metrical position. Once again, at the end of this summer–opening passage there is an echo of Virgil's *premens* with the use of *comprimite* to push forth the toil required by the vegetable garden [10.312–319]:

> *Sed cum maturis flavebit messis aristis,*
> *atque diem gemino Titan extenderit astro,*
> *hauserit et flammis Lernaei bracchia Cancri,*
> *allia tunc cepis, cereale papaver anetho*
> *iungite, dumque virent, nexos deferte maniplos,*
> *et celebres Fortis Fortunae dicite laudes,*
> *mercibus exactis, hilaresque recurrite in hortos.*
> *Tum quoque proscisso riguoque inspersa novali*
> *ocima comprimite…*
>
> But when the harvest with ripe ears of grain grows yellow and when, passing the Twin Stars, *Titan* extends the day and with his flames consumes the claws of the *Lernaean* Crab, garlic with onions join, and with the dill Ceres' blue poppy, and to market bring still fresh the closed–packed bunches and, with wares all sold, to

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in the examples above, and is expressed at the beginning of the treatise [1.pr.25]: *Atque in his ipsis haberet cognitum, quid cultus, quid silvestris ager, quid umidus et graminosus, quid siccus et spurcus, rationem quoque dispiceret et in arboribus vineisque, quarum infinita sunt genera, conserendis ac tuendis et in pecoribus parandis conservandisque, quoniam et hanc adscivimus quasi agri culturae partem, cum separata sit ab agricolatione pastoralis scientia?* ('Of how many is it the lot to have an understanding in the matter of these soils, as to what crop a hillside will refuse to yield, what a wooded land, what a land that is moist and grassy or dry and blasted; to discern also the method of planting and tending trees and vineyards, of which there are endless varieties; and of acquiring and keeping cattle, since we have admitted this as a part of agriculture, though the herdsman's art is distinct from husbandry?')

> Fortune solemn praises sing, and to your garden home rejoicing go. Now plant the basil too in fallow ground, well–trenched and watered…[269]

But before we arrive at the *ocima*, the change of season and a different section of the poem – the tasks of summer – are indicated by the colorful image of the harvest with ripe ears with ripe ears of grain (*maturis flavebit messis aristis*, 312). The next two verses (313–314) are marked by the presence of *Titan* extending the day to its longest as it passes the twin stars and burns the claws of the Lernaean Crab (312–313). The next two verses (315–316) give the first tasks for the season: to tie garlic and onion, dill and poppy, and to go to market. The *merces* theme is repeated at this point: this time saying the praises of *Fors Fortuna* and return to the garden happen in the next two verses. This short section gives us a glimpse at Columella's poetic architectural design: 3 (or 1–2)–2–2 subset of verses within a larger 7–verse phrase. It also shows that the first three verses mark a clear change of direction – the new season – yet the last four verses – those after the signaling of change of season – are a reflection of the 5 verses belonging to the end of spring tasks. Thus the images of the *rosa distend[ens] contorti stamina iunci*, and the *pressa fiscina* (306–307) are reciprocated by the injunction to tie up – *iungite* – and to carry away the *nexos… maniplos* (314–315). The exhortation to Vertumnus in 308 finds its reflection in the injunction to the *agrestis* (see verse 303) to say the *Fortis Fortuna laudes* (316).

jThere is another point of parallel in the larger structure of the poem, between this section and the start of the first (and last) season of the poem. In verse 41(–42) Columella introduces autumn explicitly: *cum satur Atumnus quassans sua tempora pomis / sordidus*. The

[269] Forster–Heffner (1955, 35)

previous two verses present, however, the opening of the season in a manner that anticipates the beginning of summer in verses 312ff. It is the only other time where Columella uses the personification of the sun as *Titan* (42 & 312). At the beginning of autumn *sitiens… Canis hauserit undas* (41). At the beginning of summer *Titan… hauserit flammis Lernaei bracchia Cancri* (312–313). In 42 Columella describes the equinox thus: *paribus Titan orbem libraverit horis.* In 312 he describes the solstice thus: *diem gemino Titan extenderit astro.* Columella, the systematic organizer, in Henderson's words, the 'signposting' formulae and the 'lucid structure' described by Reitz, seem to apply in these parallel *loci* in the poetry.

Seasonal vows

Propertius' god Vertumnus in 4.2.11–12 signals the turning of seasons by receiving the fruit of the turning year – *seu, quia vertentis fructum praecepimus anni, / Vertumni rursus credidit esse sacrum.* Columella's Vertumnus also happens at the point of juncture between Spring and Summer, marking thus the beginning of the harvesting season. Propertius presents Vertumnus' change through the image of the ripening fruits.[270] Columella adds to this picture other turning–of–season signs such as the astronomical narrative of *Titan* and the twin stars, as his '*Sed cum maturis flavebit messis aristis*', which specifically echoes Propertius' '*et coma lactenti spicea fruge tumet*' of 4.2.14. Vertumnus brings about the ripening of grain and vine and fruits in Propertius, whereas *Titan* and the *Lernaei bracchia Cancri* with the ripening of

[270] *Elegies* 2.11–12. ('Because I receive the reverting annual first–fruits, people believe this to be the offering due to Vertumnus.')

cereal in Columella signal the change of season.[271] Both also occupy an important structural point in their respective poems.

Columella's image of the *nexos maniplos* also recalls that of Propertius' *iunco brassica vincta levi* of 4.2.24. While Columella enjoins the vendor to say the praises of *Fors Fortuna*, Vertumnus in Propertius 4.2.17 expects the *insitor* (the grafter) to pay his vows with a crown of fruit at his statue in the *Vicus Tuscus*.[272] Both Propertius and, especially, Columella, in his scene by the statue of Vertumnus, exemplify well in their poetry what Finley states as inextricably interwoven categories of religion and ancient economy.[273] The association with the physical statue presented by Propertius as the theme of his first *aetiological* elegy in book 4, suggests, in Columella's image, an added physical, topographical, perhaps also *aetiological* quality.[274]

Columella is not alone, as we have seen, separating the products of the *hortus* from the rest of the agricultural products. The same separation is already in Propertius's 4th elegy: the *uva*, the *spicea frux*, and the fruits occupy verses 13–20, while the *hortus*, which Vertumnus names explicitly as his personal realm, occupies verses 41–46. One important difference is that reference to *fructus* in verses 4.2.10–11 is limited by Propertius to the realm of nature and never derives into the idea of *merx* or market profit. When Propertius assigns a negative

[271] When the sun passes through the constellations of Gemini and Cancer and the days begin to lengthen. There is, however, a lapse of time between the two dates. Saint–Denis (1969b, 66–67) points (there's a typographical error, where it indicates part 1 of book 11, it should indicate part 2) to 11.2.43 where it is stated: *Iun. sol in Geminos introitum facit.* This, Forster–Heffner indicate, falls on May 19; and to 11.2.49: *Idibus Iuniis calor incipit. xiii calen. Iul. sol introitum Cancro facit; tempestatem significat.*

[272] See Forster–Heffner (1955, 35, n. d). For the *Viscus Tuscus* see Hutchinson (2006, 86).

[273] See Finley (1999, 50).

[274] Richardson (1976, 424): 'This poem, the first of the aetiological poems P. proposed writing in 4.1.69–70'(: '*Sacra diesque canam et cognomina prisca locorum / has meus ad metas sudet oportet equus'*.)

ethical value to the god's changing identity, none of his occupations are that of the *mercator*: *messor* (verse 28), *venator* (33), *aucupor* (34), *piscator* (37), *insitor* (38), *pastor* (39), and, that for which he has the greatest reputation: *holitor* (41).

Beatum illum vendacem non emacem esse oportet

Columella makes explicit and elaborates (in prose) the principle of self–sufficiency as formulated by Cato (*De agricultura* 2.7: *patrem familias vendacem, non emacem esse oportet*) in practical terms with its corollary: nothing should be bought which can be grown or made on the estate.[275] The inclusion of capital profit from horticulture by Columella does not, therefore, contradict this fundamental premise; it rather complements it. He does, however, break the strict boundaries between Cato's three professions – that of the *mercator*, the *fenerator*, and the *agricola* – albeit in verse and in a lighthearted manner, around, as we have seen, Vertumnus and the *gerulus* (10.306–328).[276]

Horace, in his *Beatus ille* Epode (*Ep.* 2.48), invokes the *inemptae dapes* or the principle of self–sufficiency in purely idealistic terms: there is no monetary aspect associated with it. The epode ends, however, by breaking the illusion of the georgic world when the poet reveals to the reader that the narrator has all along been day–dreaming about working in a farm although

[275] As K.D. White points out (1970, 394).
[276] See chapter 1. Cato Pr.1–2: *Est interdum praestare mercaturis rem quaerere, nisi tam periculosum sit, et item fenerari, si tam honestum sit… Et virum bonum quom laudabant, ita laudabant, bonum agricolam bonumque colonum.* ('It is true that to obtain money by trade is sometimes more profitable, were it not so hazardous; and likewise money–lending, if it were as honorable… And when they would praise a worthy man their praise took this form: 'good husbandman', 'good farmer'.')

in truth he is a *faenerator*. Thus ends the epode with a return to the reality of his trade [*Ep.* 2.67–70]:

> *Haec ubi locutus faenerator Alfius,*
> *iam iam futurus rusticus,*
> *omnem redegit idibus pecuniam,*
> *quaerit kalendis ponere.*
>
> After these remarks, the money lender Alfius, just on the very point of becoming a countryman, called in all his money on the Ides, intend it to put it out again on the Kalends.[277]

The note on the calendar in the last two verses of the Epode convey the conflation of the two trades in a humorous blending of seasonal duties: the *faenerator* follows the agricultural calendar in his collecting and lending activities, as equivalents to those of harvesting (*omnem redegit idibus pecuniam*, verse 69), and sowing (*quaerit kalendis ponere*, verse 70). Still, with the contrast between what has come before and its surprising end, Horace stresses the distinction between the poetically idealized world of farming and the mundane realities of daily life for a well–to–do urban citizen, personified in the figure of Alfius.

Cato had already implied the division of labor between the three professions mentioned above. The aura of moral superiority of that of the *agricola* is now inverted by Horace to make a parody of the *locus communis* of the idealization of country life. Surely in the time of Horace and Propertius, if not in Cato's or earlier, just as the trade of the *faenerator* is a practical reality,

[277] The translation is Niall Rudd's (2004, Loeb). (Cf. Mankin (1995, 81–82, n.48), Watson (2003, 113, n.48).)

horticultural products were the object of monetary exchange, even though at a smaller scale than grains, wine, oil, or cattle.[278]

Elsewhere Columella reports the *f(a)enerator* Alfius as saying '*vel optima nomina non appellando fieri mala*' in 1.7.2: our author must have read the *Beatus ille Epode*.[279] Columella reflects in this passage what might be a more realistic day–to–day situation at the *nundina*, and stepps out, if only briefly, of the sanitized world of Virgil's *Georgics* when he describes the profitable merchant activity of the *gerulus*. Even if only for a moment, there is a degree of realism in Columella's scene that fits better the spirit of Horace's *f(a)enerator* Alfius, minus the parodic element, rather than Virgil's *Corycian* farmer. The carrier of the principle of self–sufficiency is no longer the uncontaminated literary trope expressed by the Virgilian references to the *dapes inemptae*. For Columella to add a cash dimension as part of every–day life is not even an object of parody, as it could be for Horace.

The language of business is, not surprisingly, present throughout the treatise and we only need to read the very opening of the prose preface to book 10 to witness how the

[278] Leonard Curchin's discussion of 'Production and exchange' in *Roman Spain* (1991, 130–153) gives a good idea of the dynamics of production in the western provinces and of the different phases of market trends.

[279] *Nec rursus in totum remittendum, quoniam 'vel optima nomina non appellando fieri mala' faenerator Alfius dixisse verissime fertur.* ('On the other hand, we must not neglect our claims altogether; for as Alfius the usurer is reported to have said, and with entire truth, 'Good debts become bad ones if they are not called'.)' Hentz (1978, 181, n.7.2.2) states: '*L'usurier Alfius, sur lequel nous ne savons rien d'autre, apparaît dans la seconde Epode d'Horace*.' Hentz (1978, 111) further mentions the Horatian expression '*limina potentiorum*' from *Ep.* 2.8 used by Columella in 1.pr.9: '*An honestius duxerim mercenarii salutatoris mendacissimum aucupium circumvolitantis limina potentiorum somnumque regis sui rumoribus augurantis?*' ('Or should I regard as more honorable the hypocritical fawning of the man who frequents the levees, for a price, and hovers about the thresholds of the mighty, divining the sleeping hours of his lord by hearsay?')

language of lending arises in other environments. The book he is about to start is itself a promised payment of interest, a surplus beyond the principal capital [10.pr.1]:

> *Faenoris tui, Silvine, quod stipulanti spoponderam tibi, reliquam pensiunculam percipe. Nam superioribus novem libris hac minus parte debitum, quod nunc persolvo, reddideram.*
>
> Accept, Silvinus, the small remaining payment of interest which I had promised when you demanded my debt except for this portion, and I am now going to pay you in full.

There is one other significant instance of the word *faenus* in book 10 itself; this time it occurs in the poem and within verses 140–143 in a rare combination with an important subject in Columella's discourse – fertility [10.140–143]:

> *Haec ubi credidimus resolutae semina terrae,*
> *assiduo gravidam cultu curaque fovemus,*
> *ut redeant nobis cumulato faenore messes.*
>
> When to the loosened soil we have these seeds entrusted, with fond care and culture we must tend the pregnant earth, that crops with interest may our toil repay.

Columella shows his characteristically poetical economy in the combination of these two (of his favorite) themes in one sentence. The *semina* we have entrusted – *credidimus* – to the once loosened soil, now pregnant – *gravidam*, we warm up with frequent care so that they return harvests with accumulated interest. Columella offers thus the main formulation of his enterprise: one in which material gain is directly dependent on the fertility of the land.

In this chapter we have considered aspects of method, intertextuality and ideology. We have seen that Columella writes a thoroughly technical and practical treatise and that the measure of its practicality is expressed in terms of profit. This theme – capital gain – appears in book 10 adapted to the poetic medium in which Columella comes into intertextual interaction

with Horace, Propertius and Ovid. We have also seen that there is an emphasis on the link between agriculture and the continuation of a distinctly Roman ethical system, and that material gain is for Columella part of the ideological construct. We have also seen the position Columella holds with respect to the Neronian literary circles in aesthetic terms.

In the next chapter we will consider the role of book 10 within the treatise, and the audience, composed of a handful of prominent individuals who lived during Neronian times, for whom Columella has an (ideologically–charged) message. We will see that this message has deep roots connected through intertextual relationships that go back to Hesiod. We will see the role of Hesiod with respect to book 10 and its ideological content. We will also see in what ways Columella's origin in what used to be a Phoenician colony before the destruction of Carthage may have influenced the writing of his treatise. The agricultural writings of Mago the Carthaginian may be of particular significance in this regard.

CHAPTER III: PROBLEMS OF INTERPRETATION: INDICES, IDEOLOGY AND ANCIENT SOURCES

Reading the manual

In this chapter we will consider the greatest problems in reading Columella and his poem. First, we will discuss the existence of what may be the first table of contents in western literature and its importance for a correct reading of the treatise. Second, we will discuss the ways in which Columella frames the poem as an integral part of this treatise: by providing a space for it in his strictly technical treatise, and through reference to major themes already treated by the first writer of didactic georgic poetry: Hesiod. Hesiod, as the founder of the tradition of georgic poetry, becomes for Columella an essential support for the ideological program of the treatise.

Richter states that Columella's 12 books on agriculture occupy a prominent position in ancient literature, and that there is no other work from Greco–Roman times as complete, knowledgeable, and well–organized.[280] It is, Richter continues, the most comprehensive textbook ever written in Rome on a single, self–contained subject. There is general consensus about the practical nature of Columella's manual.[281] There are and have been, however, a few challenges for the practical reader. The first one is related to the editorial decision to extract the book *De Arboribus* from the sequence transmitted by the mss. and thus distort the use this book might have as well as the function of book 10. At the opening of the *prooimion* to book

[280] Richter (1981, vol. 3 (henceforth Richter, 1981.3), 602). (The other two volumes of Richter will be quoted as 1981.1 & 1981.2.)
[281] See also Boldrer for similar statements (1996, 9–15). For the overall structure of the work, see Richter, 1981.3, 607.

10, Columella talks about nine previous books – *Nam superioribus novem libris hac minus parte debitum… reddideram* (10.pr.1). In the opening of book 11 (11.1.2) he states: *et hoc undecimum praeceptum rusticationis memoriae tradidi.*[282] This makes the 12–book count consistent with the text as is reflected in all modern editions. It also signposts the last three books as somehow separate from the previous 9. As Henderson has observed, this framing of book 10 – with 11 and 12 following – clearly sets the poem's character apart *vis–à–vis* the rest of the technical treatise.[283] It also leaves *De Arboribus* outside the scope of the manual.

This also posits a problem with respect to the authenticity of the *indices* (tables of contents) which had to be adjusted to include the intrusion of *De Arboribus* and which has not been completely resolved in the modern editions. Henderson has stated that the significance of this feature is too great to leave out.[284] The organization of this, possibly first, table of contents in western literature indicates the process by which, presumably, Columella himself organized his material and summarized the actual contents of each book. Beyond indicating the structure of each book individually and the work as a whole, they make of the treatise a true practical manual by aiding the farmer in the consultation of specific sections.

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[282] All editions consulted for this dissertation reproduce these words (including one of the *R* mss.). See Ash–Forster–Heffner (1941–1955), Richter (1981), Rodgers (2010), as well as Saint–Denis (1969a). Only one of the R mss. could be consulted for this dissertation: the E R.1.7, which still includes *Arb.* as the third book of a total of 13. The word *index* is the one used in the mss. for the 'tables of contents'. For a discussion of the issue of authorship of *Arb.* consult Goujard (1986, 7–23) and Richter (1981.3, 600–602).

[283] See Henderson (2002, 113–116 'The gardening supplement').

[284] Henderson, ibid. Lundström's critical edition, Richter, and the Budé editions all conserve these *indices* In contrast Ash–Forster–Heffner (1941–1955) and Rodger's (2010) leave them out. It is highly recommended, therefore, that the reading of these editions is complemented by the reader by consulting the *indices* included in, e.g., Richter or Lundström's editions.

Both Lundström, in his critical edition, and Richter include the *indices* in the shape (after some editorial changes) in which they have been transmitted. In the latter edition, each book, except 10 (the poem) and 11 (see below), has an *index* at its heading. There is a general table of contents at the end of book 11. The last list of items in the latter serves as the *index* at the heading of book 12, whose preface starts immediately after the last *index* item.[285] Richter also gives, in the *apparatus criticus*, what seems to have been preserved as the *index* for book 11 in some mss.: a list of items which do not correspond with those of this book, but which include the name Eprius Marcellus, whom Richter identifies with the one–time consul suffect (62 a.D.) T. Clodius Eprius Marcellus. Richter uses this name as a dating clue for when Columella may have been writing the sections on the vine. [286]

This means that book 10 (the poem) does not have a table of contents, and book 11 may or may not have had one. With the aid of this *index* Henderson has argued that book 10 holds a special position with respect to the full treatise from which books 11 and 12 are also structurally, and in terms of content, somewhat detached.[287] A thorough review of some important signposts in the treatise, and its organization, leads Henderson to state that book 10

[285] See Richter (1981, 170–176). See also André (1988, 18–20). We could compare this to one of the R mss., R.1.7 (which has not been collated with the other R mss.) which has no *index* for book one. Richter (1981.1, 8) seems to take the *index* for this book from the general *index* at the end of book 11. For an accurate assessment of the position of *indices*, however, both S and A will have to be consulted, and a survey of the consensus of the R mss. will have to be studied. See Boldrer (1996, 33–50) for a discussion of the ms. tradition and different trends of opinion with respect to the value of the R mss. On p. 41 she offers what she considers the most likely stemma of mss. See also Hedberg's (1968) fundamental study on the R mss.
[286] See Richter (1981, vol. 3; henceforth Richter, 1981.3, 150–177) for the general table and p. 168 in particular for the *app. crit*. with the dedication of the book to Eprius Marcellus. For Eprius Marcellus see *Der Neue Pauly* (1998.4, 30).
[287] See Henderson (2002, 115–116).

is both of a very different nature from the rest and, despite the author's claims to the opposite, the climax of the work:

> the work of gardening… there it stands, beneath the prairie empire of the farm. A concentrated synecdoche of the whole, an intense, intensive, fraction. As we saw, horticulture is agriculture and arboriculture writ small; and it shares with livestock management deep–seated antipathy toward pests, disease, and morbidity… What verse brings the garden of book 10 is mimesis: intensified *writing…*
> The indefatigable applied agriculturalist here pupates into an enthused poet–priest of cosmic ecstasy. Columella singles gardening out as the gem that encapsulates existence. Enter the gate, and find paradise: leave again, and re–enter reality. The rest of *De re rustica* encrypted, and will seal up again, the lyricism that bursts onto the page in its garden – but the hard work that lies behind every blossom is honored, too, in every line of hothouse verse, and it stands in for the whole range of applied creativity that materializes in every… operation down on the farm. In short, Garden *supplements* Farm – sums it up, as re–cap., and completes it (realizes it fully, brings it to fruition), as 'bonus'.[288]

While the treatise and the poem share the same material – the poem *feeds* itself to a certain extent from the prose books – they are books of radically different nature. For this symbiosis Columella draws from two traditions which have, by now, become quite distinct: the tradition of didactic poetry, with Hesiod at its origins, and the tradition of agricultural prose treatises. When Columella makes poetic statements about his program regarding land exploitation, fertility, the pursuit of profit, vows that ought to be performed, and what activities are allowed during religious holidays, based on his practical experience, he does not radically break away from all the precision and order displayed in the previous books, but he exploits with the same earnestness a poetic world founded in time immemorial, but which has also evolved. His personal innovation is to openly transfer content through literary boundaries.

[288] Henderson (2002, 125–126)

Anxiety of influence

Joining this tradition fills Columella with anxiety. This can be disconcerting for the reader who expects clear practical instruction. We have seen how successfully he incorporates the practical tenets of the field, expressed initially in prose, into poetry, in the passages discussed in chapter 2 (10.140–143, 306–310, 312–319, 337–341).[289] He is in command of the material content of his poem. Columella does not express anxiety over the poetic structure, which, as we shall see in chapter 4, he builds with meticulous care, but in the leap from one realm of expression to another: from prose to poetry. In the rhetorically–built prose prefaces he gives the impression of struggling to find justification for the georgic poem. The obvious difficulty, which he explicitly states in the preface to book 10, is the task of imitating Virgil.[290] There Columella is seen to be more concerned about protecting the integrity of his prose work than about judgments about his poetry [10.pr.5–6]:

> *Nam etsi multa sunt eius quasi membra, de quibus aliquid possumus effari, tamen eadem tam exigua sunt, ut, quod aiunt Graeci, ex incomprehensibili parvitate arenae funis effici non possit. Quare quidquid est istud, quod elucubravimus, adeo propriam sibi laudem non vindicat, ut boni consulat, si non sit dedecori prius editis a me scriptorum monumentis.*
>
> For, although there are many branches of the subject, so to speak, about which we can find something to say, they are, nevertheless, as unimportant as the imperceptible grains of sand out of which, according to the Greek saying, it is impossible to make a rope. Whatever, therefore, has resulted from burning the midnight oil, is so far from claiming for itself any special commendation as to be satisfied if it brings no disgrace on my previously published writings.

[289] In verses 10.140–143, in which the expression *ut redeant nobis cumulato faenore messes*, showed the agricultural world – represented by the *semina* entrusted to earth, *resoluta* and *gravida*, and the *messes* – yield *cumulatum faenus.* For discussion of these passages see ch. 2.
[290] Stated in 10.pr.3–4.

Through the hyperbolic image of sand hopelessly trying to make up a cord, Columella plays down the role of horticulture.[291] Thus, metaphorically, he also addresses his – alleged – inadequacy for the cultivation of a genre which is outside his competence. He, as an author, has to undergo an authorial transformation from the technical strictures of a manual on *res rusticae* proper, to a subject which cannot hold itself together even as part of *agricultura*. Unlike Varro, who chose the more casual and flexible dialogue form, his choice of genre with its necessary rhetorical heavy–handedness, does not allow a swift leap to the lightness of georgic poetry. The last sentence of the preface to book 10 expresses the core message of the *recusatio*: whatever its author put together in his nightly efforts should not get more praise than his technical work, lest it ruin his reputation in the field. This genuine anxiety about his reputation as an agronomist is the result of following on the steps of Virgil and becoming himself a link in the ages–old georgic tradition. To make such claim without explanation would hardly be short of an act of arrogance, hence the need of the anxiety shown in the preface to book 10.

The choice of subject, taken from the lead of the humble Corycian farmer, helps his cause. Henderson's description of the agronomist 'pupating' 'into an enthused poet–priest of cosmic ecstasy' can and should only be understood after the author's explicit and emphatic *captatio benevolentiae* of the prose preface of book 10. Gowers qualifies the poem as an 'allegedly unscheduled appendix', but with the preface of book 10 (and that of book 11) it becomes clear that this self–styled Ciceronian writer on agriculture is far from improvising.[292]

[291] For the proverb on which Columella bases his expression attributed to Aristeides see Forster–Heffner (1955, 5, n. c).
[292] Gowers (2000, 133)

When he later returns to develop the prose book on horticulture (as part of book 11) he returns also to the matter–of–fact approach of the technical books as if nothing had happened in between, as a way to restore the original order.

The motivation for Columella's *recusatio* has as much to do with the actual status of horticulture as the modifications necessary for a programmatic statement that belongs to his overall conception of agriculture and its ideological underpinnings. Besides the seemingly obsessive wish for completeness, this new eleventh book establishes the relatively small but true significance of garden vegetables as a legitimate member in the realm of agriculture, and also restores the original – scientific – integrity of the manual.[293]

The function of book 11 *vis–à–vis* the poem: ethical and technical

There is also an ethical level, linked to the exemplary image of the modest Corycian farmer for whom luxury is a foreign concept. Another difficulty of interpretation is to understand Columella's contradictory statement about the doubtful moral significance of horticulture itself. Just as the positive historical *exempla* of Cincinnatus, Fabricius and Curius Dentatus took a prominent position at the opening of the preface of book 1,[294] he presses forward the necessity of addressing the less–than–exemplary reality associated with horticulture in his own time – *Quare cultus hortorum, quoniam fructus magis in usu est, diligentius nobis, quam tradiderunt maiores, praecipiendus est* [10.pr.3] –, which he (earlier)

[293] See above for the contrast, and chapter 2 (*Tenuis admodum et paene viduata corpore materia*).
[294] In 1.pr.13–14.

connects with contemporary tendencies towards luxury – *Mox cum sequens et praecipue nostra aetas dapibus libidinosa pretia constituerit, cenaeque non naturalibus desideriis, sed censibus aestimentur* [10.pr.2].[295] Columella, in his ethical message, contraposes the age–long *exempla* of book 1, with the abandonment of agriculture and its instruction. This is an echo of the theme of the preface to book 1: the corruption of his own times is now symbolized by excessive attention to the *hortus*. Columella, nevertheless, is the first prose writer to present a full technical book on this new separate area of agriculture, one which had no place in either Cato or Varro's treatises. Horticulture, however, has already established itself as a separate pursuit from the rest of agriculture in Propertius' poetic aetiological narrative of Vertumnus*,* and in Virgil's treatment. The latter, as Gowers has rightly observed, gives us Columella's reason to enter the combined worlds of poetry and the *hortus.* Propertius' fourth elegy and Vertumnus' presence in Columella's book 10 confirm the separation of horticulture from the rest of agriculture.

In order to break away from the world of poetry, in book 11 Columella adds a new member to the audience of the treatise. While book 10 was produced for Silvinus, [*eum librum*] *stipulanti*,[296] and Gallio, book 11 starts with the introduction of a new promise to write this book at the behest of Claudius Augustalis, priest of the imperial cult and possibly a *libertinus*, so far unmentioned in the treatise and otherwise unknown, but one who is just as *pertinax* as

[295] 10.pr.3: 'The cultivation, therefore, of gardens, since their produce is now in greater demand, calls for more careful instruction from us than our forefathers have handed down.' 10.pr.2: 'Very soon, when subsequent ages, and particularly our own, set up an extravagant scale of expenditure on the pleasure of the table, and meals were regarded as occasions not for satisfying men's natural desires but for the display of wealth.'
[296] 10.pr.1: 'to you demanding this book.'

Silvinus and Gallio and whose insistence is necessary in order to bring order back into the manual: *quoniam tamen ea simili desiderio noster Augustalis saepius flagitabat*.[297] This new character requests that Columella complete not only the tasks of horticulture in their scientific context, but also the section on the duties of the *vilicus* already given in book 1. This also has a closing effect in the overall structure of the manual: not only the theme of the previous book (the *hortus*) but one of the themes of the first book, the duties of the *vilicus*, is also re–instated.[298] In between, Columella presents, as a bonus in this multi–purpose complementary book, a farmer's calendar.[299]

This complex working of structure, dictated by the presence of the poem, produces as a result not only the trespassing of boundaries with respect to his apparent initial plan, but an emphatic restatement of purpose: to relay to memory the instruction of the contents of this eleventh book on agriculture: *numerum, quem iam quasi consummaveram, voluminum excessi, et hoc undecimum praeceptum rusticationis memoriae tradidi.*[300] This and the brief introduction (not properly labelled *praefatio*) to book 11, frames effectively the poem within the vast, but closed, world of the treatise; one for which the poem of book 10 represents also a

[297] 11.1.2: 'Since my friend the priest of Augustus rather often demanded it of me with an eagerness which matches your own.'
[298] For the title of *Augustalis* see Forster–Heffner's note a (1955, 48–49) and, especially, Richter, 1981.3, 612 n. 18
[299] This could well have been the closing book, had not Columella decided to include the book on food preservation (book 12). See Henderson (2002).
[300] 11.1.2: 'I have exceeded the number of books which I had already practically completed, and have published (relayed to memory) this eleventh book of the principles of husbandry.' See also Henderson, 2002, 111–113.

climactic moment closed in itself and surrounded by clear boundaries just as the physical *hortus* is enclosed within walls or hedges.[301]

One of the functions of book 11 itself is to close up the poem. It does not have its separate *praefatio*, nor does it discuss the *locus communis* of frugality–luxury which, in contrast, had been developed at the beginning of the treatise (book 1) and reinstated in the preface to book 10. The brief introduction to 11 limits itself to state the need of two subjects already presented: one of which – the duties of the *vilicus* – is in turn a prelude to the corresponding duties of the *vilica* in book 12.[302] In between the two subjects, he adds a farmer's calendar (11.2) without much of an introduction except for a quotation of Virgil (*Georg.* 1.43) who advises to *proscindere terram*, i.e. to perform *labor.* In other words, the whole of book 11 constitutes a straight–forward return to technical matters.

Columella attempts for a few paragraphs to arrange the calendar according to the seasons of the year (*sed iam potius quo quidque tempore terrae mandari plerumque conveniat, per menses digeramus*), [303] but, seeing that there is not enough matter to organize it around the calendar, he soon reverts to presenting it in a manner similar to the sections on grains, legumes, vines, trees, etc. Here he treats *holera* by *genus*: *ulpicum, alium, brassica, lactuca, intubus, cinara, eruca, ocimum, panax, sinapis, coriandrum, porrum, apium, pastinaca, siser,*

[301] See 10.27. For the use of *saeptum* fencing orchards (*pomaria*) see, e.g., 1.6.24. On hedge–building see 11.2.19. On preference of hedge over brick wall see 11.3.3, and on building of hedges around the garden see 11.3.7.
[302] The duties of the *vilicus* (11.1) he had already been treated in the section of book 1 devoted to farm personnel (1.8–9). See Henderson (2002, 116).
[303] 11.3.15 'But let us rather now arrange month by month at what season it is generally fitting that each kind should be put into the ground.' The treatment of the *hortus* occupies 11.3.16–65, considerable length, if far still from the far more detailed treatment of the vine (books 3–5) and cattle (book 6).

inula, atrum olus, menta, ruta, thymum, cunila, lepidium, beta, chaerephyllum, olus atriplicis (which the Greeks call *ἀνδράφαξις*)*, papaver, anethum, asparagus sativus, raphanus, cucumis, cucurbita, capparis, cepina, rapa, napum, lupinum, ferula, etc*.[304]

This list of garden vegetables is more complete than that in the section of the poem where he first lists them (10.110–10.126). The poem's list, unlike that in book 11, is far from exhaustive and shows how effectively Columella uses his own technical taxonomies as a source for the poem. By the end of the section on flowers in 10.94–109 he starts by listing the *eruca* (10.109). The section on vegetables proper follow, including the *chaerophyllum* or *chaerephyllum* (10.110), the *intuba*, *lactucula* (10.111)*,* and *alia* (10.112); then comes the *ulpica*, which, mixed with the *faba*, makes a laborer's meal (10.113);[305] then the *siser* and the *Assyrio semine radix* (10.114), which is probably the same as the *radix Syriaca* of 11.3.59; then the *lupinum* (10.115), which has the property of tempting the drinking of *zython* (*ζῦθος*);[306] then the *capparis*, ideal for *salgama*, the *inula*, and the *ferula* (10.117–118), the *menta* (10.119), *anethum* (10.120); the *ruta*, which improves Pallas' olive (10.121), the *sinapis* (*sinapi* in L&S, 10.122); the *olus ater* (here named *olus pullus*)[307] and the *cepa* (10.123); all in the list of vegetables of book 11. Last appear two more plants also represented in book 11: the *lepidion*

[304] *Ulpicum* (leek or garlic), garlic (*alium*), cabbage, lettuce, endive or succory, (Cinaran) artichoke, cole–wort, basil, panacea or catholicon, white mustard, coriander, leek, parsley, parsnip or carrot, seashore cabbage, mint, rue, thyme, oregano, garden–cress or pepper–wort, beet, asparagus, radish, cucumber, gourd, caper, onion, turnip or rape, navew.
[305] This is Forster–Heffner's reading of the line (10.113): '*Ulpica, quaeque fabis habilis fabrilia miscet*'.
[306] See Saint–Denis (1969a, 57) n. 116.
[307] Ibid, 57, n. 123

(*λεπίδιον*), given through a three verse (10.124–126) periphrasis – *et lactis gustus quae condiat herba* – and the *brassica.*[308]

Thus the poem and the technical aspect of book 11 are separate from each other but in symbiosis, as this listing of vegetables shows. The *brassica* also becomes the leading theme for Columella's next section: a representation of the Campania filtered through a technical prism (the naming of the *brassica* of different regions) narrower than Varro or Virgil's respective *laudes Italiae*.[309] The function of book 11 has expanded from merely framing the poem to providing the technical background necessary, and this, as we shall see, will have a visible effect in the poem's fullness of description.

A technical incongruence or *epigonism* refuted

One repeated criticism against Columella has been that he was not able to shake off his *epigonism*, with its implied lack of originality, with respect to Virgil. This has led to the poem being dismissed as not worthy of reading without considering the reason for its existence. When Saint–Denis questions why the books on horticulture should be placed at the very end of the treatise instead of with the group of books 1–5, he gives poetic reasons: '*parce que Virgile a*

[308] Spencer (2010) reads this section in which Columella presents the different kinds of cabbages (*brassicae*) cultivated in different places in Campania, in terms of representation of landscape as a 'microcosm of the city–state', and offers a *tour* around the qualities of the *brassica* in the landscapes described in verses 10.127–139: Cumae, Capua, 'Parthenope', the Lacus Turni, and Aricia, also famed for its leeks. Columella's *laus Italiae*, if we agree to call it so, is much shorter than Virgil's (12 verses *vis–à–vis* 40). She does not comment on those of the Caudinae fauces, the *Stabiae brassicae*, the *Vesubia rura*, the *Sebethide roscida lympha*, the *Pompeia palus*, the *Siler*, the *Tiburis arva*, or the *Bruttia.*

[309] Varro *RR* 1.2.3–8, *Georg* 2.136–176. Neither Varro nor Virgil limit the praise to one specific product (or two, if we are to add the Arician leek which Columella names at the end of the tour).

pensé aux jardins à propos des abeilles (Géorgiques, IV, 116–124) et qu'il a décrit, dans l'épisode du vieillard de Tarente, un jardin d'apiculteur (v. 139–141), peuplé de plantes et d'arbres mellifères, qui se retrouvent dans la liste de Columelle (IX, 4).[310] In other words, the reason is not scientific but mainly literary. This observation only gives a partial explanation to the existence of the poem. While Virgil dismisses his duty towards the garden (*Georg.* 4.147–148: *haec ipse equidem spatiis exclusus iniquis / praetereo*), Columella takes his master's *recusatio* as an opportunity to create his own full–fledged georgic poem, one which continues a tradition to which he also adds something new. He not only enters Virgil's breach but creates a breach within his own technical treatise, in order to develop the microcosm described by Henderson. Besides framing it between books 10 and 11, he has been preparing the reader for this event by including repeated quotes from the poetry of Virgil and Hesiod, the two sources of georgic wisdom in all the previous technical books.[311]

Defending the *hortus* (physical and figurative): Priapus in book 10

[310] Saint–Denis (1969a, 8): 'because Virgil thinks about the gardens as they relate to bees and which he has described in the episode of the old man of Tarentum, the garden of a bee–keeper, populated by honey plants and trees, which are found in Columella's list'. Richter (1981.3, 608–609) questions the incongruity of having two separate treatments of horticulture: *Die Plazierung des Gartenbaubuches am Ende des Werkes – die einzige stoffliche Inkonsequenz der Disposition – gehört dem gegenüber unzweifelhaft zum ursprünglichen Plan des Autors; sie ist von der kühn gewählten poetischen Form des Buches nicht zu trennen.* ('The placing of horticulture at the end of the work – the only material inconsistency of its disposition – goes unquestionably against the original plan of the author; it cannot be separated from the boldly chosen poetic form of the book.') See also chapter 2 (discussions of the *napus* and the *rapa* and Propertius).

[311] See also Gowers (2000, 127). One quote of Homer and one of Nicander reinforce this preparation.

Much has been said about the excess displayed by Columella in his poetry. The image of Priapus may be cited as example. The presence of this image in the *hortus*, however, is not an exclusive feature of Columella. Virgil frames the narrative of the Corycian farmer with the image of Priapus as protector of the physical space of the garden. At the beginning of the bee narrative (*Georg.* 4.109) bees are associated with this physical space [4.109–115]:

> *Invitent croceis halantes floribus horti*
> *et custos furum atque avium cum falce saligna*
> *Hellespontiaci servet tutela Priapi.*
> *Ipse thymum tinosque ferens de montibus altis*
> *tecta serat late circum, cui talia curae;*
> *ipse labore manum duro terat, ipse feracis*
> *figat humo plantas et amicos inriget imbres.*
>
> Let the gardens fragrant with saffron flowers to invite them, and let the watchman against the thieves and birds, guardian Priapus, lord of the Hellespont, protect them with his willow hook. Let him to whom such care falls, himself bring thyme and laurestines from the high hills, and plant them widely round their homes; himself harden his hand with stern toil; himself plant in the ground fruitful slips and sprinkle kindly showers.[312]

The image of Priapus as protector (*cum falce saligna / Hellespontiaci tutela Priapi*) against thieves and birds is both a symbol of fertility and signals the definite incursion into the physical realm of the *hortus* – physical and literary. By calling on him who cares for the *hortus* to bring thyme and *tinus* to the villa's surroundings, Virgil ties together both narratives – those of bees and flowers – an image redolent of fertility – and that of its physical guardian – an inert yet protective image.[313] In Columella there is an external protecting element added: the

[312] See Fairclough–Goold (1916, 225–227). Williams (1979, 201) states that a comparison of *Georgics* 4 with Columella's book 9 shows that 'Virgil is using his own practical experience and knowledge of bee–lore in addition to literary sources.'

[313] *Tinus*: 'laurestine' (Fairclough–Goold (1999, 227)); OLD: 'the shrub laurustinus'; Lewis–Short: 'liburnum tinus'. Both Thomas and Mynors mention the function of the *Hellespontiaci tutela Priapi*. Mynors states that 'a red painted figure of Priapus, to whom donkeys were sacrificed at

hedges and walls (*vel parietibus, vel saepibus hirtis*) which effectively close the *hortus*. In addition, he preserves the established function of the image in the *hortus* by excluding potential competitors from the fine arts, discussed in book 1 on the occasion of mimesis [10.27–34]:[314]

> *Talis humus vel parietibus, vel saepibus hirtis*
> *claudatur, ne sit pecori, neu pervia furi.*
> *Neu tibi Daedaliae quaerantur munera dextrae,*
> *nec Polyclitea nec Phradmonis, aut Ageladae*
> *arte laboretur: sed truncum forte dolatum*
> *arboris antiquae numen venerare Priapi*
> *terribilis membri, medio qui semper in horto*
> *inguinibus puero, praedoni falce minetur.*
>
> This plot let walls or thick–set hedge enclose,
> impervious both to cattle and to thieves.
> Seek not a statue wrought by Daedalus
> or Polyclitus or by Phradmon carved
> or Ageladas, but the rough–hewn trunk
> of some old tree which you may venerate
> as god Priapus in your garden's midst,
> who with his mighty member scares the boys
> and with his reaping–hook the plunderer.

Three *exempla* of practitioners of the *Daedaliae munera dextrae* – Polyclitus, Phradmon and Ageladas – are offered in deliberate contrast to the roughness of the appropriate image.[315]

Lampsacus in Phrygia, at the upper end of the Hellespont (Catull. fr. 1), is from Hellenistic times a traditional ornament of the well–found garden'. Both Thomas and Mynors also mention the association of Priapus and the fertility of the *hortus* in Horace's *Sat.* 1.8.1–7, Theocritus *Epigr.*4, Tibullus 1.1.7f. Ovid mentions the statue of Priapus using the same type of language in the Pomona/Vertumnus episode. Pomona's only love is her devotion to the *hortus* and Priapus is listed as the last of her woers, before Vertumnus (14.637–641). See especially verse 640: *Quique deus fures vel falce vel inguine terret.* ('And that god who warns off evil–doers with his sickle or his ugly shape?')

[314] 1.pr.31. See also Gowers (2000, 134).

[315] Henderson (2002, 127) cites P. Stewart, 'Fine art and coarse art: the image of Roman Priapus', *Art History* 20 (1997), 575–588. Henderson sees in this symbol not only the physical

As Diederich points out, this prohibition acts also as a warning against unnecessary luxuries in the garden.[316] The closed structure of these eight verses is significant. The first two verses (10.27–28) state the need to set limits to the *hortus… ne sit pecori, neu pervia furi.* The next two and a half verses (10.29–31) state the exclusion of the *Daedaliae munera dextrae*. The last half and three verses (10.31–34) describe the statue and its functions. The tripartite structure with its increasing length of periods, from the hedge to the climax of the figure of Priapus, gives us a first glimpse at Columella's carefully designed and closed versification.

The purpose expressed by Columella is the same as that of Virgil. The mode of presentation has been framed differently: it denies the *exempla* of fine sculpture a place in the *hortus* to leave the *truncum dolatum* standing by itself after a closely defined spatial and visual composition.[317] Also in his carefully designed versification Columella shows a high degree of independence from Virgil. He carefully defines and defends the physical territory of the *hortus* by poetic means. Priapus has a very well defined function, with little room for excess.

Framing the audience: Gallio *et al*.

statue but also 'a tutelary god [who] must preside over his genre: crude but seminal Priapus, stood proud at the center of Columella's garden,' where 'garden' stands for the poem.

[316] Diederich (2007, 381). Priapus only happens twice relatively early in Columella's poem, never in the prose books.

[317] The passage in *Georg.* 4.67–87, which precedes the presentation of the Corycian farmer, one associated with *examina* and *favi* (4.103–104), is a metaphor of bees as armies in battle. After the three verses of inviting flowers (109) and the *custos furum atque avium* of verses 110–111, four verses are devoted to *labor* with a triple anaphora in accelerating sequence (112–115): *Ipse thymum… serat; ipse labore manum… terat, ipse… figat humo plantas.*

Defining the audience of this technical treatise, especially when there is no record of its author's political connections, is another challenge to interpretation. The addressees and passive interlocutors who appear sporadically named throughout can give us a clue: these are names of *principes* whom he addressed at the beginning of the treatise. At the end of book 9 Gallio joins Silvinus in the petition to request that the book on horticulture be written in verse.[318] This Gallio is the elder son of L. Annaeus Seneca, the wealthy rhetor from *Corduba* in the *Baetica* and was consul suffect in the year 56.[319] The fact that both were of the same circle leads Richter to think that Columella was also acquainted with the younger Seneca.

Columella invokes Gallio as *conscius* of his literary enterprise, a *nobilis* of provincial extraction like himself, who served in an eastern province. The Senecas' *Corduba*, like Columella's own *Gades*, had become a source for the new class of citizens of provincial origin who climbed to the rank of *equites*.[320] Columella effectively confirms his social rank through this unique connection, at the same time, as Richter states, he leaves no record of relations

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[318] L. Junius Gallio Annaeus. 9.16.2: *quae reliqua nobis rusticarum rerum pars subest, de cultu hortorum, Publi Silvine, deinceps ita, ut et tibi et Gallioni nostro complacuerat, in carmen conferemus.* ('The part of husbandry which still remains to be treated, namely the cultivation of gardens, we will now present in verse in accordance with the desire which both you, Publius Silvinus, and our friend Gallio were pleased to express.')

[319] 9.16.2. Richter (1981.3, 597–599) observes that, although he was not involved in the Pisonian conspiracy he was forced to take his life shortly afterwards. Cary–Scullard (1975, 401) mention him as proconsul in Achaea around the year 52 a.D. and he is mentioned in a chapter of *Acts of the Apostles* 18.12.1, as a *proconsular* of Achaea who dismissed an accusation against the Christian apostle Paul.

[320] Finley (1999), in his chapter on 'Orders and status' stresses the significance of the appearance of provincials in the equestrian order. He asks and answers, for example (p. 60): 'Why did Roman senators leave a clear field for the *equites* in the lucrative and politically important activity of tax–collection in the provinces? The answer is that they did so because the citizen–élite were not prepared, *in sufficient numbers*, to carry on those branches of the economy without which neither they nor their communitites could live at the level to which they were accustomed.'

with the imperial court.[321] We have already discussed connections with M. Trebellius, *tribunus militum* who appears in book 5 requesting treatment of land measurement,[322] with Claudius Augustalis,[323] with the consul suffect T. Clodius Eprius Marcellus,[324] and with his uncle M. Columella, the provincial aristocrat from whose ranks he himself hails, all men of social and political visibility.

Order differentiation through moral principles: *frugalitas priscorum*

The next problem involves identifying the ideological content as well as the social projection of this content which Columella intends to communicate to these *principes.* Not only was he not directly involved in court politics, there is no record of him participating in its literary circles. To the audience constituted by the group of individuals of equestrian order just mentioned, are meant to appeal the three historical *exempla* of *prisca frugalitas* in the preface of book 1 – Quinctius Cincinnatus, C. Fabricius and Curius Dentatus.[325] Columella, however, intends to transcend class and political status with another message: the models of *prisca frugalitas* work according to a principle of equality between the higher and lower orders

[321] Richter 1981.3, 612, n. 18: *Zum Kaiserhof scheint er keinerlei Beziehungen besessen zu haben*. ('Columella seems to have had no relationship with the imperial court'.)
[322] 5.1.2. See also Richter (1983.3, 592–593) and chapter 1, p. 15–16 (based on Hentz).
[323] See Richter (1981.3, 612).
[324] For Eprius Marcellus see Richter 1981.3, 168 & 595 & n. 28 for the dedication of one of the books (not easily identifiable) to the consul suffect (possibly in 62 a.D.) T. Eprius Clodius Marcellus.
[325] 1.pr.13–14.

(*summi* and *humillimi* in Columella's words), directly based on the Hesiodic myth of the golden age.[326] Earlier in the prose preface to the poem we read [10.pr.1]:

> *Superest ergo cultus hortorum segnis ac neglectus quondam veteribus agricolis, nunc vel celeberrimus. Siquidem cum parcior apud priscos esset frugalitas, largior tamen pauperibus fuit usus epularum lactis copia ferinaque ac domesticarum pecudum carne, velut aqua frumentoque, summis atque humillimis victum tolerantibus.*
>
> So the subject which has still to be dealt with is horticulture, which the husbandman of old carried out in a half–hearted and negligent fashion but which is now quite a popular pursuit. Though, indeed, among the ancients there was a stricter parsimony, the poor had a more generous diet, since highest and lowest alike sustained life on an abundance of milk and the flesh of wild and domestic animals as though on water and grain.

Virgil's humble Corycian farmer equaled his product to the wealth of kings (*regum aequabat opes animis*).[327] Columella, like Virgil, appeals to all orders, high and low.[328] In addition, he warns the *principes* to separate the practice of *horticulture* from the luxury attached to it in recent times. The example of the Corycian farmer shows that cultivation of the *hortus* is a realistic pursuit for an independent farmer with limited means. Columella's *gerulus*, in contrast, is a *vilicus* who, with his *dominus*' approval, may enjoy the profits of his semi–private enterprise. The superior *frugalitas* of the mythical *prisci*, as the *humillimi* enjoyed the use of the same *epulae* and the same *lactis copia* and *ferina caro, aqua et frumentum* as the *summi*, keeps the social and economic orders content but well separated.[329]

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[326] Columella uses the terms *summi* opposed to *inferiores* (for *humilles*) when comparing painters and sculptors in the preface to the opening book (1.pr.31). Those who are *inferiores* imitate the *summi*, and while the latter get the highest praise, the *inferiores* also share in that praise. This idea is analogous to that between the social orders of *summi* and *humillimi*.
[327] *Georg.* 4.132. (See also Fairclough–Goold's translation (1999, 227).)
[328] See Mynors (1990, 273).
[329] This statement, vaguely based on the myth of the ages, and like many more in the prose prefaces, is reminiscent of what Hardie has described as 'a natural–philosophical view of the

The reality of *res rusticae*: *turdi*

The principle of profit seems, at one point in the treatise, to override that of *prisca frugalitas*. Columella surprises the reader by giving formal treatment, within small–animal husbandry (*pastio villatica*) of book 8 (8.10), to the *turdus*, an item of luxury consumption and one whose cultivation requires a high expense of capital and labor.[330] Varro – Columella reports – has already elaborated on the current state of this investment: the *turdus* is especially profitable because it is favored in celebrations of public honor: it is often bought for three *denarii* apiece on the celebration of someone's triumph, as was the case in that of Scipio Metellus [Varro.3.2.15–16]:

> *'Atque in hac villa qui est ornithon, ex eo uno quinque milia scio venisse turdorum denariis ternis, ut sexaginta milia ea pars reddiderint eo anno villae, bis tantum quam tuus fundus ducentum iugerum Reate reddit.' 'Quid? Sexaginta,' inquit Axius, 'sexaginta, sexaginta? Derides.' 'Sexaginta,' inquam. 'Sed ad hunc bolum ut pervenias, opus erit tibi aut epulum aut triumphus alicuius, ut tunc fuit Scipionis Metelli, aut, collegiorum cenae, quae nunc innumerabiles excandefaciunt annonam macelli. Reliquis annis omnibus si non hanc expectabis summam, spero, non tibi decoquet ornithon; neque hoc accidit his moribus nisi raro ut decipiaris. Quotus quisque enim est annus, quo non videas epulum aut triumphum aut collegia non epulari? Sed propter luxuriam,' inquit, quodam modo epulum cotidianum est intra ianuas Romae.'*

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universe […] directed to serve the ends of a political or military universalist ideology'. (Hardie, 1986, 343.) Despite the fact that the link to the *Princeps* or his immediate circle is not explicit and that there is little explicit political or military content in his treatise, Columella's universalist ideology is an inherited reality.

[330] 8.10.1: *Turdis maior opera et impensa praebetur, qui omni quidem rure, sed salubrius in eo pascuntur, in quo capti sunt.* ('Still more labor and expense is spent on thrushes, which are kept in every country district, but, with greater advantage to their health, in that in which they have been caught.') The wild nature of the thrush requires quite a bit of extra work and unusual strategies in their nurturing, as Columella well describes in the rest of the chapter.

> 'Well, from the aviary alone which is in that villa, I happen to know that there were sold 5,000 thrushes, for three denarii apiece, so that that department of the villa in that year brought in sixty thousand sesterces – twice as much as your farm of 200 jugera at Reate brings in.' 'What? Sixty?' exclaimed Axius, 'Sixty, sixty? Are you joking?!' 'Sixty,' I repeated. 'But to reach such a haul as that you will need a public banquet or somebody's triumph, such as that of Metellus Scipio at that time, or the club dinners which are now so countless that they make the price of provisions to go soaring. If you can't look for this sum in all other years, your aviary, I hope, will not go bankrupt on you; and if fashions continue as they now are, it will happen only rarely that you miss your reckoning. For how rarely is there a year in which you do not see a banquet or a triumph, or when the clubs do not feast?' 'Why,' said he, 'in this time of luxury it may fairly be said that there is a banquet every day within the gates of Rome.'

Varro immediately gives the example of a writer named L. Abuccius (he writes in the manner of Lucilius) who, along with the elder Cato, earned substantially more income from the trade of thrushes and pond–fish than from their regular crops. Columella, in contrast, neither reproduces the lively dialogue, nor the biographical and historical details given by Varro and finishes the short section, as he concentrates on purely technical questions, with a comment on the reason why this is still for the *agricola* a field worthy of study [8.10.6]:

> *Hac impensa curaque M. Terentius ternis saepe denariis singulos emptitatos esse significat avorum temporibus, quibus qui triumphabant populo dabant epulum. At nunc aetatis nostrae luxuria cotidiana fecit haec pretia: propter quae ne rusticis quidem contemnendus sit hic reditus.*
>
> Thanks to the expenditure in this way of money and care, so Marcus Terentius informs us, these birds were often bought for three *denarii* a piece in our grandfathers' time, when those who celebrated triumphs gave a feast to the people. But at the present day luxury has made this their everyday price; wherefore this source of income must not be despised even by farmers.[331]

[331] Columella quotes Varro in several of his books – especially book 3 on the vine and book 8 on *pastio vilatica*, and here intertextual reference to his predecessor is enough to bring up the point of luxury. Before acknowledging the profitability of cultivating this wild bird, he quotes him without mention of neither Q. Metellus Scipio, nor L. Abuccius, nor Cato. Columella cuts through the personal detail to get to the abstract question of profit without further moral assessments.

Columella takes a realist position: because this bird has become a product of high consumption and has high monetary value, it is worth one whole chapter in the treatise. The fact that this is a luxury item is overridden by financial considerations. This concession to luxury is an act of practicality (*At nunc aetatis nostrae luxuria cotidiana fecit haec pretia: propter quae ne rusticis quidem contemnendus sit hic reditus*). This is an exception for Columella in the types of items included in *res rusticae*, but also a practical application of the *gerulus*' lesson.

Defining ideology and social order with respect to the *hortus*

The question remains of what is the significance of the *hortus* for the *Galliones*, *Claudii Augustales*, *M*. *Trebellii* and *Eprii Marcelli*, the *principes* of the opening of the treatise. They, along with Columella's uncle, were without doubt large land–owners. The *hortus*, however, is now a popular pursuit and its treatment in the poem, just like the case of the *turdus*, responds rather to a social reality than to technical necessity. Cultivating the *turdus* was already common practice in times of Varro, and those who could afford the expenses involved in its care should keep exploiting it because it is a good source of profit.[332] A mid–size land owner would not be able to own one of these aviaries, but could definitely afford a *hortus.*

By virtue of the connection to Virgil's Corycian farmer the *hortus* has a wider appeal, one that is both practical and ethical.[333] The virtue of *frugalitas* belongs to the land–holding population as much as to the aristocracy. For this class the *hortus*, although marginal to the

[332] See 10.pr.1
[333] *Georg.* 4.132–133

large economic dynamics, is symbolically and morally important. Its very existence ensures that the lower and middle can enjoy the same privileges as the upper orders. René Martin, who states that in the course of time smaller properties lose significance, both social and economic, also recognizes the persistence of mid–size properties:

> *En ce qui concerne l'importance de l'exploitation agricole 'Varron et Columelle reprennent en les modifiant à peine les indications de Caton'. Pour [Claude Mossé], du reste, dès l'époque de Caton et jusqu'à celle de Columelle, il existe en Italie – mise à part la petite exploitation payssane de plus en plus insignifiante – deux types de domaines et deux seulement: d'une part la moyenne propriété, 'utilisant une main–d'œuvre d'une dizaine d'esclaves', d'autre part 'le latifundium dont les têtes 'ne se comptent plus par dizaines, mais par centaines, etc.'*[334]

It is also important for both social cohesion and for the landed–aristocracy that the middle social substratum, formed by a more or less robust number of free owners, identifies with their same *ethos.* This *ethos*, as Diederich points out, remains in the control of the former:

> *sind zugleich Ausdruck der gesellschaftspolitischen Sonderinteressen und des Habitus einer ganz bestimmten Schicht, nämlich der landbesitzenden Senatorenschaft, die sich über die Landwirtschaft definiert. Außerdem streben sie immer wieder über das Banal–Sachliche hinaus nach einer ethischen Wertung und einer philosophisch–religiösen Durchdringung des bäuerlichen Handlungsraumes im Blick auf das Ganze einer Lebens– und Weltordnung.*[335]

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[334] R. Martin, ibid. What Martin states about Italy applies, with great probability, to properties in the provinces, or at least in the *Baetica* where Columella learned the lessons on farming from his uncle. Curchin, e.g. (1991, 130) states: 'The rich agricultural and mineral resources of Roman Spain are well known from ancient literary sources… Well over a thousand confirmed or possible villas have been identified and a growing number have been excavated, revealing the pressing and storage rooms, the slave quarters, the brick and amphora kilns, the opulence and sometimes the name of the owner.'

[335] Diederich (2007, 2): 'they are an expression of societal–political special interests and the *habitus* of a very definite stratum, namely the land–owning senatorship, which is defined by agriculture. In addition, they constantly strive beyond the bounds of the banal for an ethical evaluation and a philosophical–religious penetration of the rural area of action with regard to the whole of a life and world order.'

In order to preserve the social order, the middle and lower classes participate in the benefits created by the main engine of the Roman economy. Thus, as was the case for the *prisci*, the poor enjoyed just as much the *usus epularum*. As the *prisci* Romans are *exempla* of devotion to agriculture (*verum cum… admonear apud antiquos nostros fuisse gloriae curam rusticationis*) all free men participate in the moral and material benefits derived from agriculture.[336] The field – whether inherited (*patrius*) or acquired (*quaesitus*) – is both the *locus* of a quintessential ancient Roman virtue and of the Roman land itself also in the social structures of the Principate. Thus, the displeasure that the *pristinus mos* and the *virilis vita* has over *luxuria et deliciae nostrae* shows the opposite end to this Roman quintessential identity [1.pr.14]:

> *et ne singulos intempestive nunc persequar, cum tot alios Romani generis intuear memorabiles duces hoc semper duplici studio floruisse vel defendendi vel colendi patrios quaesitosve fines, intellego luxuriae et deliciis nostris pristinum morem virilemque vitam displicuisse.*
>
> 'And, not unseasonably to run through individual cases at this time, when I observe that so many other renowned captains of Roman stock were invariably distinguished in this twofold pursuit of either defending or tilling their ancestral or acquired estates, I understand that yesterday's morals and strenuous manner of living are out of tune with our present extravagance and devotion to pleasure.'

This is also the *duplex studium* in which the *duces* – the *Senatorenschaft* – flourished. *Senatorenschaft* needs to be understood in a broad sense to include the whole class of free land–owners: the *equestrian* order, which now includes provincial *novi homines*, like Columella's uncle or himself, who may have enough resources and social or political connections not only to exert influence in their respective provincial *municipia*, but also to be

[336] 1.pr.13

present in Rome at some point in their lives. They, like Columella, may not be interested in following the *cursus honorum* beyond the military tribunate.[337] The social dynamics themselves have not changed from the times of the Licinio–Sextian *Rogationes*.[338] As is to be expected in agricultural societies, Rome was one with little inclination to change. But, although change of structure is slow, Columella's treatise shows a considerable evolution from earlier treatises at several levels. These changes in the treatise reflect other changes that were effectively happening within the subsiding structures and discourses: social, political, scientific, and literary.

A practical *sententia* of a pre–capitalist ideology

Abstract principles always have practical applications for Columella. On the question of sizes of *latifundia* (and mid–size properties) in republican and imperial Rome, Martin avoids categorical statements: it is difficult to come up with stable data on real land measurements and what would have been the tendencies of growth and decrease through time. Columella, however, offers a glimpse into a principle which favors a relative approach with practical manifestations of agricultural principles. Thus he states, quoting Virgil for the first time, the ideal size of an *ager* [1.3.8–9]:[339]

> *Nos ad cetera praecepta illud adicimus, quod sapiens unus de septem in perpetuum posteritati pronuntiavit, adhibendum modum mensuramque rebus,*

[337] See Martin (1978, 343) who avoids categorical statements with respect to the state of the sizes of tracts of *ager publicus*, and below, the discussion of the provincial upper class in Rome.
[338] For discussion of the significance of the *Licinio–Sextian Rogationes* as reflection of the social dynamics associated with agriculture see, e.g., Cornell (1995, 327–344).
[339] The common assumption is that the *De Arboribus* belongs to an earlier treatise.

idque ut non solum aliud acturis, sed et agrum paraturis dictum intellegatur, ne maiorem, quam ratio calculorum patitur, emere velint. Nam huc pertinet praeclara nostri poetae sententia:

laudato ingentia rura,
exiguum colito.

Quod vir eruditissimus, ut mea fert opinio, traditum vetus praeceptum numeris signavit, quippe acutissimam gentem Poenos dixisse convenit imbecilliorem agrum quam agricolam esse debere, quoniam, cum sit conluctandum cum eo, si fundus praevaleat, adlidi dominum. Nec dubium quin minus reddat laxus ager non recte cultus quam angustus eximie.

To the other injunctions we add one which one of the Seven Sages delivered to posterity for all time: that measure and proportion be applied to all things, and that this be understood as spoken not only to those who are to embark on some other enterprise, but also to those who are to acquire land – not to want to buy more than a regard for their reckonings allows. For this is the meaning of that famous maxim of our own poet:

Admire large farms, but yet a small one till.

This precept, which a most learned man has expressed in verse, is, in my opinion, a heritage from antiquity, inasmuch as it is agreed that the Carthaginians, a very shrewd people, had the saying that the farm should be weaker than the farmer; for, as he must wrestle with it, if the land prove stronger, the master is crushed.[340]

Columella presents this principle as inherited from one of the seven sages, and stated by *noster poeta* (Virgil), a *traditum vetus praeceptum* – transmitted by the *Poeni*, *acutissima gens.* The size of the *ager* needs to be directly proportional to the *agricola's* management capacity and capital – *adhibendum modum mensuramque rebus*: technical and material capacity for performance comes first; then capital capacity to back the project and avoid falling into debt; a common occurrence for owners of *agri publici* throughout history and one whose consequences offer few opportunities to correct. Consideration of capital is, therefore, important: '*ne maiorem, quam ratio calculorum patitur, emere velint*'. Success is measured,

[340] The quotation (*laudato ingentia rura*) is from Virgil's *Georgics* 2.412–413. Ash (1941, 47–49).

once more, by profit in proportion to the size of the field, in a chapter of book 1 (1.3) about the choice of land for purchase, at the head of which are the considerations given by Cato: *salubritatem caeli et ubertatem loci*.[341] The principle had been stated by Cato in his characteristic *brevitas* [Cato 1.6–7]:

> *Videto, quam minimi instrumenti sumptuosusque ager ne siet. Scito idem agrum quod hominem, quamvis quaestuosus siet, si sumptuosus erit, relinqui non multum.*
>
> See that [the farm] be equipped as economically as possible, and that the land be not extravagant. Remember that a farm is like a man – however great the income, if there is extravagance but little is left.[342]

The quotation of Virgil also comes from a passage about a lucrative part of agriculture – the vine,[343] and anticipates the Corycian farmer who could only afford a few *iugera* of land, not adequate for greater cattle nor for cereal or vines.[344] In this passage, also Virgil shows he is well

[341] The opening of chapter 3 (1.3.1) states: *Porcius quidem Cato censebat inspiciendo agro praecipue duo esse consideranda, salubritatem caeli et ubertatem loci; quorum si alterum deesset ac nihilo minus quis vellet incolere mente esse captum atque eum ad agnatos et gentiles deducendum.* ('Porcius Cato, indeed, held the opinion that in the inspection of farm land two considerations were of chief importance – the wholesomeness of the climate, and the fruitfulness of the region; and that if either of these were wanting and one had the desire none the less to live there, he had lost his senses and should be turned over to his legal guardians.') Ash quotes Varro and the Law of 12 tables, as well as Cicero's *De inv.* 2.50 (148). I thank Professor Catherine Connors for pointing out this passage and its topical connection with the Law of 12 tables. Mynors (1990, 412–413) quotes Palladius (1.6.8) and states with regard to the mention of the *Poeni*: 'this suggests the Punic expert, Mago'.

[342] The translation is Hooper–Ash's (1934, 5). Virgil's *sententia* comes from *Georg.* 2.412–413. Fairclough (1999, 165, n. 19) states: 'An old adage already used by Cato: it is more profitable to till a small farm well than a large one badly.'

[343] *Georg.* 2.396–419 treats the vine and starts (296–297): *Est etiam ille labor curandis vitibus alter, / cui numquam exhausti satis est.* This section concerns *labor* in Virgil. Columella devotes almost three books 3, 4, and much of 5 to the vine. This is later famously pointed out by the elder Pliny.

[344] *Georg.* 4.127–129

attuned to the practical aspects of farming, as Mynors states: 'this is not a list of miscellaneous precepts, but an account of what must always be done in one department'.[345]

Deep structure: sources of georgic wisdom

Another problem of interpretation when reading Columella is the significance he assigns to georgic poetry, and, specifically, the degree in which he resorts to Hesiod and other poets beyond Virgil.[346] Columella refers to Hesiod with great reverence and this points to the central role that the founder of georgic wisdom has in Columella's ideological program.[347] We will see, in the following pages, what motifs Columella takes from him. Underneath the two times Columella quotes Hesiod directly, there are clear allusions to some central Hesiodic themes.[348] The reference to Virgil's *laudato ingentia rura, / exiguum colito* is at a deeper level a reference to *Op.* 643 where the object is ships, rather than farms. Hesiod, however, states that the means of production – the size of a merchant ship – are in direct – rather than inverse – proportion to monetary gain. A larger vessel is preferable to a smaller ship because it would resist sea storms, but also because the greater the *φόρτος* the greater the *κέρδος*. That he does not show yet a clear concern for the cost/profit ratio in the same way Cato and Columella understand the management of property, shows an aspect in which the theme of the

[345] Mynors (1990, 152, n. 397–419) commenting on *Georg.* 2.396–419.
[346] We have already seen some of those poets in the discussion of Vertumnus in chapter 2.
[347] See 1.1.7 (*princeps celeberrimus vates*) & 1.3.9 (*eruditissimus*).
[348] 1.3.5 & 11.1.29 (see below).

intertextual reference has evolved.[349] Columella's *madefactus gerulus*, who takes up the trade of the merchant on top of his trade as horticulturist, also agrees with Hesiod's advice to Perses, to consider profit the result of *labor*, something highly desirable [*Op.*641–645]:

> *Τύνη δ᾽, ὦ Πέρση, ἔργων μεμνημένος εἶναι*
> *ὡραίων πάντων, περὶ ναυτιλίης δὲ μάλιστα.*
> *νῆ᾽ ὀλίγην αἰνεῖν, μεγάλῃ δ᾽ ἐνὶ φορτία θέσθαι.*
> *μείζων μὲν φόρτος, μεῖζον δ᾽ ἐπὶ κέρδεϊ κέρδος*
> *ἔσσεται, εἴ κ᾽ ἄνεμοί γε κακὰς ἀπέχωσιν ἀήτας.*
>
> But you, Perses, remember all works in their season but sailing especially. Admire a small ship, but put your freight in a large one; for the greater the lading, the greater will be your piled gain, if only the winds will keep back their harmful gales.[350]

Another common element in the literature of both the agricultural and merchant trades – in both didactic poetry and prose – of keeping up with the time of the seasons is, as we can see, expressed already by Hesiod: *Τύνη δ᾽ ἔργων μεμνημένος εἶναι* / *ὡραίων πάντων*. If the element of timeliness is not directly connected to gain, it belongs to the same order of things. Columella presents the same idea, but in negative terms: profit is lost when timeliness is not observed, and thus he states when he lists the duties of the *vilicus* in book 11.1.28:

> *Nam etsi multum prodest scientia, plus tamen obest imprudentia et neglegentia, maxime in rusticatione; cuius est disciplinae caput semel fecisse quicquid exegerit ratio culturae. Nam quamvis interdum emendata sit perperam facti imprudentia vel neglegentia, res tamen ipsa iam domino decoxit, nec mox in tantum exuberat, ut et iacturam capitis amissi restituat, et quaestum resarciat.*
>
> For, although knowledge is a great advantage, ignorance or carelessness does more harm than knowledge does good, especially in agriculture, of which art the chief point is to have done, once and for all, whatever the method of cultivation shall have required. For, though ignorance and carelessness, which have caused something to be done amiss, can sometimes be remedied, yet the master's

[349] In agriculture a desire for large fields could, and does eventually, come into play as capital protection against debt in the case of bad crops.
[350] The translation is Evelyn–White's (1914, 50).

property has already been impaired and cannot afterwards yield a great enough increase to make up for the loss of capital and restore the lost profit.

Risk management: *Serere ne dubites*[351]

This quote also shows the close dependence of *quaestus* on *scientia, prudentia et diligentia*, all present in the final objective in Columella's agricultural enterprise. This he has established as early as in 1.8.14, where he gives instructions to the *vilicus*.[352] Here (1.8.14) he establishes, first, that he understands *scientia* to be a practical knowledge: '*perite [ali]quid facere*'. The *usus et experientia* expressed elsewhere, being a factor of the *peritia* with which the task is performed, will prevent the mistakes done on account of *imprudentia et neglegentia*. Columella establishes, second, the golden rule of agriculture: '*quicquid exigit ratio culturae, semel facere*'.[353] That this idea is important is shown by the virtual repetition of its statement in book 11 – a common trait, we have seen, of this book. Differences and identical repetitions between the two indicate those points Columella intends to have firmly established at 1.8.14:

> *Nam cum multum prodest perite quid facere, tum plus obest perperam fecisse. Unum enim ac solum dominatur in rusticatione, quicquid exigit ratio culturae, semel facere, quippe cum emendatur vel imprudentia vel neglegentia, iam res ipsa decoxit nec in tantum postmodo exuberat, ut et se amissam restituat et quaestum temporum praeteritorum resarciat.*

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[351] Mynors (1990, 158) on *Georg.* 2.433 (*et dubitant homines serere atque impendere curam?* ('And can men be slow to plant and bestow care?)): 'the rustic proverb in Col. 11.1.29 '*serere ne dubites* (Otto no. 1631) is a precept against delay.'

[352] The title of this section in the table of contents reads: '*Qualis corporaturae mancipia cumque operi instituenda sint*'. ('Slaves' workload according to their physical condition.') Richter (1981.3, 8). (This appears also in R.1.7 fol. 193 r.)

[353] Notice, for instance, the slight variation in the expression in 11.1.28: '*semel fecisse quicquid exegerit ratio culturae*'.

> For not only is it very helpful to do a thing skillfully, but even more so is it hurtful to have done it incorrectly. For there is one and only one controlling principle in agriculture, namely, to do once and for all the thing which the method of cultivation requires; since when ignorance or carelessness has to be rectified, the matter at stake has already suffered impairment and never recovers thereafter to such an extent as to regain what it has lost and to restore the profit of time that has passed.

Imprudentia and *neglegentia* lead not just to random loss but, more importantly, to an irreparable loss of profit: '*iam res ipsa decoxit nec in tantum postmodo exuberat, ut et se amissam restituat et quaestum temporum praeteritorum resarciat*'. In positive terms, the golden rule for agriculture is a combination of knowledge and timeliness.[354]

The price of delay: *ἄτη*

Again Columella, twice with this principle, resorts to *tradita vetera praecepta*, those of Hesiod, who also formulates the negative consequences of an action or lack thereof. In the following example Hesiod is quoted to make the agronomist aware of the passing of time and to avoid delay and its negative consequences at all costs [11.1.29]:

> *Praelabentis vero temporis fuga quam sit irreparabilis, quis dubitet? Eius igitur memor praecipue semper caveat, ne improvidus ab opere vincatur. Res est agrestis insidiosissima cunctancti, quod ipsum expressius vetustissimus auctor Hesiodus hoc versu significavit:*
>
> *Αἰεὶ δ' ἀμβολιεργὸς ἀνὴρ ἄταισι παλαίει.*
>
> *Quare vulgare illud de arborum positione rusticis usurpatum, serere ne dubites, sit vilicus ad agri totum cultum referri iudicet, credatque, praetermissas non duodecim horas sed annum periisse, nisi sua quaque die quod instat effecerit.*[355]

[354] Henderson (2002, 106) mentions the importance of timing and the discusses the overlapping between the two sections on the duties of the *vilicus* (1.8 and 11.1)
[355] *Op.*413. See discussion below.

> Who can doubt how irreparable is the flight of time as it slips away? The *vilicus*, mindful of this, should always beware above all things, lest, through want of forethought, he be overcome by his work; for agriculture is very apt to deceive the dilatory man, a fact which the very ancient author Hesiod has expressed rather forcibly in this line:
>
> He who delays must aye with ruin strive.
>
> Wherefore let the *vilicus* hold that the opinion about the planting of trees common on the lips of husbandmen, 'never hesitate to plant,' is applicable to the whole of agriculture, and let him be sure that not merely twelve hours but a whole year has been lost, if pressing work is not carried out on its own proper day.

The main injunction in this section devoted to the *vilicus* is to observe that awareness of the passage of time and vigilance deflects *ἄτη*. The *res agrestis*, more than any other trade, is particularly treacherous for him who delays. Hesiod's passage from which Columella quotes contains pertinent instruction about the basic items the husbandman ought to take care of if he wants to be financially independent [*Op.* 405–413]:

> *Οἶκον μὲν πρώτιστα γυναῖκά τε βοῦν τ᾽ ἀροτῆρα,*
> *κτητήν, οὐ γαμετήν, ἥτις καὶ βουσὶν ἕποιτο,*
> *χρήματα δ᾽ ἐν οἴκῳ πάντ᾽ ἄρμενα ποιήσασθαι,*
> *μὴ σὺ μὲν αἰτῇς ἄλλον, ὃ δ᾽ ἀρνῆται, σὺ δὲ τητᾷ,*
> *ἡ δ᾽ ὥρη παραμείβηται, μινύθῃ δὲ τὸ ἔργον.*
> *μηδ᾽ ἀναβάλλεσθαι ἔς τ᾽ αὔριον ἔς τε ἔνηφιν·*
> *οὐ γὰρ ἐτωσιοεργὸς ἀνὴρ πίμπλησι καλιὴν*
> *οὐδ᾽ ἀναβαλλόμενος· μελέτη δὲ τὸ ἔργον ὀφέλλει·*
> *αἰεὶ δ᾽ ἀμβολιεργὸς ἀνὴρ ἄτῃσι παλαίει.*[356]
>
> … a *villa* first of all, a woman, and an ox for plowing – the woman one you purchase, not marry, one who can follow with the oxen – and arrange everything well in the house, lest you ask someone else and he refuse and you suffer want, and the season pass by, and the fruit of your work be diminished. Do not postpone until tomorrow and the next day: for the futilely working man does not fill his granary, nor does the postponer; industry fosters work, and the work–postponing man is always wrestling with calamities.

[356] West (1978, 261, 413) comments on the irregular formation of the word *ἀμβολιεργός*, and states that, perhaps because of its irregularity, it is a felicitous expression. (The translation is West's.)

The text shows a very specific approach and style of didactic literature. After the first preparations – the *villa*, a woman, a plough – comes the expression of preparedness in the house – *χρήματα πάντ᾽ ἄρμενα ποιήσασθαι* – so you may not have to ask for a loan, and be denied it. Then we find insistence on the urgency of time: to let the season pass by, leads to capital loss.[357] Columella's choice of verse *Op.* 413 signals that his own passage is a paraphrase of several of the observations made by Hesiod, beyond the quoted verse itself. It also shows a close reading of Hesiod's passage and an affinity towards practical statements that is not as clear–cut in Virgil, although Hesiod hints at an awareness of the contest of the myth of the ages – through the verse quoted by Columella (413), which more directly points to the *ἄτη* associated with the iron age.

For Hesiod the prevention of *ἄτη* requires industry on specifically practical points: in order to fill the granary – *πίμπλήσι καλιήν* – industry helps fulfilling the task – *μελέτη δὲ τὸ ἔργον ὀφέλλει*. Columella replaces industry with foresight when he insists that the *vilicus* be consciously careful lest he is defeated by the work because of his lack of foresight: *eius igitur memor praecipue semper caveat, ne improvidus ab opere vincatur.* Columella also paraphrases with a degree of *variatio* – *res est agrestis insidiosissima cunctanti* – the verse he quotes directly – *αἰεὶ δ᾽ ἀμβολιεργὸς ἀνὴρ ἄτῃσι παλαίει.*

A personal note (under the inspiration of Hesiod)

[357] A point that Columella earnestly takes up.

Twice Hesiod presents *κέρδος* without negative connotations in connection with sailing and trade. The first is the passage quoted above in which he advices Perses to load a greater ship in order to obtain greater profit. In another passage in which he narrates his father's departure from Aeolian Cyme fleeing penury, the purpose of profit is to avoid not *λιμός* and *ἄτη*, but *πηνία.* Thus Hesiod brings in an autobiographical note to his narrative [*Op.* 630–638]:

> *Αὐτὸς δ᾽ ὡραῖον μίμνειν πλόον, εἰς ὅ κεν ἔλθῃ.*
> *καὶ τότε νῆα θοὴν ἅλαδ᾽ ἑλκέμεν, ἐν δέ τε φόρτον*
> *ἅρμενον ἐντύνασθαι, ἵν᾽ οἴκαδε κέρδος ἄρηαι.*[358]
> *ὥς περ ἐμός τε πατὴρ καὶ σὸς μέγα νήπιε Πέρση*
> *πλωίζεσκ᾽ ἐν νηυσὶ βίου κεχρημένος ἐσθλοῦ.*
> *ὅς ποτε καὶ τύιδ᾽ ἦλθε πολὺν διὰ πόντον ἀνύσσας*
> *Κύμην Αἰολίδα προλιπὼν ἐν νηὶ μελαίνῃ,*
> *οὐκ ἄφενος φεύγων οὐδὲ πλοῦτον τε καὶ ὄλβον,*
> *ἀλλὰ κακὴν πενίην, τὴν Ζεὺς ἄνδρεσσι δίδωσιν.*
>
> You yourself wait until the sailing season arrives, and then drag your swift boat down to the sea, arrange the cargo in it and get it ready so that you can bring the profit home, just as my father and yours, Perses, you great fool, used to sail in boats, deprived as he was of a fine means of life. Once he came here too, after he had crossed over a big sea, leaving behind Aeolian Cyme in a black boat, fleeing not wealth nor riches nor prosperity, but evil poverty, which Zeus gives to men.[359]

By giving the biographical example of their own father who left Cyme to flee poverty, Hesiod personalizes a rude fact of life. This not only adds a personal tone to the instruction and advice given to his brother Perses but gives the abstract idea of *πενία*, if not *λιμός*, a human

[358] The verb *ἀρήαι* (aor.2 med. 2nd sg. *ἄρνυμαι*, to win, gain) adds emphasis to *κέρδος*.
[359] Elsewhere West (1978, 244, n.352) opposes the two principles which, by now, we have identified as *ἄτη* and *λιμός* (or *πηνία*), to *κέρδος*. Columella introduces the theme of *λιμός* with a quote (his only) of Homer (*Od.* 12.342) in 2.2.7 among his discussion of qualities of soils: *Nam ille mortem facit, hic taeterrimam comitem mortis famem, si tamen Graecis camenis habemus fidem clamitantibus*: *λιμῷ δ᾽ οἰκτιστον θανέειν.* 'For the one type brings death, and this brings starvation, that most frightful attendant of death, if we may trust the Grecian Muses, who cry: 'To die of hunger is the bitterest of fates'.'

face. In Columella's poetry the comical figure of the *madefactus holitor*, certainly representing a member of a *familia*, takes the place of the closer in kin and more personal Perses. Columella preserves thus the *feel* of the familial business. In the prose books, rather than through the poetic image of the *holitor*, he attains this through the multiple mentions of his uncle *M. Columella patruus meus* (2.15.4, 5.5.15, etc.), always a knowledgeable and diligent farmer, who taught him agriculture in the Baetica province. His informal familiarity with his addressee Silvinus contributes to this effect, as it does when he conventionally but familiarly addresses *M. Trebellius noster* (5.1.2), *Gallio noster* (9.16.2), and *noster Augustalis* (11.1.2). The sciences of agriculture and economics still have a human face, in line with a requirement of didactic texts.[360]

Hesiod and the dark side of profit

There is also a difference of effect between Columella's late didactic poem and its archetype. Hesiod's approach to agriculture gives the impression of being far in net size from the large–estate mass–production agriculture of the time of Columella. We can assume that agriculture in the archaic ages is closer to the subsistence principle poetically formulated later, albeit symbolically, by the poets of the late Republic through the expression *inemptae dapes*. As Martin has argued, there is no certainty that small–land farming had disappeared completely, but this is the farming preferably invoked in moral *exempla* – at least by Virgil through the Corycian farmer, and Columella through the *exempla* of historical Roman figures.

[360] I thank Professor James Clauss for bringing to my attention this particular point.

In small–land farming moral principles seem to manifest themselves with greater directness in a theme often repeated by Hesiod: fleeing *ἄτη* or *λιμός*. These are so close together that we encounter them both associated among themselves and absent in the just man (*Op.*230):

> *οὐδε ποτ᾽ ἰθυδίκῃσι μετ᾽ ἀνδράσι λιμὸς ὀπηδεῖ*
> *οὐδ᾽ ἄτη, θαλίῃς δὲ μεμηλότα ἔργα νέμονται.*
>
> Neither famine nor disaster ever haunt men who do true justice; but light–heartedly they tend the fields which are all their care.

Columella, however, brandishes his moral rod as he brings in the subject of *fames* as in the example above, just as when he presents the reasons why agriculture is in decline: the loss of competitiveness of Italian farms due to the expansion of trans–maritime markets signaled by the auctions announced with the presence of the *hasta* [1.pr.20]:[361]

> *Itaque in hoc Latio et 'Saturnia terra,' ubi di fructus agrorum progeniem suam docuerant, ibi nunc ad hastam locamus, ut nobis ex transmarinis provinciis advehatur frumentum, ne fame laboremus, et vindemias condimus ex insulis Cycladibus ac regionibus Baeticis Gallicisque.*
>
> So, then, in this Latium and 'Saturnian land,' where the gods had taught their offspring of the fruits of the fields, we let contracts at auction for the importation of grain from our provinces beyond the sea, that we may not suffer hunger; and we lay up our stores of wine from the Cyclades Islands and from the districts of Baetica and Gaul.

This passage is emblematic on different levels. First, the 'Ennian' quotation recalls the *laudes Italiae* of Virgil (*Georg.* 2.173): *Salve, magna parens frugum, Saturnia tellus, / magna*

[361] Ash (1941, 17) explains: 'Lit. 'at the spear.' A spear was stuck in the ground at the place where an auction was held, originally as a sign of the sale of plunder taken in battle.' An example of sales of plunder taken in battle can be read in Livy 5.16.7: *Biduum ad recognoscendas res datum dominis; tertio incognita – erant autem ea pleraque hostium ipsorum – sub hasta veniere, quodque inde redactum militibus est divisum.* ('Two days were allowed the owners to identify their property; on the third all that had not been recognized – chiefly things belonging to the enemy themselves – was sold under the spear and the proceeds divided amongst the soldiers.')

virum). The brief quotation, at this early stage of the treatise, has the function of stressing certain points – a signpost – concerning the *ethos* of *agri cultura*.[362]

In this passage Columella also complains explicitly (a new circumstance not present in Hesiod nor in Hesiod's time) about the trade in which the transmarine provinces are squeezing the local farmer out of business – whether strictly in *Latium* or Italy in general. Columella locates physically where the shift has occurred: *ubi di fructus agrorum progeniem suam docuerant, ibi nunc ad hastam locamus.* He thus implies a violation of sacred space, if only symbolically, where the gods taught agriculture to their descendants, to one where the large–scale provincial products have shamelessly taken over.[363]

The following paragraph describes the devaluation of agriculture even further away from its status when the gods taught it to their *progenies in hoc Latio et* '*Saturnia terra*' [1.pr.20]:

> *Nec mirum, cum sit publice concepta et confirmata iam vulgaris existimatio rem rusticam sordidum opus et id esse negotium quod nullius egeat magisterio praeceptove.*
>
> Nor is it to be wondered at, seeing that the common notion is now generally entertained and established that farming is a mean employment and a business which has no need of direction or of precept.

[362] The quote, as Ash (1941, 16) states, is attributed to Ennius. Skutsch (1985, 179–180) arrives at the conclusion that *Saturnia terra* denotes *Latium* and not the whole of Italy. He also argues against Lundström, who attributes the whole phrase '*hoc Latium et Saturnia terra*' to Ennius, and says that only '*Saturnia terra*' can be attributed to Ennius. (In that case, the expression *hoc Latio* is Columella's alone and should not be included in the quotation marks: *hoc Latio et* 'Saturna terra'.)

[363] Columella does not offer in his treatise an invocation comparable to that to the *dei Consentis* whom Varro (1.1.5–6) invokes at the opening of his treatise.

The divinely–taught activity of farming has been demoted and reduced to reception of provincial goods. Implicitly, Italy has become a land of merchants while Hesiod assigned both tasks, that of the *agricola* and that of the *merchant*, to the same person, Perses. Columella's *gerulus* (308) under the statue of *Vertumnus*, enjoying the gains he obtained from selling his own produce, the addressee who is being advised to say the praises of *Fors Fortuna* (10.316–317) and the *securus* reproduces for a moment both the *holitor* and the *gerulus mercator*, just as Hesiod's Perses. When Hesiod discusses *κέρδος* elsewhere (*Op.*322–326), however, he warns against the dangers of profit deceiving the mind in quite morally personal and somber tones:

> *οἷά τε πολλὰ*
> *γίνεται, εὖτε ἄν δὴ κέρδος νόον ἐξαπατήσει*
> *ἀνθρώπων, Αἰδῶ δε τ᾽ Ἀναιδείη κατοπάζῃ,*
> *ῥεῖα δέ μιν μαυροῦσι θεοί, μινύθουσι δὲ οἶκον*
> *ἀνέρι τῷ, παῦρον δέ τ᾽ ἐπὶ χρόνον ὄλβος ὀπηδεῖ.*
>
> As often happens when profit deceives the mind of human beings and Shamelessness drives Shame away, then the gods easily make him obscure, and they diminish the man's household, and wealth attends him for only a short time.

The terms of this moral *dictum* are quite harsh: the shamelessness associated with profit drives *αἰδός* away; the gods obscure the man who succumbs to it; his patrimony diminishes, and short is the time in which bliss attends the enjoyment of profit. Not much later (*Op.* 352) he warns against seeking profit through evil means – *μὴ κακὰ κερδαίνειν· κακὰ κέρδεα ἶσ᾽ ἀάτῃσιν* – and stresses thus an association of profit not only with ethically negative connotations but with *ἄτη* itself.[364] There is a morally wrong way to pursue profit and, although

[364] *Op.*352: 'Do not seek profit evilly: evil profit is as bad as calamities.'

πλεονεξία is not yet likely to happen in Hesiod,[365] *avaritia* is a concept whose negative effects Columella considers frequently with connotations closer to those of *ἄτη*, rather than those of *αἰδός*. In 3.3.6, e.g., *avaritia* is one of the reasons why the vineyards do not yield a return:

> *Fructum vero plerique quam uberrimum praesentem consectantur, nec provident futuro tempori, sed quasi plane in diem vivant, sic imperant vitibus, et eas ita multis palmitibus onerant, ut posteritati non consulant. Haec omnia vel certe plurima ex his cum commiserunt, quidvis malunt quam suam culpam confiteri; querunturque non respondere sibi vineta, quae vel per avaritiam vel inscientiam vel per neglegentiam perdiderunt.*
>
> Most people, in fact, strive for the richest possible yield at the earliest moment; they make no provision for the time to come, but, as if living merely from day to day, they put such demands upon their vines and load them so heavily with young shoots as to show no regard for succeeding generations. After committing all these acts, or at any rate most of them, they would rather do anything at all than admit their own guilt; and they complain that their vineyards do not yield them a return – vineyards which they themselves have ruined through greed, or ignorance, or neglect.

This *avaritia* is more specific, and more specifically tied to financial necessity, than the more general *εὖτε ἄν δὴ κέρδος νόον ἐξαπατήσει / ἀνθρώπων* of Hesiod (*Op.* 323–324) in the passage quoted above. *Avaritia* when combined with *inscientia* and *neglegentia*, habits opposed to the lessons learned through *usus et experientia*, shows that those who *quam uberrimum praesentem consectantur, nec provident futuro tempori*, run into problems with the next generations of vines which later do not respond to the same demands. This *avaritia* concerns earlier stages in the production than the probably more immediate *κέρδος* which, as Hesiod tells, has the capacity to confound the minds of men, but both have the same effect: *ἄτη*.

[365] This abstract concept does not appear in the Hesiodic corpus.

In a later passage in book 4 (4.3.1–3), still regarding the vine, Columella exposes those who, led by *avaritia* build *domos, navigia*, or buy cattle or *mancipia*, but later fail to keep them up. Some even act greedily (*avare*), he continues, with their children, when they neglect the training of their minds and nourishment of their bodies [4.3.2]:

> *Ac ne ista, Silvine, miremur, liberos suos nonnulli nuptiis votisque quaesitos avare nutriunt, nec disciplinis aut ceteris corporis excolunt instrumentis.*
>
> And that we may not wonder at these statements, Silvinus, some men are niggardly (*avare*) in the nurture of their children – objects of their marriage ties and solemn prayers – and do not look to their improvement through the training of the mind or through the general furnishings of the body.[366]

Columella applies a methodological principle of analogy to this concept with moral undertones. The general moral principle against *avaritia* is thus not different when applied to vines or to the nourishment of children. It is soon applied again, however, to the vine [4.3.2–3]:

> *Quid his colligitur? Scilicet plerumque simili genere peccari etiam ab agricolis, qui pulcherrime positas vineas, antequam pubescant, variis ex causis destituunt: alii sumptum annuum refugientes, et hunc primum reditum certissimum existimantes, impendere nihil; quasi plane fuerit necesse vineas facere, quae mox avaritia desererent. Nonnulli magna potius quam culta vineta possidere pulchrum esse ducunt. Cognovi iam plurimos, qui persuasum haberent atrum bonis ac malis rationibus colendum.*
>
> What is the inference of all this? Obviously that errors of like nature are commonly made by husbandmen also, who for various reasons abandon their most beautifully planted vineyards before they reach the age of bearing, some shrinking from the yearly expense and thinking it the first and surest income to have no outgo at all; as if they were only to quit them presently because of their greed. Some consider it a fine thing to have extensive rather than well–tended vineyards. I have known a very great number also who were convinced that their land must be cultivated, whether by good methods or bad.

[366] Ash (1941, 361)

And thus Virgil's *sententia* (1.3.8–9: *laudato ingentia rura / exiguum colito*) gets restated in a practical and technical environment.[367] In the section on sheep in book 7, Columella writes about *avaritia* in this sense. Here he advises against being *avarus* in the treatment of the Greek or *Tarentine* breed [7.4.1]:

> *Nam cum sit universum genus lanigerum ceteris pecudibus mollius, tum ex omnibus Tarentinum est mollissimum, quod nullam domini aut magistrorum ineptiam sustinet, multoque minus avaritiam; nec aestus, nec frigoris patiens.*
>
> For while all the sheep which are kept for their wool are more delicate than the others, the *Tarentine* breed is particularly so, for it does not tolerate any carelessness on the part of the owner or shepherd, much less *avaritia*, nor can it stand heat or cold.

Although the abstract concept of *πλεονεξία* (as equivalent to *avaritia*) is not used by Hesiod, the comparatives *πλείων* and *μείζων* occur in the context of material gain with a positive connotations. This is expressed by the statement *μείζων μὲν φόρτος, μεῖζον δ᾽ ἐπὶ κέρδεϊ κέρδος* / *ἔσσεται* in *Op.* 644–645 (the greater the laden, the greater the profit), and earlier in *Op.* 379–380, by the statement:

> *Ῥεῖα δέ κεν πλεόνεσσι πόροι Ζεὺς ἄσπετον ὄλβον.*
> *πλείων μὲν πλεόνων μελέτη, μείζων δ᾽ ἐπιθήκη.*
>
> Yet Zeus can easily give great wealth to a greater number. More hands mean more work and more increase.

In this statement the objective of wealth is so that a greater number (*πλεόνεσσι*) benefit from it and the greater the working hand, the greater the profit.[368] There is a subtle development in these instances from the more general negative earlier statement of Hesiod in

[367] See above.
[368] Herodotus will later use the abstract term *πλεονεξία*, not completely divorced conceptually from Hesiod's use of *μείζων* and *πλείων.*

323–324 (*εὖτε ἂν δὴ κέρδος νόον ἐξαπατήσει / ἀνθρώπων*) who sees it threatening the loss of shame of those who do not hold it in check. In the earlier passage, Hesiod implies that this *avaritia / πλεονεξία* leads through shamelessness to loss of property – *μινύθουσι δὲ οἶκον / ἀνέρι τῷ* – and a temporally shortened enjoyment of one's gains – *παῦρον δέ τ᾽ ἐπὶ χρόνον ὄλβος ὀπηδεῖ*.[369] The later passage (*Op.* 379–380) shows good *πλεονεξία*, that which benefits the greatest number.

The abstract concept of *avaritia*, in contrast, has acquired more specific connotations for Columella (niggardliness or stinginess), negative traits when it comes to care for the nourishment of the children as well as in the management of vines or sheep. We have also read Columella's accusation against the *principes* who delight too often in luxury while in the golden age the *humiles* also could enjoy the same *inemptae dapes*. The first have contributed thus to the corruption of agriculture, a vision of the golden age slightly different than Hesiod's.[370] What for Hesiod is a general moral principle, for Columella is also a practical economic principle.

When Columella quotes Hesiod, as we have seen in 11.1.29, he alludes not only to the phrase he quotes, but to the general theme of the passage to which the phrase belongs. Columella is conscious of the traditions associated with georgic literature (including poetry). Thus the statement '*μηδ᾽ ἀναβάλλεσθαι ἔς τ᾽ αὔριον ἔς τε ἔνηφιν*' (*Op.* 410) is reproduced,

[369] For the translation of *πλεονεξία* as *avaritia* v. *T.L.G.*1190–1191. The first instance of *πλεονεξία* occurs only once in Herodotus 7.149, where the Argives accuse the Spartan kings of *πλεονεξία* because, having two kings they never wanted to yield to the one Argive king, and request the envoys to leave their land before sunset.

[370] The term *avaritia*, on the other hand, is not encountered in Cato, and is only brought up once by Varro at the opening of his second book (2.intr.4) immediately after the passage on the *patres familiae* creeping into the walls of the city. (Varro.2.intr.4. See ch. 1, p. 27.)

even exaggerated, by Columella who states in its place '*credatque, praetermissas non duodecim horas sed annum periisse, nisi sua quaque die quod instat effecerit*'. The expressions '*μινύθουσι δὲ οἶκον*' (*Op.* 325) and '*μινύθῃ δὲ τὸ ἔργον*' (*Op.* 409) find echo in '*res tamen ipsa iam domino decoxit* (11.1.28). The connection of *prudentia et neglegentia* (expression which Columella uses twice in 11.1.28) with the loss of *quaestus* also has precedents in Hesiod; as well as the treatment of *πλεονεξία* as *avaritia.* Columella refers to Hesiod reverentially, but he also shows an intimate knowledge of his poetry as he quotes it purposefully. We can trace some aspects of Columella's *doctrina*, even in some specific details, to Hesiod but, with the lapse of time, there are both important conceptual distinctions and, especially, distinctions dictated by the economic and political changes from one period to the other. Columella cannot relate to the world of Hesiod the way he can to that of Virgil with which he, given the new political circumstances, wants to build continuity.

From the Instructions of Ninurta to Columella via Mago the Carthaginian

One of the most striking features of Columella's work is the number of times the authority of Mago, neither Roman nor Greek, is invoked. We should return for a moment to the passage in 1.3.8–9 (*laudato ingentia rura*) in which mention was made of the *Poeni.* Martin (1971) states that Carthage, the fatherland of Mago 'the Carthaginian', '*semble bien avoir été, de tous les pays du monde antique, celui où la science agronomique a connu le plus grand*

développement. Ici encore, Columelle est catégorique: la plupart des principes d'économie agricole ont été formulés par des auteurs puniques.[371]

M.L. West understands that one of Hesiod's passages quoted above (*Op.* 405–ff.: *Οἶκον μὲν πρώτιστα γυναῖκά τε βοῦν τ᾽ ἀροτῆρα*) belongs to an even wider tradition of wisdom literature of which he gives some specific examples.[372] Besides mentioning the parallel with *Op.* 14.64 (*οἶκόν τε κλῆρόν τε πολυμνήστην τε γυναῖκα*) he cites the Sumerian *Instructions of Ninurta*, a text of the first half of the second millennium b.C. on farming.[373] If we take a glimpse at a few details of these instructions we see that the same themes that appear in Columella's work are anticipated with a great degree of similarity. The format of instructions, attributed in the text to the Sumerian god Ninurta, where he, as farmer, addresses his son, are reflected in Hesiod's address to Perses, and, to a greater degree, in Columella's to P. Silvinus. There is also the following statement regarding profit: 'let your *bandu*–basket crackle; (all this) will make a mighty income for you' which, besides the detail of income or profit, has a remarkable echo in Columella's verse 10.307 – *pressaque flammeola rumpatur fiscina caltha*.[374] The *Instructions of Ninurta* also insist on the urgency and timeliness of work:

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[371] Martin (1971, 37): 'seems to have been, of all the countries of the ancient world, the one in which agronomic science has undergone the greatest development. Here again, Columella is categorical: most principles have been formulated by Punic writers.' Here Martin quotes 1.1.6 on the influence of Carthaginian on Roman writers.

[372] See West (1978, 3–8) for Sumerian and Akkadian wisdom literature in reference to Hesiod.

[373] West (1978, 259ff) quotes Kramer (1963) who includes the translation of an early 'fragmentary work containing moral and ethical admonitions, and a work of technical instruction, an agricultural handbook dating from the first half of the second millennium known as the *Instructions of Ninurta* (p.105–109, 340–342)'. The admonitory character of the Akkadian text resonates with *Works and Days* to a certain extent. It resonates much closer, however, in Columella's prose books.

[374] Kramer (1963, 340–342)

> Brook no idleness. Stand over them (the field laborers) during their work, (and) brook no interruptions. Do not [distract] your field workers. Since they must carry on by day (and by) heaven's stars for ten (days), their strength should be spent on the field, (and) they are not to dance attendance on you.[375]

The direct style of presentation of the Sumerian *Instruction* remarkably anticipates Columella's matter–of–fact practical approach in his prose books, and is more akin to the later writer than to the content and form of Varro's dialogue, for instance, who is more prone to take on tangential discussions. Kramer understands that the Sumerian text has a didactic purpose from the fact that 'the composition has been found inscribed on numerous duplicates and extracts'.[376] Just as in western traditions literary texts are more likely to survive when they have become didactic texts, it is not inconceivable that the *Instructions of Ninurta* represent a didactic tradition later taken up by Babylonian (Akkadian) from Sumerian schools – *edubba* – and teachers – *ummia*, and that from here they made their way to the Phoenician schools.

Whatever the fortune of ancient near eastern agricultural texts, we can attest with certainty that Columella cites Mago very frequently on practical matters. In *De Arboribus* (17.2) he states that the Carthaginian recommends that the olive tree be planted in dry ground shortly after the autumn equinox. He quotes him in 1.1.18–19 with the advice to pay more attention to the country house than to the town house.[377] In 3.12.5, when discussing the optimal orientation of the vineyard, Columella gives the names of Saserna, Tremelius Scrofa, Virgil, Democritus, alongside Mago, as authorities supporting his recommendations. Mago is also quoted alongside Virgil on mistakes that should be avoided when transplanting a vine (3.15.4).

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[375] *Ibid*.
[376] Kramer (1963, 105–111). For the Sumerian schools p. 109.
[377] The question of the absentee *dominus* or *agricola* who prefers the city to the *ager* is frequently discussed in exclusively Roman context. See Thibodeau, (2011, 22).

In 4.10.1 Mago is the authority for the seasons of pruning (*putandi tempora*), who is followed also by Celsus and Atticus. In 5.5.4 Mago is the authority on the *satio vitis. Mago* is the source for the important directives of how to buy an ox (6.1.2–3). Mago also establishes the proper time to castrate a calf (*vitulus*) in 6.26.1–4. Columella cites Democritus, Mago, and Virgil as sources for the *bougonia*: *Ceterum hoc eodem tempore progenerari posse apes iuvenco perempto, Democritus et Mago nec minus Vergilius prodiderunt* (9.14.6).[378]

Mago also recommends not to kill all the drones in a honey–comb on 'humanitarian' principles (9.15.3); and Mago provides a unique method for making raisin–wine (12.39.1), as well as methods for preserving (appropriately) *mala punica* (12.46.5 & 6). Columella, consequently, among his *turba Graecorum* has named Mago, a non–Greek, the father of *rusticatio* (1.1.13): *postremo… verum tamen ut Carthaginiensem Magonem rusticationis parentem maxime veneremur.*[379]

Mago's treatise was available, as Columella himself explains, through the translation of Dionysius of Utica and a later abridgement of this translation made by Diophanes of Bithynia.[380] Varro, in contrast, also cites him and his translator and epitomizer in his list of authors, but

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[378] 'Now Democritus, Mago and likewise Virgil have recorded that bees can be generated at this time of year from a slain bullock.' This statement is followed, however, by another in which Columella states his disbelief in the *bougonia*: *quam rationem diligentius prosequi supervacuum puto, consentiens Celsus, qui prudentissime ait, non tanto interitu pecus istud admitti, ut sic requirendum sit.* ('But I consider it superfluous to deal in more detail with this method, since I am in agreement with Celsus, who very wisely says that there is never such mortality among these creatures, that it is necessary to produce them by this means.')

[379] 'So that finally we may pay greatest reverence to the Carthaginian Mago.' Mago the Carthaginian could well represent a tradition of agricultural writing which, in its more technical prose expression, but also because of cultural affinities, may be connected to a larger tradition with common elements with the *Instructions of Ninurta.*

[380] 1.1.10. The translation, explains Columella in 1.1.13, was done after a *senatus consultum*.

barely quotes him referring to specific agricultural directions. In one of the two occasions he quotes the Carthaginian Varro, he has little praise to give him:

> *Duo enim genera cum sint pastionum, unum agreste, in quo pecuariae sunt, alterum villaticum, in quo sunt gallinae ac columbae et apes et cetera, quae in villa solent pasci, de quibus et Poenus Mago et Cassius Dionysius et alii quaedam separatim ac dispersim in libris reliquerunt.*[381]
>
> For there are two kinds of pasturing: one in the fields, which includes cattle–raising and the other around the farmstead, which includes chickens, pigeons, bees, and the like, which usually feed in the steading; the Carthaginian Mago, Cassius Dionysius, and other writers have left in their books remarks on them, but scattered and unsystematic.

While Columella had plenty of sources for his treatise (Mago the Carthaginian and all the Greek and Roman writers listed as the '*magna Graecorum turba de rusticis rebus praecipiens*') he only names two models for didactic poetry: Hesiod and Virgil.[382] He does not name either, as Varro does (Varro 1.1.9), *Menecrates Ephesius*, the Hellenistic imitator of Hesiod.[383]

Conclusion: from Columella the husbandman and businessman to Columella the poet

[381] In 2.5.18 Varro makes the following general comment without offering any technical content: *De sanitate sunt complura, quae exscripta de Magonis libris armentarium meum crebro ut aliquid legat curo.* ('On the subject of health there are many rules; these have been copied down from Mago's treatise, and I see to it that my head herdsman is reading some of them repeatedly.)

[382] Hesiod is, in fact, the first writer and poet he mentions at the beginning of his list (1.1.7): '*Magna porro et Graecorum turba est de rusticis rebus praecipiens, cuius princeps celeberrimus vates non minimum professioni nostrae contulit Hesiodus Boeotius.*'

[383] Varro has both Hesiod and *Menecrates Ephesius* at the end of the list rather than at the beginning, while Columella has Hesiod alone. Columella trades literary sophistication for practicality.

M.S. Marsilio has pointed to the parallels in Hesiod between the language of farming and that of poetry.[384] She compares the preparation recommended for the farmer to the preparation of the oral poet collecting formulas for his composition. An analogy with oral poetry could be made for Columella the agronomist's preparation for his book on poetry: much of his material resources, if not linguistic, are contained in the prose books.

We have seen that in the technical books of his treatise Columella quotes from Hesiod and from Virgil, not at random, but either to support a moral principle or a strictly technical point. There is always some degree of practicality, often given with moral connotations, in georgic poetry. We have also seen allusions by Columella to other poets: to Ennius explicitly.[385]

We have seen examples of Columella (e.g. in 1.3.8) quoting Virgil in his prose books. We have also explored possible *Phoenician* connections through Mago the Carthaginian, one of the most important agricultural authorities, to more remote sources. Columella, we have also seen, builds up a frame for the poetic quotes in the prose books. After Hesiod's *ἀμβολιεργός* quote in 11.1.29–30, and after he has stated how insidious agriculture is to the person who delays its tasks, he includes a full three and a half verses from *Georg.*1.204–207 with directives to observe the cycles of stars, necessary for the timely performance of agricultural tasks:

> *Tam sunt Arcturi sidera nobis*
> *haedorumque dies servandi et lucidus anguis,*
> *quam quibus in patriam ventosa per aequora vectis*
> *Pontus et ostriferi fauces tentantur Abydi.*

[384] Marsilio (2000, 18): 'Like the farmer, the poet is involved with the essential tasks of selection and measurement.'

[385] In 1.pr.20. Varro, in contrast, quotes Ennius directly four times, as Skutsch states, 'at significant points'. This technique of quoting a poet's passage or phrase is, therefore, a trait Varro and Columella have in common.

> Arcturus' star, the Kids and gleaming Snake we must observe as carefully as men who, sailing homewards over the wind – swept sea through Pontus and Abydos' narrow jaws, the breeding–ground of oysters, seek to pass.[386]

The inclusion of such poetic language would be surprising if it were not for its function of introducing the farmer's calendar at this crucial spot. As we shall see in the next chapter, Columella uses astronomical signposts to indicate the changes of season in the poem which, in turn, will become important structural junctures.

More significantly, horticulture and the *hortus* have been separated from agriculture, not just as a small appendix, but as a physical signifier for the poetry. Columella the 'enthused poet–priest of comic ecstasy', to use Henderson's words, has designed a closed space for his poetry between two technical books, as he has designed a physical space for the *hortus* enclosed by walls and hedges, and protected by the crude statue of Priapus.[387]

Although there have been substantial social, political and economic developments from the time of Hesiod, some of the themes carry over chronological and spatial boundaries, and Columella admits that his remote predecessor states some of the themes *expressius*.[388] His audience, composed of members of the higher orders, shows perhaps a more rigid social structure than that of the times of Hesiod and Perses. Both audiences, however, need to be reminded of the ethical dimensions of agriculture which have both technical and social implications. This ethical dimension – the practical side of *ideology* – is already present in Hesiod. Only the circumstances are new: the need of continuity for the equestrian order (now

[386] The quote is followed by an argument against paying excessive attention to the details of astronomy and against the Chaldean astronomers (11.1.31–32). Columella also gives testimony of his own book on astronomy, which has not survived.
[387] Henderson (2002, 126)
[388] 11.1.29.

expanded by upwardly mobile members of provincial extraction), aggressive trans–marine market competition also from the provinces, and the pertinacity of a luxury market. In the next chapter we will explore how the poem – through reading some of its sections – 'sums up, as re–cap., completes, realizes, fully and brings it to fruition', to use Henderson's expressions, Columella's whole treatise on agriculture.

In this chapter we have seen how Columella physically frames the garden and the poem itself, as a metaphor for the garden. We have assessed aspects of methodology, intertextuality, and ideology that go deeper than those of other agricultural treatises. We have seen that Columella bases his *doctrina* of capital gain on sources that go beyond Virgil. Present in his writings are principles that find their formulation in Hesiod as well as in ancient Sumerian literature, perhaps acquired through the now lost treatises of Mago the Carthaginian. We have also seen how he has framed the audience for whom the treatise and its message is addressed: the upper order of Roman society, the large land–ownership. For them he brings a treatise on the discipline that their ancestors took as foundation of their *ethos*, as he repeats the *exempla* of those men of state who in the past made them their object of dedication. This contrasts abruptly with the urban and literary culture of Nero's court against which it also offers an excellent source of analysis. In the following chapter we will return to the aspect of form in order to elucidate how the poem in book 10 is used by Columella to address this, or any other, class of citizens.

CHAPTER IV: STRUCTURE, INTERTEXTUALITY

Defining the georgic genre (Prose and poetic sources)

In this chapter we will try to understand the function of the poem that is book 10 through an analysis of its structure in broad terms, paying special attention to its structure and framing. Columella may be entering the georgic didactic tradition in book 10 with the hope of attaining *ἄφθιτος κλέος* for his treatise, something usually granted poetry and seldom a technical document. As Richter states about Cato's treatise:

> *Bereits das erste uns bekannte und erhaltene Literaturwerk in lateinischer Prosa ist diesem Zweck gewidmet (Technik und ökonomische Praxis der Landwirtschaft), und die Tatsache, dass es mehr als zwei Jahrtausende überdauert hat, ohne ein sprachliches Kunstwerk zu sein und jemals in den Schulunterricht Eingang gefunden zu haben, spricht eine eindrucksvolle Sprache.*[389]

Columella, by repeatedly quoting in the prose sections Cato, Varro, and Virgil, the three extant representatives of this genre, should already have reserved a place within the tradition. By attaching a 'literary' piece to his strictly technical work, as an integral part of the treatise he offers what Henderson has described as 'a concentrated synecdoche of the whole, an intense, intensive fraction'. The statement he makes in the *exordium* – the relatively long prose *recusatio* to the poem –, however, is partly responsible for the reputation of the heavy cloak thrown over his own poem. Diederich states it thus:

[389] Richter (1981.3, 569): 'Already the first known and preserved literary work in Latin prose is dedicated to this purpose (technical and economic practice of agriculture) and the fact that it has lasted more than two millennia without being a work of literary art and never having entered school instruction speaks volumes.'

> *An seiner Umstrittenheit ist Columella nicht ganz unschuldig: Der von ihm selbst provozierte Vergleich mit Vergil muß natürlich zu seinen Ungunsten ausfallen.*[390]

Saint–Denis suggests, in contrast, that the preface to book 10 amounts to being his own version of Virgil's complaint to Maecenas in *Georg.* 3.40–41: *Interea Dryadum silvas saltusque sequamur / intactos, tua, Maecenas, haud mollia iussa.*[391] The problem of the *älter Columellaphilologie*, to use Diederich's expression, is precisely that it has taken the *recusatio* as a proof itself of the author's lack of worth:

> *Dieser Bescheidenheitsgestus wurde von der älteren Columellaphilologie anscheinend etwas zu wörtlich genommen. Deren Interpretationen beschränkten sich nämlich vielfach auf den Versuch, die Schwächen, nämlich den Dilettantismus und das Epigonentum unseres Dichters nachzuweisen.*[392]

Columella quotes Virgil more than any other poet. In his prose books he uses expressions such as the following to introduce a Virgilian quote: *nostri poetae sententia* (1.3.8), *si verissimo vati velut oraculo crediderimus dicenti* (1.4.4), *noster quoque Vergilius… adiecit* (2.2.4), *placet nostro poetae… quod ipsum numeris sic edisserit* (2.8.1), *priscis autem rusticis nec minus Vergilio… placuit* (2.10.11), *ut ait poeta* (2.21.1, 3.2.29), *ut ait praestantissimus poeta* (3.1.1), *si modo credimus Vergilio dicenti* (3.1.9), *unde etiam pastor ille in Bucolicis ait* (3.9.4), *idque nobis poeta velut surdis veritatis inculcet dicendo* (3.10.18), *Vergilio de industria occasum sic repudiante* (3.12.5), *quem [Magonem] secutus Vergilius… sic praecipit* (3.15.4), *et quod de*

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[390] Henderson (2002, 125). Diederich (2007: 233): 'In his controversy, Columella is not entirely innocent: the comparison with Virgil provoked by himself must naturally turn unfavorable.'

[391] ('Meanwhile, haste we to the Dryads' woodlands and untrodden glades, no easy task, Maecenas, that you have laid upon me.') Saint–Denis (1971, 342ff), also mentioned by Diederich (2007, 229).

[392] Diederich, 2007, 230: 'This gesture of modesty was apparently taken too literally by the older philologists of Columella. Their interpretations were, in many cases, limited to the attempt to prove his weaknesses, namely the dilettantism and the epigonism of our poet.'

sacro numine poeta dicit (3.21.4), etc. Hesiod, whom he quotes twice, is not identified in the first instance [1.3.5]: *qui… cum a primis cunabulis… audisse poterit: οὐδ᾽ ἂν βοῦς ἀπόλοιτ᾽ εἰ μὴ γείτων εἴη*. The second instance he gives Hesiod credit with even a greater tone of reverence as that given to Virgil: *quod ipsum expressius vetustissimus auctor Hesiodus hoc versu significavit*. The two Hesiodic quotations help give a temporal depth that he would not have acquired with Virgil alone, despite all the quotes from the latter.

Echoes of Callimachean bindings

Columella is much closer to Virgil than to Hesiod: as a poet of the Neronian age, although not directly associated with the Neronian circle which embraced Callimacheanism, he also embraces the Callimachean (Alexandrine) aesthetics he inherits from Virgil. In the second *Georgic* Virgil, after the *labor curandis vitibus* (*Georg.* 2.397–419) and the *oleis cultura* (420–425), introduces the *poma* (426 – 432) before visiting the trees. After he asks himself '*Quid maiora sequar?*' Virgil lists the *salices humilesque genistae*, which provide sufficient leafage for sheep and shade for the shepherd.[393] The *salices* and *genistae* of *Georgics* 2.434 echo the recurring theme of the *Eclogues*' slender *avena* [1.1–2]:

> *Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi*
> *silvestrem tenui musam meditaris avena.*

[393] *Georg.* 2.434–436:
Quid maiora sequar? Salices et humilesque genistae,
aut illae pecori frondem aut postoribus umbram
sufficiunt saepemque satis et pabula melli.
'Why need I pursue greater themes? The willows and lowly broom – they either yield leafage for the sheep or shade for the shepherd, a fence for the crops and food for honey.'

You, Tityrus, lie under the canopy of a spreading beech, wooing the woodland Muse on slender reed.

The theme is repeated on different occasions along the *Eclogues* and in most of them in the neighborhood of trees. In *Ecl.* 1.1–2 the *fagus* provides shade for the slender reed's wooing of the woodland Muse, in *Ecl.* 5.1–3 Menalcas invites Mopsus to play the *calamos levis* while they sit among *corylis* (hazel–trees) and *ulmos* (elms). As the long scholarship on this topic has discussed, a Callimachean programmatic statement is stressed by a quotation of Apollo's words at the beginning of the sixth *Eclogue* where the environment is that of the shepherd [6.3–5]:

Cynthius aurem
vellit et admonuit: 'pastorem, Tityre, pinguis
pascere oportet ovis, deductum dicere carmen.'

The Cynthian plucked my ear and warned me: 'A shepherd, Tityrus, should feed sheep that are fat, but sing a lay fine–spun.

In *Georgics* 2.434 – *Quid maiora sequar?* – confirms adherence to the aesthetic principles of the *Eclogues*, for which the humbler trees – *salices et genista* – provide an appropriate background beyond the *bucolic* world. The latter, however, has not disappeared completely as we are reminded of four tasks entrusted to the lowly *salices* and *genista*. Two of them are: providing pasturage and shade for sheep and shepherd, as we have seen, activities still reminiscent of the world of the *Eclogues*.[394] The other two tasks are to provide a *saepes* (hedge) and fodder for the bee, both legitimate georgic functions.[395] By the end of the *Georgics* Virgil explicitly rejects the *studiis… ignobilis oti* (*Georg.* 4.564), the *carmina pastorum* of his

[394] Sheep are known to be fond of willow leaves, and for 'being particularly destructive where the grazing is thin' (White, 1970, 312), so it is conceivable that, especially in dry areas, they would feed on broom.
[395] The willow is a popular tree for bees.

audax iuventa, allegedly in favor of the 'grown–up' world of the *Georgics*. Virgil, however, decides to reminisce on the *bucolic* world and finishes the last book – the whole of the *Georgics* – by self–referencing the first verse of *Ecl.*1, with the present participle *recubans*, leaving it to the reader to remember the second verse, with the main verb (*meditaris*) without which the grammatical sentence would have been incomplete.[396]

But it is the humble qualities of the *salix* and, more perhaps even, of a plant such as the *genista*, which give the *Georgics* their georgic character. That Columella does not name the *genista* in book 10 should not imply that he is returning to the – now remote for him – world of the *Eclogues.* The real applications of the plant are addressed in the early prose books, as well as in the book concerning horticulture.[397] For example, in 4.31.1 Columella states:

> *Perarida loca, quae genus id virgultorum non recipiunt, genistam postulant. Eius cum sit satis firmum tum etiam lentissimum est vinculum. Seritur autem semine, quod cum est natum, vel defertur bima viviradix, vel relicta cum id tempus excessit, omnibus annis more segetis iuxta terram demeti potest.*
>
> Very dry places, which do not admit copses of this sort, require broom. A band of this material not only has sufficient strength, but also it is very pliant. The plant is raised from seed, and when it has sprouted, it is either transplanted as a *viviradix* (quickset) when two years old; or, if left where sown after that time has passed, it may be cut close to the ground every year in the manner of standing grain.

The next statement on the *rubus* (bramble) confirms that the *genista* require less *labor.* This is not the only place where Columella discusses the practical applications of this plant. In

[396] *Ecl.*1.1–2 reads: *Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi / silvestrem tenui musam meditaris avena.* The last line of *Georg.*4.566 reads with the conclusive perfect of *cano*: *Tityre, te patulae cecini sub tegmine fagi.*

[397] As we have discussed above, he has already settled in the prose preface to book 10 that the cultivation of the *hortus* was always programmed to be treated also in prose [10.pr.3]: *Quare cultus hortorum… diligentius nobis praecipiendus est.*

the following passage from the *De Arboribus* the function of the *genista* and *salix* is to provide ties for the vine [*Arb.* 29.1]:[398]

> *Salicem et genistam crescente luna vere circa calendas Martias serito. Salix humida loca desiderat, genista etiam sicca: utraque tamen circa vineam opportune seruntur, quoniam palmitibus idonea praebent vincula.*
>
> Plant the willow and the *spartum* when the moon is waxing about March 1st. The willow requires a damp situation, the *genista* one which is dry; both, however, can be conveniently planted round a vineyard, because they produce bands suitable for tying up vine–shoots.

Three pieces of information are given here: the *salix* and the *genista* ought to be planted around the Kalends of March. The willow needs a humid, the *genista* a dry, environment. They are both good candidates to be planted round a vineyard so they can provide tying up material. In 4.13.2 the *genista* is also listed as one of the preferred materials for binding the young vine, along with the *iuncus* (rush), *ulva* (sedge) or *harundinum folia* (leaves of reeds) properly dried in the shade. These are better than the *vimen salicis aut ulmi* (elm). In 1.pr.21, in the context of a discussion about the necessary knowledge of different aspects of farming, he names last the care of *prata* (meadows), and *genistae et harundines, quamvis tenuem nihilo minus aliquam desiderant industriam.*[399] This proportion between utility and low cost reflects Columella's perennial concern for profit. Finally, the *genista* also deserves a place in the farmer's calendar (11.2.19), although here he recommends that they be planted at least two weeks earlier than in *De Arboribus* 29.1. It should not come too much as a surprise that Columella does not address any of the uses Virgil gives the *genista*, along with the *salix*:

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[398] The *trope* of trees providing shade is recurrent in the *Eclogues* as we have seen in the examples from *Ecl.*1.1–2 and *Ecl.*5.1–3 Mynors (1969, 158, n. 434) notes that both the *genista* and the *salix* provide 'vine–ties.'

[399] 1.pr.28 'though they require little attention, still require some.'

although agriculturally realistic, they are not essentially practical [*Georg.*2.434–436]: *pecori frondem aut pastoribus umbram / sufficere saepem satis et pabulla melli.* Producing shade for the shepherd belongs more to the world of the *Eclogues* than to georgic poetry.

Columella's approach to the georgic genre

Columella, after having written the previous 9 books, has proven (or tried to prove) his agricultural expertise. Now he is under pressure to show he follows the new set of conditions that come attached to the georgic genre. Early in book 10 [35–40], therefore, he invokes the muses in the following manner:

> *Ergo age nunc cultus et tempora quaeque serendis*
> *seminibus, quae cura satis, quo sidere primum*
> *nascantur flores, Paestique rosaria gemment,*
> *quo Bacchi genus, aut aliena stirpe gravata*
> *mitis adoptatis curvetur frugibus arbos,*
> *Pierides tenui deducite carmine Musae.*
>
> Come now, ye Muses, and in slender verse
> recount the culture and the seasons due
> for sowing seeds; the care the seedlings need;
> under what star the flowers first come to birth;
> and Paestum's rose–beds bud, and Bacchus' vines,
> or kindly trees are bent beneath the weight
> of borrowed fruits grafted on alien stock.

Columella echoes in these six lines the opening of the poem, which in turn, echo Virgil's opening of the *Georgics.* The new task Silvinus and Gallio have imposed on Columella has compelled him to invoke, in the last verse of this programmatic passage (10.40) the *tenuis avena* of the opening of the first *Eclogue*, as well as *Cynthius* Apollo's admonition at the

opening of *Eclogue* 6: '*pastorem pinguis pascere oportet ovis, deductum dicere carmen*'.[400] The reference to the world of the *Georgics* is apparent, however, from the very first line of the invocation: Columella sings the cultivation and seasons for sowing with the phrase '*Ergo age nunc cultus et tempora quaeque serendis* / *seminibus*', where *cultus* echoes the opening of *Georgics* [1.3–4] – *quae cura boum, qui cultus habendo / sit pecori.* He also transfers, in an allusion *cum variatione*, the *cultus* of cattle to that of sowing.

The phrase '*quae cura satis*' in Columella's second verse [10.36] alludes, through its metrical position, to Virgil's *quae cura boum* in 1.3: *ulmisque adiungere vites / conveniat, quae cura boum*. The intertextual reference becomes increasingly dense the closer we read the text. '*quo sidere primum / nascantur flores*' of 10.36–37 is a direct echo, also by metrical position, to the first verses of the *Georgics* [1.1–3]: '*Quid faciat laetas segetes, quo sidere terram / vertere… / conveniat*'. The following phrase, still in verse 10.37, is also a direct allusion *cum variatione* to the *biferi rosaria Paesti* of Virgil's passage of the *Corycius senex* [4.118–119]:

> *pinguis hortos quae cura colendi*
> *ornaret, canerem, biferique rosaria Paesti.*[401]

[400] See the end of book 9 (9.16.2) for Silvinus and Gallio's request. White (2013, 140–141 n.40) is also right to point to *Ecl.* 6.5. He states that the *deductum carmen* theme 'recalls' Ovid's opening of the *Metamorphoses* (1.4). The reference to Virgil, in this case, seems far more purposeful and intentional, and it seems obvious that Columella adopts Callimachean poetics via Virgil more than through any other author. That is not to deny completely Ovid's influence. White also quotes Henderson as stating that the *Eclogues* rather than the *Georgics* are for Columella the 'source of direct inspiration'. There is no distinction, in my opinion, in Columella's mind between the two. Both Virgil's works share the same 'aesthetic' principles and Columella sees both of them in the same category and uses both as sources for his program, both concerning agriculture and poetics.

[401] Thomas (1988, 168–9, n. 119) gives other instances of the *rosaria Paesti*: Propertius 4.5.61, Ovid *M* 15.708, Martial 12.31.3. He also points out that only Martial reproduces the epithet *bifer.*

I might sing what careful tendance clothes rich gardens in flower, and might sing of Paestum whose rose beds bloom twice yearly.

That Columella [10.40] invokes the Muses of Pieria – *Pierides tenui deducite carmine Musae* – shows a further intent on his part to anchor his georgic enterprise in contemporary aesthetics but also, as White states, to follow ultimately in the steps of Hesiod.[402]

A poetic program re–instated

Gowers, however, rightly calls attention to yet a third programmatic passage halfway through the poem (verses 225–229) in which Columella describes literary functions through metaphors from gardening: the pruner (*putator*), the vegetable gardener (*holitor*), metaphors for the poet; *parvoque iubet decurrere gyro* – the turn of the plough to indicate a literary position, just as *gracili connectere carmina filo* [10.225–229]:[403]

Me mea Calliope cura leviore vagantem
iam revocat, parvoque iubet decurrere gyro,
et secum gracili connectere carmina filo,
quae canat inter opus musa modulante putator
pendulus arbustis, holitor viridantibus hortis.

Me, Calliope, on a humbler quest roaming, recalls and bids me to confine my course in narrow bounds and with her weave verse of a slender thread, which tunefully the pruner perched amid the trees may sing or gardener working in his verdant plot.

[402] White (2013, 140, n.40) states that Virgil uses the nouns 'Musae' and 'Pierides' but never together. Virgil, however, associates them in *Ecl.* 3.84–85: *Pollio amat nostram, quamvis est rustica, Musam: / Pierides, vitulam lectori pascite vestro.*

[403] Gowers (2000, 135). Strictly speaking, the technique of pruning (*putatio*) belongs to the broader field of *agricultura* and, in Columella, especially to the vine, as we read his treatment of this technique through book 4.

In these verses Columella brings together both technical facets of his writing: horticulture and literature. In a use of parallelism characteristic of his versification he posits one statement – *Me mea Calliope cura leviore vagantem / iam revocat* – and two injunctions – i. *parvoque iubet decurre gyro*, and ii. *et secum gracili connectere carmina filo.*[404] The two outside verses (225 and 227) referring to the literary constraints imposed by the Muse contain between them the demands of agriculture (226). The middle verse in this three–verse group (or single verse + distich) contains the message of Columella's first quotation of Virgil: *laudato ingentia rura, / exiguum colito*.

Calliope asks him to weave – *connectere* – his verse with slender thread, just as he weaves the verse about the *gyrus* (the *cursus aratri*) – in between the two verses reminding him of his poetic program.[405] This exemplifies the mimesis – art imitating life – stated by Henderson. In the last two verses (228–229) the *putator* and the *holitor* become a metaphor for the poet.[406] The function of the second is to invigorate the already vigorous gardens – *viridantibus hortis*; the function of the first, to keep them from overgrowing. Just as the *putator* keeps the garden trees from overgrowing, Calliope calls the poet to cut down his verses.

Structure of the poem

[404] Horace uses the same expression in *Epist.* 2.1.2.
[405] The term *γύρος* has an often overlooked agricultural connotation and is used by Theophrastus, e.g. in *C.P.* 3.4.1, to denote a trench around a tree.
[406] Gowers (2000, 135) uses these lines to state that through them the poem claims 'to be a song for cheerful gardeners and pruners to sing while they work.'

After having considered the poem in relation to the rest of the treatise and having discussed the main themes of the latter, it is necessary to turn to the poem itself and its structure. Columella's georgic is divided, according to Saint–Denis, in the following sections: introduction (1–5), preparation of the plot (6–34), invocation to the Muses of Pieria (35–40), Autumn and Winter tasks (41–76), spring tasks (77–310), summer tasks (311–422), return to autumn tasks – end of the gardening year (423–432), epilogue (433–436).[407] The structure of the poem is, therefore, dictated by the turn of the seasons. The beginning with, and return at the end to, Autumn tasks gives it an internal cyclical order that confirms this essential feature of the poem. As Saint–Denis states: *Ce plan a le double mérite d'être simple et vivant.*[408]

Formal analysis: Columella the garden *didascalos*

The introduction to the poem itself is the explanation of the didactic purpose of the poem, which Columella had already presented in the prose preface, but one in which he now directly invokes Virgil through a close paraphrase of his words from *Georg.* 4.147–149 [10.pr.3]:

> *Hortorum quoque te cultus, Silvine, docebo,*
> *atque ea quae quondam spatiis exclusus iniquis,*
> *cum caneret laetas segetes et munera Bacchi,*
> *et te, magna Pales, necnon caelestia mella,*
> *Vergilius nobis post se memoranda reliquit*.[409]

[407] Saint–Denis (1969a, 12–13)
[408] Ibid. p. 13
[409] *Georg.* 4.147–149 states: *Verum haec ipse equidem spatiis exclusus iniquis / praetereo atque aliis post me memoranda relinquo.* In the commentary on these two lines Mynors (1990, 278) makes an observation that could be made about Columella's choices as much as Virgil's: 'Poets, who can to some extent at least lay down their own rules, reserve the right to complain, as though restrictions were imposed from without.' In the commentary to the same verses Mynors, who frequently and perceptibly points in the direction of Columella, states: 'the

> The cult of garden–plots I now will teach, Silvinus, and those themes which Virgil left for future bards, when, closed in narrow bounds, he sang of joyous crops and Bacchus' gifts and thee great Pales and heaven's boon of honey.

The introduction is also a paraphrase of Virgil's very opening of the first *Georgic*: Virgil's [1.1] *Quid faciat laetas segetes…* – finds echo in Columella's [10.3–5] *cum caneret laetas segetes… Vergilius*. Columella *ad orationem variandam* changes Virgil's [1.2–3] *quo sidere ulmisque adiungere vites conveniat* by the antonomasia *ea munera Bacchi* sung by Virgil himself.[410] Virgil's expression *quo sidere… conveniat* finds echo later in Columella's invocation to the Muses of Pieria [10.36–37]: *quo sidere primum / nascantur flores.* As example of the technique *ad orationem variandam*, in this introduction the name of the Roman goddess, *magna Pales*, with whom Virgil appropriately starts the third *Georgic* (on animal husbandry), is simply stated instead of Virgil's more elaborate expression denoting animal husbandry in the first *Georgic* (1.3–4: *quae cura boum, qui cultus habendo / sit pecori*).[411] This introduction is a confirmation of Columella's promise to Silvinus and Gallio of taking up where Virgil had left off. It also shows Columella's tendency to use concentrated expressions, in this case, the name of the goddess for the whole area of study.

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invitation was accepted by a Spanish admirer a century later, when Columella wrote his tenth book on gardening in verse'.

[410] Columella uses Virgilian expressions, but these always in a different context. As Stettner (1894, 13) pointed out: '*Sicuti Vergilius Columella amorem ac studium, quo rerum naturae colebat amoenitatem atque amplitudinem, ad orationem variandam contulit*'. See also, chapter 1, p. 19.

[411] As Claussen (1994, 163) states, Pales is paired with Apollo both in *Georg.* 3.1 (*magna Pales*) and *Ecl.* 5.35 (*ipsa Pales*). Mynors (1990, 1) states: 'The livestock of Book 3 was placed in few words under the joint protection of Apollo (Nomius, this time the pastoral deity) and Pales, who had appeared together as patrons of the countryside in *Ecl.* 5.35.

While Virgil, however, continues with the invocation of the agricultural divinities in *Georgics* 1.5–23 (*lumina,*[412] *Liber, Ceres, Fauni and Dryades, Tellus, Neptune, Aristaeus (cultor nemorum), Pan, Minerva, Silvanus*), Columella finds no reason to invoke further agricultural divinities, after *magna Pales* in line 4. Instead he opts for the search of a field – *pinguis ager.* Gowers, in her formulation of the Columella problem, rightly points to the semantic ambiguity of the expression *numeroso horto*, where the adjective *numerosus* may be associated with the numerus *ῥυθμικός* of poetry or with the abundance of the *hortus* – a metonymy for the *pinguis ager* of the next verse.[413] That the garden can also be interpreted as metonymy for the actual poem speaks of Columella's consciousness as a poet, and of one who has the primary theme of his poetry – fertility – in focus [10.6–10]:

> *Principio sedem numeroso praebeat horto*
> *pinguis ager, putres glebas resolutaque terga*
> *qui gerit, et fossus graciles imitatur arenas,*
> *atque habilis natura soli, quae gramine laeto*
> *parturit, et rutilas ebuli creat uvida bacas.*
>
> First for the varied garden let rich soil a place provide, which shows a crumbling glebe and loosened clods, and, dug, is like thin sand. Fit is the nature of the soil which grass abundant grows and moistened brings to birth elder's red berries.

But, while this paragraph seems to have little to do with poetics, and much with what the rich soil (*pinguis ager*) ought to provide, the epithet *pinguis* leads the reader to a complex web of intertextual connections and, ultimately, to Callimachus' prologue to the *Aetia* where,

[412] For *lumina* see Mynors' note (1990, 4, n. 5–6).
[413] See Gowers (2000, 138).

as the poet (Callimachus) gets ready to start writing, Apollo reveals to him a poetic principle [*Aetia* 1.21–24]:

> *Καὶ γὰρ ὅτε πρώτιστον ἐμοῖς ἐπὶ δέλτον ἔθηκα*
> *γούνασιν, Ἀπόλλων εἶπεν*
> *'μέμνεό μοι, φίλ᾽] ἀοιδέ, τὸ μὲν θύος ὅττι πάχιστον*
> *θρέψαι, τὴ]ν Μοῦσαν δ᾽ ὠγαθὲ λεπταλέην'.*[414]
>
> For, as soon as I put the tablet upon my knees, Apollo spoke: 'Remember, dear singer, to nourish your burnt sacrifice as fat as possible, but your Muse, gentleman, delicate.'

This allusion adds, with the poetic meaning of *numerosus*, and alongside adjectives such as *graciles* applied to the sands (*arenas*), a poetic tension between abundance and delicateness. This poetic tension is already present in Callimachus' utterance in the prologue to the *Aetia* and Columella exploits it by making the *hortus* a metaphor for the poem. Horiculture and poetry are interchangeable. Fertility, in turn, lying under the expression *pinguis ager*, from a technical point of view the first and most important theme of the poem, takes at the outset a poetic and sacred character via its association with Callimachus' burnt sacrifices.[415] Columella's *ager* ought to provide a place for an abundant garden, one which carries fertile glebes – *putres glaebas* – with its ground – *terga* – dissolved.[416] This ground gives birht to fertile grass and, moistened, brings forth the elder's (*ebulum*) red berries.[417] This last image is not new in Columella. When

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[414] Hopkinson (1988, 15–16)

[415] The poetic implications with respect to this intertextual connection are vast. I thank Professor James Clauss for pointing out this connection to me, one which is essential in order to understand the depth of the Callimachean aesthetics to which Columella subscribes.

[416] Saint–Denis (1969a, 51): '*Columelle désigne par* terga *la surface de la terre (cf. 2.2.23, 4.14.1, et ci–dessus. V. 10.71.*' Certainly *terga* recurs in verse 10.17: see below. Also Saint–Denis, ibid.: 'Solvere *et* resolvere *sont employés par Virgile (Georg. 1.44) et Columelle (v. 10.76, 90, 145, 167, 320).*'

[417] 'Dwarf–elder' *apud* Ash (1941, 20). Claussen (1994, 301): 'the dwarf–elder, *Sambucus ebulus* L., an invasive, malodorous weed with reddish–black berries.' See also Coleman (1977,

in book 2 he offers different tests to determine the 'sweetness' of the soil, the elder is one of the plants along with the *iuncus, calamus, gramen, trifolium, rubi pruni silvestres*, nourished only by the veins of sweet water in the ground [2.2.20]:

> *Sed et citra hoc experimentum multa sunt, quae et dulcem terram et frumentis habilem significent, ut iuncus, ut calamus, ut gramen, ut trifolium, ebulum, rubi, pruni silvestres et alia complura, quae etiam indagatoribus aquarum nota non nisi dulcibus terrae venis educantur.*
>
> But, apart from this experiment, there are many signs which show that ground is sweet and suitable for grain – for example, the rush, the reed, grass, trefoil, the dwarf–elder, bramble bushes, wild plums, and many other things which are well known also to searchers of springs, and which are not nourished except by veins of sweet water in the ground.

The *ebulum* appears also in Virgil's tenth ('Gallus' love') *Eclogue* (10.27) adorning the head of Pan – *deus Arcadiae* – who comes to attend Gallus in distress for having lost Lycoris. The bucolic element thus makes it, subtly, into Columella's technically driven song.

The *arenas* of 10.8 are reminiscent of the passage where Columella states (1.pr.24) that there is not one single type of soil that is best, but that there are different types depending on the land. Thus the sandy soils of Africa and Numidia surpass in fertility other types. Here, however, Columella is not referring to his own previous prose but, as Stettner observes,[418] to *Georg.* 2.204.[419] This is not the first time Columella alludes to these lines, for this is an early quote in the prose books [2.2.4]:

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283). Saint–Denis (1969a, 51): '*l'hièble (Sambucus Ebulus L.) est une espèce de sureau à tige herbacée qui porte des baies couleur de sang; cf. Verg.* Buc *10.27:* sanguineis ebuli bacis. *Déjà cité par Columelle (2.2.20) dans une liste de végétations qui indiquent un sol cultivable:* iuncus, calamus, gramen, trifolium, ebulum, rubi, pruni silvestres, *etc.*'

[418] Stettner (1894, 16): 'V. 8 (ager) imitatur arenas; eadem metaphora inest G. 2.204 'hoc imitamur arando'. See chapter 1, '*Ars* imitating nature'.

[419] See also *Georg.* 2.203–204, and Mynors (1990, 128) who points to Columella's 2.2.4 as well as to Theophrastus' *C.P.* 3.12.2.

De siccaneis et riguis non comperimus, utra numero vincant, quoniam utrimque paene infinita sunt, quae siccis quaeque umidis locis gaudent; sed ex his nihil non melius resoluta humo quam densa provenit. Quod noster Vergilius, cum et alias fecundi arvi laudes rettulisset, adiecit,

et cui putre solum namque hoc imitamur arando.

Neque enim aliud est colere quam resolvere et fermentare terram; ideoque maximos quaestus ager praebet idem pinguis ac putris, quia cum plurimum reddat, minimum poscit, et quod postulat exiguo labore atque impensa conficitur.

As to dry ground and wet ground, we have not ascertained which of these excels in number, since there are, in each case, almost limitless things which thrive in dry places, and the same in wet areas; but of this number there is nothing that does not grow better in loose soil than in dense. This, too, our own Virgil said when, after recounting the other good points of a fruitful field, he added:

and one of crumbling soil; for this is what we rival when we plough.

For cultivation is nothing else than the loosening and breaking up of the ground; and on this account a field which is both rich and mellow yields the greatest returns, because in producing most it demands least, and what it does require is supplied with trifling labor and expense.[420]

Already Virgil's *Georg.* 2.203 contains the epithet *pinguis* which we read in verse 7. The *putre solum* of *Georg.* 2.204, quoted literally in 2.2.4, finds its way also in verse 7: *putres glebas.* Columella states already in 2.2.4 the superior product of the *resoluta humo*, and the expression itself makes it to the *resoluta terga* of 10.7. Lines 10.11–12 express with the images of marshes and frogs – *querulae ranae* – the thought expressed in the first sentence of 2.2.4 (*De siccaneis et riguis non comperimus…*) [10.11–12]:

Nam neque sicca placet, nec quae stagnata palude
perpetitur querulae semper convicia ranae.

For a dry ground is not suitable, nor one which bathed in stagnant water,
endures incessantly the cries of the plaintive frog.

[420] Ash (1941, 111)

The image of the frog, along with this simple and brief distich, is a first attempt at breaking the arduous nature of the treatise's content and where we start to sense a more playful approach on the part of the poet. In verses 13–16 Columella develops the image of the best ground for the *hortus*: one in which wild trees grow, that is, a soil that is naturally fertile and uncultivated [10.13–16]:

> *Tum quae sponte sua frondosas educat ulmos*
> *palmitibusque feris laetatur, et aspera silvis*
> *achradis, aut pruni lapidosis obruta pomis*
> *gaudet, et iniussi consternitur ubere mali.*
>
> Apt is [the farm] which spontaneously grows leafy elm–trees, which is fertile with wild vines, and which rejoices being rough with the bushes of the wild pear–tree, or overwhelmed with the stony fruits of the plum tree, and which is bestrewn with the fertility of the unaccustomed fruit.

A fertile plot produces *sponte sua* vegetation which is *frondosa*, as is the *ulmus*, a tree treated in detail by Columella in book 5,[421] or the *palmes*, a term frequently used by Columella in technical discussions pertaining to the vine in books 3, 4, and 5, as in 3.6.3, where the origin of a *malleolus novellus* is identified as an outgrowth of the *palmes* of the previous year [3.6.3]:

> *Malleolus autem novellus est palmes innatus prioris anni flagello,*
> *cognominatusque ad similitudinem, quod in ea parte, qua deciditur ex vetere*
> *sarmento, prominens utrimque mallei speciem praebet.*
>
> The mallet–shoot growing out of a cane of the year before; it is named according to its resemblance, because, projecting on both sides in that part where it is cut from the old branch, it has the appearance of a mallet.[422]

[421] 5.6.1–4 & 14ff.
[422] *O.L.D.:* 'a vine–branch or vine–shoot.' For instances and uses of *palmes* in technical context see Betts–Ashworth (1971, 391).

The *achras* – wild pear – gains a tone of rusticity in the context of Columella's treatment of the pig, a flexible animal for whom this fruit can provide suitable pasture.[423] The choice of imagery reflects and develops the generosity of the *pinguis ager*: *frondositas* and *ubertas* underline the passage, along with the *asperitas* of the wild pear and the *lapidosa poma* of the wild plum–tree. This *asperitas* has a limit for the ideal *pinguis ager.* The next verses set off limits two kinds of plants that would render the uncultivated *ager* noxious: the *helleborus,* the *carpasa* (or *carbasa*),[424] and the *taxus* [17–18]:

> *sed negat helleboros, et noxia carpasa succo,*
> *nec patitur taxos, nex strenua toxica sudat.*
>
> that bears no hellebore with noxious juice, nor suffers yews to grow, nor poisons strong exudes.

Despite it being noxious on the ground, *helleborus* has medicinal properties, and Columella lists it as an ingredient of a remedy for sheep's *scabies* [7.5.7]:

> *Facit autem commode primum ea compositio, quam paulo ante demonstravimus,*
> *si ad faecem et amurcam succumque decocti lupini misceas portione aequa*
> *detritum album helleborum.*
>
> First, the preparation which I explained just now can be used with advantage, namely, a mixture in equal portions of crushed white hellebore with lees of wine and dregs of oil and the juice of boiled lupine.

The poisonous quality of the *taxus* is not only almost proverbial in bucolic and georgic poetry (and is described accordingly by Pliny) but also has a firm presence in Virgil's bucolic and

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[423] 7.9.6. *L.S.J.* lists instances *ἀχράς* in Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae*, Dioscorides, Aristotle, and Theophrastus. See discussion about the *paliuron* below.

[424] Saint–Denis (1969a, 51): '*cette graphie de* S (Sangermanensis Petropolitanus 207) *ne doit pas être écarté…, bien que le nom grec soit κάρπασον, d'après Dioscoride (*De venenis, 13*); plante toxique non identifiée, sans doute la même que* carpathum *de Plin. 32.58.*' Forster–Heffner (1955, 7 (vol. 3)) add: '*Helleborus* and *carapasa* are names of the same species, the latter being white hellebore (*Veratrum album*)'.

georgic poetry.[425] In *Ecl.* 9.30 the *taxus* is something Moeris' swarms ought to avoid in order for him to become a successful farmer, while the *cytisus* is beneficial for the cows.[426] In *Georg.* 4.47 the farmer is explicitly advised against having a yew–tree near the hive: *Neu propius tectis taxum sine.*[427] When Columella describes the ideal feeding–grounds where to place a bee–hive he first quotes Virgil's *Georg.* 4.9–12. After a list of shrubs and trees on which the region should be *fecunda – thymus, origanus, thymbra, cunila (satureia), rosmarinus, cytisus, pinus, minor ilex, hedera, rutila et alba ziziphus, tamarix, amygdala, persicus, pyrus, pomiferarum pleraeque, glandifera robora, terebinthus, lentiscus, tila*[428] – only the *taxus* is singled out as being *nocens* [9.4.3]: *Solae ex omnibus nocentes taxi repudiantur.*[429] The verse (10.18) closes with a general statement: *nec strenua toxica sudat.* In 2.9.8 Columella gives an example of certain grounds which produce a poisonous humor that kills any chance of seeds producing stalks:

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[425] *O.L.D.*: 'a yew–tree'. Saint–Denis (1969a, 51): '*sur la nocivité de l'if, voir Verg.* Ecl. 9, 30; *Georg*. 4.47; Plin 16.50–51.' Pliny states: *Similis his etiamnunc aspectu est, ne quid praetereatur, taxus minime virens gracilisque et tristis ac dira, nullo succo, ex omnibus sola bacifera. Mas noxio fructu, letale quippe bacis in Hispania praecipue venenum inest: vasa etiam viatoria ex ea vinis in Gallia facta mortifera fuisse.* ('Moreover, not to pass over any variety, resembling these trees in appearance is the yew, hardly green at all in color and slender in form, with a gloomy, terrifying appearance; it has no sap, and is the only tree of all the class that bears berries, particularly in Spain, which contains a deadly poison; even wine–flasks for travelers made of its wood in Gaul are known to have caused death.' Trans. Rackham (1945, 421).)

[426] Coleman (1977, 263): 'Virgil refers to yews as *nocentes* (*Georg.* 2.257) and warns against putting beehives near them (*Georg.* 4.47)'.

[427] 'And suffer no yew too near the hive.' Both Mynors (1990, 264, n. 47) and Thomas (1988, 154, n. 47) mention the noxious quality of the *taxum* as well as *Ecl.* 9.30 (*Sic tua Cyrneas fugiant examina taxos*) and *Georg.* 2.257. Only Mynors quotes Columella 9.4.3.

[428] 'Thyme, marjoram, Greek savory, Italian savory (which Italian folk call *satureia*), rosemary, trefoil, pine, the lesser holm–oak ('for the taller variety is universally condemned'), ivy, red and white jujube–trees, tamarisks, almond–trees, peach–trees, pear–trees, the majority of fruit–bearing trees, acorn–bearing oaks, terebinths, mastic–trees, linden–trees.

[429] 'Of all the trees of this class yews only are excluded as being hurtful.'

Solet autem salsam non numquam et amaram uliginem vomere terra, quae quamvis matura iam sata manante noxio umore corrumpit et locis calentibus sine ulla stirpe seminum areas reddit.

Further, the earth has a way, at times, of emitting a brackish and bitter ooze which blights even full–grown crops with its poisonous seepage and in warm localities leaves patches without even a single stalk from the seed.

A few lines later Columella (2.9.9) states how certain pests may not allow roots to develop.[430] The statement *neu strenua toxica sudat* in verse 10.18 gains clear meaning in the technical context of this passage in book 2. The taxonomies continue for four more verses with plants that, despite their unusual characteristics, are not noxious to the ground [10.19–22]:

quamvis semihominis vesano gramine feta
mandragorae pariat flores; maestamque cicutam,
nec manibus mitis ferulas, nec cruribus aequa
terga rubi, spinisque ferat paliouron acutis.

though the ground may bear the maddening flower of the half–human mandrake, hemlock drear and fennel cruel to the hands, and bramble–bush's arching branches to legs unkind, and prickles ('Christ's thorn') sharp of thorn.

The mandrake, a plant nowhere treated in his treatise, Columella adds for color and has no use in the rest of the treatise; unlike the *cicuta* (hemlock),[431] whose juice can be used, like the *helleborus*, to cure the sheep's *scabies* (7.5.8–9); and the *ferula* (giant fennel), which elsewhere has a wide array of auxiliary functions. In both *De Arboribus* 22.3 and 5.10.14 the same grafting technique is offered to plant the *nux Graeca* or the *avellana Tarentina* by inserting into the *medulla* of an already planted *ferula* the seed of the almond or the hazel without its shell. The *ferula* (fennel), because of its hardness, is

[430] 2.9.9: *Quaedam etiam subterraneae pestes adultas segetes radicibus subsectis enecant.* ('Certain underground pests also kill out mature crops by cutting off their roots.')
[431] Saint–Denis, 1969, 52: cicutam: *la grande ciguë (*Conium maculatum L.*), cf. Plin. 25.151sq.; elle est* maestam*, parce que son jus était doné en breuvage aux condamnés à mort.*

preferable to the knife for castrating young pigs (6.26.1).[432] It can also serve to make *alvaria* (bee–hives; 11.2.90), or, in a similar technique as that for planting the *nux Graeca* and the *avellana Tarentina*, to graft cucumbers into the stalk of a rooted fennel. The open flower of the *ferula* (giant fennel) with its stalk can also be pickled in vinegar and brine (12.7.1).

The *rubus* is a type of thorn–brush which, although it does not poison the ground, needs to be extirpated from its roots during Winter season (2.17.1 & 4). We also saw that, along with the *ebulum*, the *rubus* is one of the shrubs which show there is sweet water underneath (2.2.20). In the business of preparing the ground, if shoots of *rubus* (bramble), *silvester pirus* (wild pear tree) or *silvester prunus* (wild plum tree), come up in clean fallow, this is also an indication that the land is suitable for vines (3.11.5). The *rubus*, however, can be noxious to the sheep's wool (7.3.10 & 7.4.4), especially if this grows excessively, so it should be trimmed before they pasture in the fields:

> *Liberis autem campis et omni surculo ruboque vacantibus ovem Graecam pascere meminerimus, ne, ut supra dixi, et lana carpatur et tegumen.*
>
> We shall remember to feed a Greek sheep on open fields free from all shoots and brambles, lest, as I have already said, its wool and its covering be torn away.

[432] Martial (10.62.10–11) mentions the hard *ferula* as instrument for scourging the *simplex turba* of schoolboys: *ferulaeque tristes, sceptra paedagogorum, / cessent…* Martial also presents the *ferula* as *apophoreton* in 14.80: *Ferulae / Invisae nimium pueris grataeque magistris, / clara Prometheo munere ligna sumus.* ('Rods / Most hateful to boys and agreeable to schoolmasters, we are the sticks made famous by Prometheus' gift.' Trans. Braund.) Juvenal (1.15) also refers to the *ferula* as instrument for the punishment of schoolboys: *Et nos ergo manum ferulae subduximus, et nos consilium dedimus Sullae,…* ('Well, I too have snatched my hand from under the cane. I too have given Sulla advice,…' Trans. Braund.)

The *paliouron* (or *paliuron*) is listed along with the *achras* among the plants suitable for pig's pasture [7.9.6]:

> *Omnem porro situm ruris pecus hoc usurpat. Nam et montibus et campis commode pascitur, melius tamen palustribus agris, quam sitientibus. Nemora sunt convenientissima, quae vestiuntur quercu, subere, fago, cerris, ilicibus, oleastris, termitibus, corylis, pomiferisque silvestribus, ut sunt albae spinae, Graecae siliquae, iuniperus, lotus, pampinus, cornus, arbutus, prunus, et paliurus, atque achrades pyri. Haec enim diversis temporibus mitescunt, ac paene toto anno gregem saturant.*
>
> Moreover, pigs can make shift in any sort of country wherever situated. For they find suitable pasture both in the mountains and in the plains, though it is better on marshy ground than on dry. The most convenient feeding–grounds are woods covered with oaks, cork–oaks, beeches, Turkey oaks, holm–oaks, wild olive trees, terebinth–trees, hazels, wild fruit–trees like the oxyacanth, carob–pods, junipers, nettle–trees, vine–tendrils, cornel–trees strawberry–trees, plum–trees, Christ's thorn, and wild pear–trees.

The *paliuron* , along with what the Greeks call the *κυνόσβατον*, is particularly useful for the construction of quick–set hedges around the *hortus* and because of its thorns keeps man and cattle away from its grounds (11.3.3–4). An enclosing wall made of brick would not last for too long, since it is usually damaged by rain; stone is too expensive for the purpose (11.3.2).

The next four verses (10.23–26) state the need for near–by water sources. In the first two of these verses (23–24) the sources are *amnes*: *Vicini quoque sint amnes*. In verses 25–26 the source is a *fons putei*: *aut fons inlacrimet putei*. These four verses are arranged as two pairs: both (23 and 25) start with a spondaic foot. The second foot of both is dactylic and the fourth contains a strong *caesura*, by the end of the source: after *amnes* in 23, and after putei in 25. Thus the beginning of each pair states the source – *amnes*, *fons putei* – in parallel metrical expressions [10.23–26]:

> *Vicini quoque sint amnes, quos incola durus*
> *attrahat auxilio sempre sitientibus hortis:*

aut fons illacrimet putei non sede profunda,
ne gravis hausturis tendentibus ilia vellat.

Let rivers flow adjacent to your plot, whose streams the hardy gardener may lead as aid to quench the garden's ceaseless thirst, or else a fountain should distil its tears into a basin, not too deeply sunk, lest it should strain the drawers' panting sides.

The remaining of both verses (23 *quos incola durus*; 25 *non sede profunda*) follow a strong caesura and contain bucolic *diaereseis* after the monosyllables *quos* (23) and *non* (25). Verses 24 and 26 show also parallel structures between the two. The metrical design of the last three feet in both verses is the same except for a bucolic *diaeresis* in verse 26 which does not happen in verse 24. The first halves of both verses are rhythmically equivalent, except for the second feet: in 24 a spondaic, in 26 a dactyl; both have third–foot strong *caesuras.*

This parallel structure, however, is far from an academic exercise. For Columella the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, as we see in verse 23 where he states a general advice: there should be – *sint* – neighboring streams, which the *durus* husbandman draws near as *auxilio* to the thirsting gardens. In the second statement (verses 25–26) the personified well – *inlacrimet* – is a step up in pathos from the previous two verses. Personification has already started in the first half of the quatrain in the passive thirst of the *hortus* – *sitientibus hortis.* The source of the well (*fons putei*) is personified by shedding tears (*illacrimet*), only to quickly return to practicalities: let it not be too deep lest the heavy water strain the drawer's panting sides. *Labor* has a rational component in which the idea of proportion has to be taken into consideration. *Téchne* is the activity of man in nature and in these verses we see how Columella gives it poetic expression. The personification of the well works well in the overall scheme to reflect mutual collaboration: to the general principle that man imitates nature in

order to make it fertile – in this case by facilitating irrigation –, nature corresponds by imitating man through poetic personification.

The theme of water of these four verses (23–26) balances also that of the frog's complaint's verses (11–12). There the *natura soli*, is also personified when it has to suffer the noise of the always complaining frog: *nec quae stagnata palude / perpetitur querulae semper convicia ranae.* The next two verses (27–28) bring a theme that we have recently observed in regard to the *κυνόσβατον / paliouron / Christ's thorn*: the construction of a hedge. This is an early subject in the prose book on horticulture. Brick or stone walls are not advisable, according to Democritus' words in his *Georgicon*, says Columella, because they are either too ephemeral or too expensive (11.3.2). Quick–set is preferable, especially that built on *rubus* and *paliuron* (11.3.3). The two verses (10.27–28) reflect the dichotomy between the two types of enclosure, but do not show preferences for one over the other:

> *Talis humus vel parietibus, vel saepibus hirtis*
> *claudatur, ne sit pecori, neu pervia furi.*
>
> This plot let walls or thick–set hedge enclose, impervious both to cattle and to thieves.

As we saw in chapter 2, in the sub–chapter 'tasks after summer solstice', Columella sometimes organizes longer phrases in groups of 2 or 3 verses. After the statement in a distich about the hedge we find the 6–verse passage on the statue of Priapus. Following immediately is the invocation to the Muses of Pieria. The first 40 lines show a carefully designed structure with evenly distributed sections. In the first place, the opening introduction states the purpose of the poem in a paraphrase of Virgil's introduction to his own *Georgics.* This five–line statement of purpose (1–5) is mirrored by the six–line dedication in lines (35–40). Although the

address is to the Muses of Pieria, these are not named until the last verse. The effect is, therefore, that the poet is still addressing Silvinus: *ergo age nunc cultus et tempora quaeque serendis / seminibus* (35–36) seems thus to repeat the purpose of the poem (*te cultus, Silvine, docebo* (10.1)) stated at the very opening: what appears to be an early pause to remind the addressee about the journey he is about to start turns, in the very last verse, into an invocation. We have seen above the close intertextual relationship between Columella and Virgil in both the opening verses and this programmatic passage. These six verses close the section by reciprocating the first five verses of the poem and form what is effectively the introduction to the poem: 1–40. [433]

In between the two framing sections (1–5 & 35–40), the five–line statement of principles – *sedem numeroso praebeat horto / pinguis ager…* (6–10) – finds its mirror, in turn, in the six–verse *recusatio* of fine sculpture for the garden in favor of the statue of Priapus (29–34). The distich of the complaining frog (11–12) is mirrored by the distich of the *saepes hirta* and the *paries* as limits for the garden (27–28).

In between these two distichs there is one section on the types of trees that indicate good ground in an uncultivated plot (13–22) and a smaller section of four verses that advise

[433] The first verb – *docebo* – is addressed to Silvinus. The next main verbs are prescriptive of the characteristics of the ideal land for the ground of the garden: *sedem praebeat pinguis ager* (6–7); *nam neque sicca placet* (11); *tum quae educat ulmos gaudet* (13–15); *sed negat helleboros* (17)*, nec patitur taxos* (18), nec sudat (18); *vicini quoque sint amnes* (23); *aut fons illacrimet* (25); *claudatur* (28); *neu tibi quaerantur munera* (29); *nec laboretur* (30–31); *sed truncum forte dolatum Priapi minetur* (31–34). Also in the verb distribution we find greater concentration of these (e.g., two verbs in one verse) in the middle verses 17–18 where *hellebore* and *taxus* are prohibited from future garden grounds. There is also an intensification from (hortatory) subjunctive forms of the verbs (*praebeat*) to the indicatives (*placet, gaudet, negat, patitur, sudat*), back to (hortatory) subjuntives (*illacrimet, claudatur, quaerantur, laboretur, minetur*).

that a water source be near the ground (23–26). The first four verses of that middle section contain those trees that indicate a fertile plot (13–16): the *frondosa ulmus*, the *palmes ferae*, the *achras*, the *prunus*, and the *iniussa mala*, which indicate *ubertas.* These are immediately followed by an internal distich (17–18) containing the plants that characterize the toxic ground: the *helleborus*, the *carpasa* (or *carbasa*), and the *taxus.* The last four verses of this section (19–22) are devoted to those plants which, although curious, do not harm the uncultivated ground: *mandragora, cicuta, ferula, rubus, paliuron.* This longer section of 10 verses is, therefore, internally divided into 4–2–4 verses by theme, and form the central section of the first 40 verses. These 40 verses can then be divided evenly in groups of 5, 6, 4, or 2 verses. The sections are distributed symmetrically in a balanced composition. Nothing hints at excess; on the contrary, adherence to a well–planned structure is manifest in these early verses.

Autumnal cycle: part I

From this moment on the poem is organized in a cyclic sequence of seasons.[434] Verse 41 starts Autumn; Winter starts in verse 55. The longest section of the poem corresponds to the Spring from verse 77 to verse 310.[435] Summer starts on 311 and on 423 there is a return to Autumn.[436] This closes the cyclic structure of the poem written, as Henderson states, by the

[434] See Saint–Denis (1969a, 12–13).
[435] Coppolino (1994, 35) subdivides Spring further: 77–93: fertilizing and clearing; 94–139: sowing flowers, medicinal and aromatic plants, and vegetables; 140–154: maintenance and irrigation; 155–195: transplanting; 255–310: harvesting of flowers and enjoying full bloom.
[436] Both Coppolino (1994, 36–52) and White (2013, 67–89) present this basic structure. For a subdivision of Summer, see Coppolino (1994, 35: 311–368): planting and the struggle against harm; 369–422: harvest of vegetables and fruits.

'systemic organizer' of also the carefully articulated prose treatise.[437] Columella marks the start of seasons by astronomical events [10.41–46]:

> *Oceani sitiens cum iam canis hauserit undas,*
> *et paribus Titan orbem libraverit horis,*
> *cum satur autumnus quassans sua tempora pomis*
> *sordidus et musto spumantes exprimet uvas;*
> *tum mihi ferrato versetur robore palae*
> *dulcis humus, si iam pluviis defessa madebit.*

Autumn begins with the 'Dog–star' – *Canis* – drinking from the *undas Oceani* (41). The present participle *sitiens* recently applied to the *hortus* (verse 24) and the (future perfect indicative of the) verb *haurire* from the wells of the *incola gravis* (26), reappear both, now modifying the name of the star. This sets a very precise beginning for the autumnal season. Saint–Denis explains thus the signaling event: 'Canis (*ou* Canicula)*: la plus brillante etoile de la constellation du Grand Chien; date de son coucher dans l'océan: du 24 au 26 de septembre… Le verse suivant se réfère en effet à l'équinoxe d'automne.*'[438]

In the next two verses Autumn gains even greater relevance through its personification [10.43–44]: *cum satur Autumnus quassans sua tempora pomis / sordidus et musto spumantis exprimet uvas.* The future simple now takes over the perfects of verses 41–42, all establishing a

[437] Henderson (2002, 113).

[438] See Saint–Denis (1969a, 53). For a discussion of the identification of this star see White (2013, 142–143). In the calendar section of book 11 (11.2.66) Columella states the dates of the Autumn equinox – viii, vii, and vi *Kal. Oct.* (24th–26th Sept.): *Octavo cal. Octob. et septimo et sexto Aequinoctium autumnale pluviam significat.* The description of the equinox is given in the next verse [10.43]: *et paribus Titan orbem libraverit horis.* Ovid also in *Met.* 1.10 identifies the sun as the son of the Titan Hyperion (*Nullus adhuc mundo praebebat lumina Titan, / nec nova crescendo reparabat cornua Phoebe*), as well as in *Met.* 2.118, but these do not signal the beginning of the year. See also Saint–Denis (1969a, 53, esp. n. 42). Ovid, in *Met.* 6.438 (daughters of Pandion), cites *Titan* as a calendrical annual point of reference for the beginning of the year: *Iam tempora Titan quinque per autumnos repetiti duxerat anni*.

firm spot in time. Autumn, *sordidus musto* as a metonymy for Bacchus, the *pater Lenaee* of Virgil, announces a song of fertility. Here the Virgilian reference is *Georg.* 2.4–8:

> *Huc, pater o Lenaee (tuis hic omnia plena*
> *muneribus, tibi pampineo gravidus autumno*
> *floret ager, spumat plenis vindemia labris),*
> *huc, pater o Lenaee, veni nudataque musto*
> *tingue novo mecum dereptis crura cothurnis.*
>
> Hither, Lenaean sire! Here all is full of your bounties; for you blossoms the field teeming with the harvest of the vine, and the vintage foams in the brimming vats. Come hither, Lenaean sire, strip off your buskins and with me plunge your naked legs in the new must.[439]

The *spumantes uvas* of 10.44, object of the future *exprimet* echo the *spumat… vindemia* of Virgil's 2.6. The subject of *exprimet* in 10.44 is *satur autumnus*. In Virgil *spumat* is the main verb (in contrast to the present participle modifying the direct object – *uvas*) with the *vindemia* as subject. The *musto* of the same verse echoes, as we can witness, in concentrated form, the *musto… novo* of Virgil.[440] Virgil's *musto* is ablative with the verb *tingue* (7–8) and Columella's *musto* modifies *Autumnus'* epithet *sordidus* – *sordidus et musto* (44).

The next two verses (10.45–46), continue with a reference to the fertility expressed the previous verses: *dulcis humus, si iam pluviis defessa madebit* (the sweet soil, if now it lies weary and sodden by the rain, 10.46). Wetness and weariness offers a sharply contrasting image

[439] Fairclough–Goold (1999, 137)

[440] Virgil 2.7–8. Scrhoeter, 1882, 20 adds: '*v. 44: Clausulae versus similes locos haud paucos invenies apud Vergilium; cf.* Ecl. *5.67 (*Pocula bina novo spumantia lacte quotannis*);* Georg. *4.139–41 (*Ergo apibus fetis idem atque examine multo / primus abundare et spumantia cogere pressis / mella favis.*);* Georg. *2.6; 3.309–310.*' The last relating to milking goats.

against the hard quality of the agricultural instrument in the previous verse: *ferrato robore palae* (with the might of spades with iron shod, 10.45). [441]

In these six verses (10.41–46) we find, therefore, the same kind of symmetrical structure we saw in the introductory 40 verses, here applied to the smallest poetic units: two verses (41–42) to indicate the starting moment of a season (the Autumn equinox), two verses to personify the season through the implied figure of Bacchus (43–44), and two verses to characterize the season (45–46): one in which the fertile ground (*dulcis*) ought to be turned by the iron strength of the hoe. The image of Bacchus as *Autumnus* is locked in between the imagery of Titan's equal division of the hours and the harsh strength of the hoe in the two middle verses of this group of 6: 2–2–2. The poem closes with the same *épanouissement* of Bacchic imagery of verses 425–432, which ends with another *variatio* of verses 43–44.[442]

The next group of verses (10.47–49) picks up on the theme of wetness or dryness of the ground from verse 46. The natural elements, *rivi* and *terra*, are personified in this first three–verse cell. The theme gets, however, carried over to the next group of five verses (50–54). The first two of this group show each the contraposition of two elements: in verse 50 the *humor caeli* against the *humor campi*; in verse 51 the same image is duplicated in chiastic order: the

[441] See Mynors (1990, 34, n. 162) on the meaning of *robur* as 'massive strength'. The verse is reminiscent of a trope in *Georg.* 1.147–149 (following the *sententia on labor*) – *Prima Ceres ferro mortalis vertere terram instituit*) –, as well as *Georg.* 1.162 – *vomis et inflexi primum grave robur aratri* –, or *Georg.* 2.203–204 – *nigra fere et presso pinguis sub vomere terra / et cui putre solum (namque hoc imitamur arando*) –, and 211 (*at rudis enuit impulso vomere campus*). Shroeter (1882, 20) also makes a parallel between Columella's *dulcis humus, si iam pluviis defessa madebit* and *Georg.* 3.428–429: *qui, dum amnes ulli rumpuntur fontibus et dum / vere madent udo terrae ac pluvialibus Austris.*

[442] See 'Autumnal cycle: part II' below.

humor campi of verse 50, expressed now as *ingenium loci*, is set against *Iuppiter* who may deny rain.[443]

Verses 10.52–54 continue with the theme of rain as they state the consequence of the previous two verses with a return to the hortatory subjunctive *exspectetur* (52) addressed to the farmer. It is necessary to wait for the *Corona Borealis* (*Bacchi Gnosius ardor*) to be hidden, and for the *Atlantides* (*Pleiades* or *Vergiliae*) to fear the sun–rise (54), i.e., for the change of season which will end Autumn and start Winter.[444]

The first autumnal passage has a symmetrical structure akin to that we have observed in the opening 40 verses of the poem. It opens with the setting of the *Canis* and the description of the Autumn equinox (verses 41–42). It closes with the expectation of Winter, marked by the setting of the *Corona Borealis*, described by the personified Gnosian burning of Bacchus to denote this constellation, and the personification of the *Atlantides* (53–55). The different sections are not sealed water–proof: the last is comprised by verses 51–55 which are concerned with the fact that *nec caeli nec campi competit humor* (50) and that it may be the case that *ingenium… loci vel Iuppiter abneget imbrem* (51).

The theme of irrigation starts, therefore, in the first of the three sections of Autumn. (These are 41–46 (6 verses), 47–49 (3 verses) entirely devoted to irrigation, 50–54 (5 verses)

[443] Schroeter (1882, 21) offers several parallels in Virgil. *Ingenium loci*, for instance, echoes *Georg.* 2.177: *Nunc locus arvorum ingeniis, quae robora cuique, quis color et quae sit rebus natura ferendis.*

[444] In 11.2.84 Columella identifies the morning setting of the *Vergiliae* with the advent of storms and wind: *Sexto idus Novembres Vergiliae mane occidunt* . The beginning and end of Autumn is marked by rains: first the autumn equinox, which happens with the setting of the *Canis* signifies rain (*Octavo cal. Octob. et septimo et sexto Aequinoctium autumnale pluviam significat*).

marking the end of season with the personification of two constellations. The explicit presence of Bacchus associated with the constellation at the end of the season counter–balances the implicit Bacchus–as–*Autumnus* of its opening (43–44) which also introduces a desire for rain (46): *si iam pluviis defessa madebit.* Yet all the vivid images and impersonations (e.g. *terra bibat fontis et hiantia compleat ora* of 49), the tension between contrary elements (e.g. *humor caeli et humor campi* of 50, or whether *ingenium loci vel Iuppiter abnegat imbrem* of 51), those images already commented upon, remain checked by a balanced and contained form, and a carefully ordered treatment of themes.

Winter preparations: two ages of man and iron tools

Winter starts in verse 10.55 with *Phoebus* (personification of the sun) no longer safe in Olympus (metonymy for the sky) flees the *chelas* (claws) *et spicula* (stings) *dira Nepae* (Scorpion). The density of personification, metonymy, and the enjambment, as Diederich points out, of the *spicula…/ dira Nepae* between verses 55 and 56 becomes more intense. This is not unique to Columella. There is an echo in verses 55–57 of *Ecl.* 6.26 in which neither the Parnassian crags rejoice as much in Phoebus, nor Rhodope and Ismarus admire Orpheus as much as Fauns, beasts and oaks enjoy in their dance *in numerum* (*Ecl.* 6.27) as Silenus is about to start his cosmic song.[445] Virgil's personification of natural geographical places (the *Parnasia rupes* and the *Ismarus*) is transferred by Columella to celestial signs [10.55–57]:

Atque ubi iam tuto necdum confisus Olympo

[445] The first myth that Silenus sings, albeit briefly (*Ecl.* 6.41), is the myth of Decaulion and Pyrrha, one Columella evokes in this early sections of the poem (10.65–67). See below.

sed trepidus profugit chelas et spicula Phoebus
dira Nepae tergoque Croti festinat equino,
nescia plebs generis matri ne parcite falsae
ista Prometheae genetrix fuit altera cretae.

And as soon as Phoebus no longer relies on the safety of Olympus, but tremblingly flees the cruel claws and stings of Scorpion, to rush over the back of Crotus, then, people ignorant of your origin, do not spare the earth you falsely call your mother; she a race mothered from clay Promethean.

In the description of the change of sign from *Scorpio* to *Sagittarius* (*Crotus*) there are also echoes of the image of its *chelas* early in the *Georgics* of Virgil [1.32–36]:

anne novum tardis sidus te mensibus addas,
qua locus Erigonen inter Chelasque sequentis
panditur (ipse tibi iam bracchia contrahit ardens
Scorpios et caeli iusta plus parte reliquit):
quidquid eris (nam te nec sperant Tartara regem).

or whether you add yourself as a new star to the lingering months, where, between the Virgin (Erigone) and the grasping Claws, a space is opening (lo! for you even now the blazing Scorpion draws in his arms, and has left more than a due portion of the heaven!) – whatever you are to be (for Tartarus hopes not for you as a king).

A few verses later (10.63–64), we shall see a return of Tartarus. Diederich sees a *crescendo* from the verb *celetur* (verse 53) and *metuant* (54) at the end of the previous (autumn) section, through *trepidus profugit* (56), and *festinat* (57), suggests that a rough time is coming upon the earth.[446] This interpretation relies on an anticipation of the

[446] Diederich (2007, 234). Saint–Denis (1969, 32) suggests a full stop after verse 58 which is not in Forster–Heffner. This change alters little the structure of the verses. Diederich also suggests that this passage echoes Ovid's *Met.* 2.80–83 on the myth of Phaethon. The replacement of Phaethon with Phoebus, on the one hand, and the *gradieris… saevaque circuitu curvantem bracchia longo / Scorpion*, taken up by Columella in the sentence *trepidus profugit chelas et spicula Phoebus /dira Nepae*, show definite parallels.

theme of *labor* which has not yet appeared. We have already seen in the previous examples Columella's tendency towards intensification.

Verses 58–59, following immediately after the opening of Winter verses, present the theme of the children of Promethean clay of the pristine generation.[447] There is a change from the third–person singular narrative of Phoebus (*profugit* (56), *festinat* (57)) to the second–person imperative *ne parcite* (58). The subject of the new verse (59) – *ista Prometheae genetrix fuit altera cretae* – is in sharp contrast with the *genetrix altera* of verse 60, one born after the great *deluge* [10.60–62]:

> *altera nos enixa parens, quo tempore saevos*
> *tellurem ponto mersit Neptunus, et imum*
> *concutiens barathrum Lethaeas terruit undas.*
>
> but us another parent bore, when 'neath the waves harsh Neptune whelmed the earth, the lowest pit shaking, and Lethe's streams with terror filled.

These three verses, echo the *deluge* of Ovid's Neptunus (*Met.* 1.283). *Ad orationem variandam* (in variation of the expression) Columella has Neptune *tellurem ponto [mergere]* (sink the earth in the sea), where Ovid has Neptune *tridente suo terram [percutere]* (smite the earth with his trident). While the sea (*pontus*) has no shores in Ovid, for Columella it covers the earth (*tellurem*). While for Columella Neptune shaking the depth terrifies the Lethaean waves, in Ovid *[terra] illa intremuit* (trembles).[448]

The myth of the ages is, therefore, introduced through the Promethean *creta.* The use of the epithet 'Promethean' with *creta* (which *O.L.D.* explains 'from which Prometheus made

[447] Forster–Heffner (1955, 10) present the 5 verses (55–59) as a unit. Both Saint–Denis (1969, 32) and Rodgers (2010, 404) separate the last two verses from the previous three. 55–57 describe the turn of season, 58–59 introduce the new theme.
[448] *Met.* 1.283–292.

men'), seems to be an expression unique to Columella. Only Martial (10.39.4) uses a similar expression: *ficta Prometheo diceris esse luto.* The word evokes, at any rate, the earth (*γαῖα*) which covers the first three failed races of humans in Hesiod's verses 121, 140, and 156 of *Works and Days*. The Ovidian echoes, however, lead Columella to Ovid's narrative of the *deluge.* This narrative ends with an evocation of *Tartarus* verses 63 – 64), reminiscent of the banishment of Saturn to *Tartarus* by the end of the first age of man in Ovid's *Met.* 1.113.[449] In search of dark imagery, Columella may be combining several *loci*, as he also seems to be thinking of *Georg.* 1.36 (*nam te nec sperant Tartara regem*), as well as the images of the *Stygiis umbris* of *Met* 1.139, or the *Stygio luco* of *Met.* 1.189 [10:63–64]:

> *Tumque semel Stygium regem videre trementem*
> *Tartara, cum pelagi streperent sub pondere Manes.*
>
> Then once Tartarus saw the king of the Styx tremble, while the Manes roared under the weight of the ocean.

The change of subject, however, from Virgil to Columella, is surprising: the object (*te… regem*) of *Georg.* 1.36 (*nam te nec sperant Tartara regem*) is no other than Caesar, listed as the last divinity of agriculture in the introduction. In Columella's poem Tartarus witnesses the king of Styx himself *trementem*.

Cosmic *aition*: Deucalion

[449] Saint–Denis (1969, 53, n. 59) signals the paragraph starting in 318. Echoes might be found even earlier – in Ovid's myths of the ages and Jupiter's punishment of Lycaon. There is, for instance, a possible echo to the *Stygiis umbris* (*Met.* 1.139) and the *Stygio luco* (*Met.* 1.189) in the *Stygium regem* in a later verse (63) of Columella.

The next three verses (10.65–67) present the answer to verse 10.60 (*altera nox enixa parens*) immediately after the dire image of Neptune flooding the earth and *Stygium regem trementem*, along with the *Manes streptentes.* In verse 65 there is, in contrast, an immediate positive epithet applied to the origin of the current race of men – *fecunda manus* – when the world was devoid of them. The second half of the anaphora (the object *nos… nos…*) is a brief reference to the myth of Deucalion [10.65–67]:

> *Nos fecunda manus viduo mortalibus orbe*
> *progenerat, nos abruptae tum montibus altis*
> *Deucalioneae cautes peperere.*
>
> A fertile hand gave us birth when the world was empty of mortals; the rocks torn from the high mountains by Deucalion gave us birth.

The myth, for which Columella could have consulted Ovid, is mediated by a statement from *Georg.* 1.60–63. The intertextual dependency on this statement is pertinent to what is emerging as Columella's argument for the Winter season. The reference to *quo tempore primum* of *Georg.* 1.61 finds its echo in 10.60 (*quo tempore saevos*). The expression *viduo mortalibus orbe* (10.65) finds its precursor in *Georg.* 1.62: *Deucalion vacuum lapides iactavit in orbem.*[450] To find the correspondence to Virgil's *durum genus* we need to read forward into the next verse (10.66–67): *Sed ecce / durior aeternusque vocat labor* where the epithet is not applied to the *genus [hominum]* but to *labor.* [*Georg.* 1.60–63:]

> *Continuo has leges aeternaque foedera certis*
> *imposuit natura locis, quo tempore primum*
> *Deucalion vacuum lapides iactavit in orbem,*
> *unde homines nati, durum genus.*

[450] See also confirmation in Schroeter (1882, 22).

> From the first, Nature laid these laws and eternal covenants on certain lands, even from the day when Deucalion threw stones into the empty world, whence sprang men, a stony race.[451]

Schroeter, for instance, sees in Columella's lines 67–68 (*Sed ecce / durior aeternus vocat labor*) a parallel also of *Georg.* 2.412, where Cato's *adage* is stated: *durus uterque labor: laudato ingentia rura*;[452] but what seems to be specific to these verses is really a reference, not necessarily to Virgil's lines themselves, but the trope of *labor*, ubiquitous throughout the *Georgics*.[453]

We have seen that Columella seldom has one single model in mind with respect to intertextuality. His references to Virgil are not more evident than to other texts and do not overshadow his own original poetic voice which, in the details, shows as much dialogue with the poetic traditions as a whole as with Virgil. The true link with Virgil is not at the formal, but both at an artistic and an ideological level. It is through a strengthened connection between *labor* and *usus* that Columella tries to consolidate concepts already present in Virgil. In *Georg.* 2.22, e.g., we read about this connection when he begins to describe techniques acquired by *usus*, which later Columella presents as the specific methods of *propagatio*, *exstirpatio*, *impedatio*, through a *viviradix* or a *malleolus*, *insitio*, etc. [*Georg.* 2.22–25][454]

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[451] Fairclough–Goold (1999, 103)

[452] The full quote is [*Georg.* 2.410–413]: *Bis vitibus ingruit umbra, bis segetem densis obducunt sentibus herbae; durus uterque labor: laudato ingentia rura, exiguum colito.* ('Twice the shade thickens on the vines; twice weeds cover the vineyard with thronging briars. Heavy is either toil: 'Give praise to large estates, farm a small one'.' (Fairclough's translation.))

[453] For *labor* in the *Georgics* see, e.g., Thomas (1981.1, 16): 'That man's pursuit of toil, *labor*, is the chief theme of the poem is clear; an evaluation of the poem necessarily involves examining the nature of such toil, and the results of man's relationship with it'.

[454] See chapter 1. See also Thomas (1988.1, 157, esp. n. 9 & 159 n. 22–34): 'Thirteen lines on the spontaneous and natural forms of generation are followed by another thirteen on

Sunt alii, quos ipse via sibi repperit usus.
Hic plantas tenero abscidens de corpore matrum
deposuit sulcis, hic stirpes obruit arvo
quadrifidasque sudes et acuto robore vallos.

Others there are which Experience has in her course discovered for herself. One man tears away suckers from the mother's tender frame, and sets them in furrows; another buries in the ground stems, both as cross–cleft shafts and as sharp–pointed stakes.

Columella, by taking on the theme of the fall of man, is engaging a cultural *topos* of didactic poetry. His narrative of the *Deluge* and the Deucalion myth, dense in images and intertextual references, and its evocation of the myth of the ages has derived into the theme, or interrelated themes, he has chosen for Winter as inseparable from the new post–Promethean race: *labor* and *usus*. The origin of this race Saint–Denis states in his commentary: *Ista Prometheae…: Columelle veut dire que si la première race des humains fut tirée par Prométhée de la terre, la race actuelle fut, après le déluge, créée par Deucalion et Pyrrha, en lançant des pierres derrière eux.*[455] Diederich comments eloquently on the balance between the different elements and, most importantly, between transferable qualities such as the hardness of stone and the hardness of *labor*:

Die Hand ist dabei das Aition für die Arbeitsamkeit der gegenwärtigen Menschheit, der Stein begründet ihre Härte, die noch überboten wird von der Härte der ständig fordernden Arbeit, vom aeternus labor.[456]

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propagation effected by man, namely the planting of suckers, of stems, layers, cuttings, growing from a piece of trunk, and grafting and budding.'

[455] In the three places (*Op.* 121, 140, and 158) the verses are almost identical: *αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ / καὶ τοῦτο [χρὺσεον, ἀργὺρεον, χάλκειον] γένος κατὰ γαῖα κάλυψεν.* As punishment for Prometheus' infraction Zeus orders Hephaestus *ὅττι τάχιστα / γαῖαν ὕδει φύρειν* (*Op.* 60–61)

[456] Diederich, 2007, 234: 'The hand is, in this respect, the *aition* for the industriousness of the present humanity; the stone establishes its hardness, which is still surpassed by the hardness of constantly demanding work, of *aeternus labor.*'

Labor improbus

As we have been anticipating, Columella proceeds to the practicalities of agriculture – *usus et experientia* are finally calling. Early among the winter tasks is the turning by means of *ferrato robore palae* of the *dulcis humus* (10.45–46). By the end of Winter tasks we return to *labor* and its instrument – the *vomer* (plough). After the general statement of *vocat labor* come the three imperatives (the first in enjambment: *pellite, lacerate, scindite*). The third, *scindite*, appropriately in a short and stately injunction [10.67–70]:

> *Sed ecce*
> *durior aeternusque vocat labor: eia age segnes*
> *pellite nunc somnos, et curvi vomere dentis*
> *iam virides lacerate comas, iam scindite amictus.*
>
> But here a harder and endless task calls. Come! drive away dull sleep, and with the ploughshare's curving tooth start tearing [earth's] green hair, and start rending [her] robes.

But before the call of the instruments is the call to *abstinentia* (*eia age segnis / pellite nunc somnos*) which invites comparison with the advice against the *somniculosum vilicus* (11.1.13), or the *vilica* for whom *considerandum erit… a somno… remotissima* (12.1.3) and the implied call to *labor*. The plough – *vomere* – evokes Virgil's in *Georg.* 2.203 (*Nigra fere et presso pinguis sub vomere terra*) and 2.211 (*at rudis enuit impulso vomere campus*), both in the same case and in the same metrical place as Columella's – after the *bucolic diaeresis*. In contrast with Virgil, who ends both main clauses at the end of the respective verses, and *ad orationem variandam*, Columella presents the sentence *et curvi vomere dentis / iam virides lacerate comas*

extended over the two verses (69–70).[457] Not only are these two instances of metrical identity echoed by Columella: as we have seen in other examples, the leading idea of the passage is the driving motivation for the intertextual reference. The passage contained between the two verses of *Georg.* 2.203–211 expresses Virgil's vision of the relationship between man and nature:

> *Nigra fere et presso pinguis sub vomere terra*
> *et cui putre solum (namque hoc imitamur arando),*
> *optima frumentis: non ullo ex aequore cernes*
> *plura domum tardis decedere plaustra iuvencis:*
> *aut unde iratus silvam devexit arator*
> *et nemora evertit multos ignava per annos,*
> *antiquasque domos avium cum stirpibus imis*
> *eruit; illae altum nidis petiere relictis,*
> *at rudis enuit impulso vomere campus.*

> Land that is dark, and rich beneath the share's pressure and with a crumbly soil – for such a soil we try to rival with our ploughing – is, in the main, best for corn; from no other land will you see more wagons wending homeward behind slow bullocks; or land from which the angry ploughman has carried off the timber, levelling groves that have idled many a year, and tearing up by their deepest roots the olden homes of the birds – these leave their nests and seek the sky, but forthwith the untried plain glistens under the driven ploughshare.[458]

Verses 207–208 especially show the ultimate power of the *iratus arator* over virgin land (*nemora ignava*). Virgil's imagery throughout reveals these aspects of domination of the land. The plough is the instrument through which domination comes about: (*nigra fere et presso pinguis… terra presso sub vomere*) is picked up by the *iratus arator*, whose epithet is not without a measure of violence. The birds of 209–210 re–inforce this violence, now not only against the *nemora multos… ignava per annos* (208), but its *antiquas domos avium* (209). The passage ends with a return to the field, now transformed *impulso vomere* (211). Columella uses

[457] *Georg.* 2.203 is followed immediately by the verse with the parenthetical *(namque hoc imitamur arando)*. See about this subject under the sub–heading '*Abstinentia*' in chapter 2.
[458] Fairclough–Goold (1999, 151)

only two lines to express this elaborate image with the addition of the metaphors of tearing hair and garments [10.69–70]: *et curvi vomere dentis / iam virides lacerate comas, iam scindite amictus*).[459]

Passages in the *Georg.* which bring up variations on the theme of *labor*: e.g. *Georg.* 1.118–119 (*Nec tamen, haec cum sint hominumque boumque labores / versando terram experti*), which with its Homeric/Hesiodic echoes, is brought up by Columella later in the poem: shortly after the beginning of Summer tasks, the *holitor* is ordered to say the vows at the temple of *Fors Fortuna.* A few lines later the *holitor* is ready to apply the *falx* and he will encounter the violence of the elements [10.328–330]:

> *et iam maturis [holitor] quaerit supponere falcem,*
> *saepe ferus duros iaculatur Iuppiter imbres,*
> *grandine dilapidans hominumque boumque labores.*
>
> ready to put in the knife, oft–times fierce Jove, launching his cruel showers, lays waste with hail the toils of man and beast.

Once again Columella has taken a Virgilian intertext (with roots in archaic epic) and placed it in a slightly different environment: what in Virgil follows and introduces a section on *labor* – 1.118–146 –, a section which ends in the most famous *sententia* of the *Georgics*;[460] in Columella the same expression is surrounded by the violence of the age of fierce (*ferus*) Jupiter who throws in cruel showers (*duros imbres*) and who with hail lays waste the toils of man and beast (*grando dilapidat hominumque boumque labores*). The themes, of course, are not

[459] See chapter 1. Saint–Denis (1969a, 54) states: '*cette expression continue la personification de la terre, en utilissant le verbe technique* scindere; *cf. Verg.* Georg. *3.160 (*scindere terram*).*'
[460] *Georg.* 1.145–146: *Labor omnia vicit / improbus, et duris urgens in rebus egestas.*

unrelated, and Virgil, a few verses later [1.121–122] returns to *usus et experientia*: *Pater ipse colendi / haud facilem esse viam voluit, primusque per artem movit agros.*

But, let us return to book 10, to show how Columella varies a phrase from Virgil. The noun *comas* in the expression *iam virides lacerate comas* is not as explicit as when Virgil uses it as a metaphor to denote the branches of vines climbing on the elm–tree in 2.368 [*Georg.* 2.367–370]:

> *Inde ubi iam validis amplexae stirpibus ulmos*
> *exierint, tum stringe comas, tum bracchia tonde*
> *(ante reformidant ferrum), tum denique dura*
> *exerce imperia et ramos compesce fluentis.*
>
> Later, when they have shot up and their stout stems have now clasped the elms,
> then strip their locks and clip their arms – before they shrink from the knife –
> then at last set up an iron sway and check the flowing branches.

Stringe is substituted by *lacerate*, the *viridis comas* are the object of the *curvi vomere dentis* of the previous verse (10.67) and, therefore, not of an instrument that would strip the locks (*stringe comas*) of the vine. The only instance in the *Georgics* when Virgil uses the noun *amictus* is in the context of the plague of Noricum in book 3 (3.563), when the plague has already affected man and rendered all *labor* useless (3.525: *Quid labor aut benefacta iuvant?*). This intertextual interpretation is, obviously, at this early spot of his own georgic, far from Columella's intentions in verse 10.70, and shows that lexical choice in this instance is not dictated by intertextual convenience. The theme of *labor*, frequently associated with the *aratrum* or other utensils expressed by Virgil underlies Columella's narrative. [*Georg.* 2.514]:

> *Agricola incurvo terram dimovit aratro:*
> *hinc anni labor, hinc patriam parvosque nepotes*
> *sustinet, hinc armenta boum meritosque iuvencos.*

Meanwhile the husbandman has been cleaving the soil with crooked plough; hence comes his year's work, hence comes sustenance for his country and his little grandsons, hence for his herds of cows and faithful bullocks.

Winter labors and their instruments: *marrae*

The *laus laboris* continues in the next four verses (10.71–74) echoing one of the most important Virgilian themes. In this short and concentrated section Columella resorts to the violent action perpetrated against the earth through the aid of two new instruments, the *rastrum* (verse 71) and the *marra* (verse 72), used within an emphatic double imperative[461] [10.71–73]:

Tu gravibus rastris cunctantia perfode terga,
tu penitus latis eradere viscera marris
ne dubita.

With heavy rakes cleave her unyielding back; spare not with mattocks broad her inmost parts to scrape.

Virgil has his readers accustomed to the violent language of ploughing as we may read in *Georg.* 2.203–211, 2.367–370, or 2.514. Virgil uses the word *arma* to connote the violence implied in the use of agricultural instruments in *Georg.* 1.160–164:

Dicendum et quae sint duris agrestibus arma,
qui sine nec potuere seri nec surgere messes:
vomis et inflexi primum grave robur aratri,
tardaque Eleusinae matris volventia plaustra,
tribulaque traheaeque et iniquo pondere rastri.

[461] The *rastrum* has been in use in Latin poetry: it appears, *e.g.*, in Plautus' *Merc.* (277), Ennius (319), in *Ecl.* 4.40 (*non rastros patietur humus, non vinea falcem*), and multiple times in the *Georgics*.

> I must tell, too, of the hardy farmer's weapons, without which the crops could be neither sown nor raised. First the share and the curved plough's heavy frame, the slow–rolling wains of the Mother of Eleusis, sledges and drags, and hoes of cruel weight.

Columella, in this instance does not use any of these examples of farming instruments except for the *vomer.* The *marra* appears for the first time in this verse and again a few verses further (10.89). According to *L.S.J.* (s.v. *μάρρον*) it appears to be related to the Assyrian or Sumerian *marru* and *Syriac mar(r)â.*[462] In 10.89, at the beginning of the spring tasks, the instrument is used in the same environment within a three–verse phrase echoing its first instance [10.88–90]:

> *Mox bene cum glebis vivacem cespitis herbam*
> *contundat marrae vel fracti dente ligonis,*
> *putria maturi solvantur ut ubera campi.*
>
> Then, let [the *holitor*] carefully crumble the lively grass of turf with the tooth of the *marra* or of the broken *ligo* (mattock or hoe), so that the crumbling wealth (*ubera*) of the mature field is set free.

In both instances, this instrument of middle eastern extraction adds color, but its action, as that of all other instruments, is marked by the Virgilian violence associated with *labor*: *eradere viscera* (10.72); *vivacem cespitis herbam contundere* (10.88–89). Although neither the

[462] The correction from *matris* (of the SAR mss.) to *marris* is well founded on the presence of this instrument a few verses further (10.89) along with another intrument, the *ligo.* See *O.L.D.* '*marra*'. *T.L.L.*: '*marra ae f. [una cum gr. μάρρον]. Asiaticae originis esse putant. Etc.*' T.L.G.: '*Hesychio ἐργαλεῖον σιδηροῦν*, *Instrumentum ferreum. Simile quid esse dicitur Marrha apud Columellam.*' See also ch. 3 under the sub–heading 'From the Instructions of Ninurta to Columella via Mago the Carthaginian'. Saint–Denis (1969a, 54) states with respect to the *marra*: '*outil mal connu; le mot* marra *se rencontre rarement; cf. v. 89*.' The reading *matris* would have brought a very different image, although appropriate for the topic and certainly effective, but would leave *latis* unexplained. Both Forster–Heffner (1955, 12) and Saint–Denis (1969a, 32) correctly accept the correction to *marris.*

verbs *perfodere, eradere* or *contundere* appear with the same meaning in Virgil, the same image occurs in *Georg.* 2.236–237 with the verb *proscindere*.[463]

Verses 10.71–72 are comprised of two parallel imperatives (*perfode, eradere ne dubita*) with the second verb in enjambment in 10.73: 'You with heavy rakes (*rastri*) to cleave her unyielding back, to scrape out with broad mattocks (*marrae*) her innermost entrails do not hesitate.' This imagery of cleaving and scraping is common in both poets and we find it as early as *Georg.* 1.94 – *Multum adeo, rastris glaebas qui frangit inertis* –, where the work of the *rastrum* is described breaking the sluggish clods, or *Georg.* 1.155 (*quod nisi et adsiduis herbam insectabere rastris*), where the *rastrum* is a weapon of cutting grass.[464]

Sharp contrast of imagery is, however, not alien to Columella. This is exemplified in verse 73 if the reading *ferventia* (instead of *frequentia* in the mss.) is adopted.[465] There is a parallel syntactic construction with the imperative *ne dubita*, first to be taken with the previous *eradere* (72), now with *ponere* (74). Verses 10.73–76 close Winter with reference to conflicting winds:

> *et summo ferventia cespite mixta*
> *ponere, quae canis iaceant urenda pruinis,*
> *verberibus gelidis iraeque obnoxia Cauri,*
> *alliget ut saevus Boreas Eurusque resolvat.*

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[463] *Georg.* 2.236–237: *Glaebas cunctanctis crassaque terga / exspecta et validis terram proscinde iuvencis.* ('Look for reluctant clods and stiffness of ridge, and have strong oxen break your ground.') From these verses could well have originated the epithet *cunctans* modifying, not the *glaebas* as in Virgil, but the *terga* in verse 10.71, while in Virgil the *terga* are *crassa*.

[464] See Gowers, 2000, 137, for a similar but slightly different interpretation of 'Mother Earth as a Neronian bride, first raped, then decked for marriage'.

[465] See White, 2013, 158–160. *Ferventia* is Gesner's correction of *frementia* (S) or *frequentia* (A) and much preferable to the latter two.

> Do not hesitate to mingle with the topmost turf yet warm, that they may lie for frosts to sear exposed to Caurus' wrath and chilling scourge, that savage Boreas may bind and Eurus loose them.

To recapitulate, verses 55–57 describe Phoebus' flight form Scorpio indicating the beginning of Winter. Two verses deny that the *genetrix* of Promethean clay, prior to the *deluge*, is a true mother. (The expression is 'spare not the earth ye falsely call your mother'.) Verse 60 states that there is a real *parens*, but (verses 61–62) this came to be only after Neptune flooded Earth – a *Deluge* so terrifying that *Tartarus* saw its king tremble (verses 63–64). That *parens* of verse 60, is now identified as the *abruptae Deucalionae cautes*, which have generated the new race of men (verses 65–67). In these verses we see the, by now, common parallel construction of Columella: indicated by the *anaphora* of *nos… nos…* where the second half of the parallel statement contains the reference to Deucalion. The concentration of images related to the myth of the ages prepares the scenery for the theme of *improbus labor.*

Verses 10.67–70, with *labor* calling – *vocat labor* – and its three enjambed imperatives (*pellite, lacerate, scindite*), form a compact structural cell. The next six verses (10.71–76) form another unit subdivided in two parts: the first (71–74) contains the imperatives *perfode, eradere ne dubita, ponere [ne dubita]*; the second (74–76) contains the meteorological conditions of Winter. If the reading *ferventia* in 73 is correct, it introduces the reality of the cold winter, against the warmth of the *viscera ferventia… urenda* in the cold *canae pruinae*, to close with the end of Winter and the *Eurus* marking a change of season in verse 76. This closing section parallels that of the end of Autumn in verses 50–54.

Winter ends having emphasized one specific theme: the violence associated with *labor*, a thoroughly Virgilian theme expressed with a high concentration of means and in a very

personal style by Columella. At this injunction starts the section of the poem devoted to Spring. From this point to the *titubante gradu multo madefactus… gerulus* (10:77–310) the longest section of the poem is developed: that devoted to the tasks of Spring.[466] Summer starts in 10.310 and ends in verse 10.422.

Spring

Spring begins just as Autumn (41–44) and Winter (55–57) did. In each of the three there is the movement of a constellation which marks the beginning of the season: the hiding of *Canis* opens Autumn (41); the *Atlantides* (*Pleiades*) hide during the closing of Autumn (54); the Sun crosses Scorpion and Sagittarius during the opening of Winter; the *Lyra* constellation withdraws from the north pole at the opening of Spring as the *hirundo* (swallow) sings. Unlike in the previous seasons, there is this time a geographical qualification of Winter as *Riphaean* (77) which now is thawed by the west wind in order to let in the new season.[467]

The hortatory subjunctives aimed at the *holitor* replace the futures that announced the new season and the first task for him is to saturate fasting Earth with *rudere pingui, solido stercore aselli,* or *armenti fimo* (81–82), with the *holitor* himself carrying the baskets (*qualos*) *disruptos pondere* (burst with weight). The baskets burst with *armenti fimo* just as the *pressa*

[466] Coppolino (1994, 52), White (2013, 164–289)
[467] Virgil cites the *Riphaean* (mountains) in *Georg.* 3.382 to characterize the *Eurus* (East wind) (see Mynors, 1990, 237, esp. n. 382), and in *Georg.* 4.518 again, as Mynors states (1990, 320, in n. 518) 'to emphasize cold and loneliness' as Orpheus roams *solus Hyperboreas glacies Tanaimque nivalem / arvaque Riphaeis numquam viduata pruinis* (4.517–518). See White (2013, p. 64–65).

fiscina will be burst by the *flammeola caltha* in verse 10.307. The 7 initial verses of Spring (10.77–83) are divided exactly in the middle with verse 80 presenting the sonorous *hirundo* singing the arrival of the season. The first three verses (77–79) contain the signs of change of season – astronomical, meteorological and geographic – the last three pertain to the practical aspects of *stercoratio.* The next two verses counter–balance the second half of the first Spring cell of 7 verses (77–83) in a structure we have seen repeated from the beginning of the poem: a group of 5, 6, or 7 verses counterbalanced by a distich to offer a closing remark on the previous cell. That is the case, e.g., with verses 6–12, where the *querulae ranae* (12) provided some color within the last two verses to close the first section on the selection of farm–ground.

These two verses have raised some eye–brows, but Columella is just expressing in the concentrated fashion of his verse the techniques of *stercoratio* in the early books of the treatise. Particularly shocking is the statement that *immundis quaecumque vomit latrina cloacis* could serve as *pabula fisso novali* (84–85). This possibility, however, Columella had already presented in his long treatment of *stercoratio* (2.14.2) where he describes the diverse possible sources of such *pabulum.* Just as the qualities of the *genista* were praised in the world of georgic poetry, now the reader is presented with the day–to–day practical realities of running a farm and Columella does not sugarcoat it.[468] Neither does he, once *tribunus militum*, seek metaphors of war for his world of farming either, such as naming the tools *arma.*

The next two verses, forming a small cell, bring back the tools of work to introduce the *marra* in the next three verses as we saw above, and three more verses about another tool: the

[468] Saint–Denis' comment in 1969b, 121, is particularly pertinent: '*La poésie didactique est un genre périlleux, et les critiques littéraires sont des hommes de cabinet qui jugent un poème géorgique en villotins, insensibles aux* realia *rustiques et à la poésie des métiers.*'

sarculum. With verse 10.94 the flower theme, which we have already considered, starts, where he exploits his taxonomies of flowers from the prose books. These are followed, after the two–verse reference to the *eruca* and Priapus, by the garden vegetables (10.108–126) and the following tour of Campania (or short version of a *laus Italiae*).

Autumnal cycle: part II

The return of autumn, at the very end of the poem, is marked by the re–introduction of Bacchus or Bacchus' gift, a theme present from verse 10.3 where Virgil was invoked *cum caneret laetas segetes et munera Bacchi*, which Columella brings up in a distich with a command [10.423–424]:

> *Sed iam maturis nos flagitat anxius uvis*
> *Euhius excultosque iubet claudamus ut hortos.*
>
> But now *Euhius*, anxious for the ripe grapes, presses us and orders us to shut the carefully cultivated gardens.

The exhortation *excultosque iubet claudamus ut hortos* in this opening of the last section mirrors the opening of the poem – *Hortorum quoque te cultus, Silvine, docebo.* The next four verses – again a quatrain – present us again with the *munera Bacchi* of verse 10.3 [10.425–428]:

> *Claudimus imperioque tuo paremus agrestes,*
> *ac metimus laeti tua munera, dulcis Iacche,*
> *inter lascivos Satyros Panasque biformes,*
> *bracchia iactantes vetulo marcentia vino.*
>
> We shut and obey, we peasants, your command,
> and we harvest fecund your gifts, sweet Iacchus,
> among wanton Satyrs and double–shaped *Panes*,

flinging our arms enfeebled by the old wine.

The weakened arms under the effect of *vetulo vino* bring back the joy of the *titubante gradu multo madefactus Iaccho… gerulus* (10.309–310). Columella finishes the last verses of Autumn invoking Bacchus (first with the epithet *Maenalium* more appropriate to Pan),[469] under the cult titles *Lenaeus* and *Lyaeus*. The first is associated with the *ληνός* (wine–vat or wine–press); [470] the second with Bacchus *Λυαιός*, also attested in *Georg.* 2.229.[471] The invocation takes place in the last two verses before the epilogue [10.429–432]:

> *… te Bacchum… canimus…*
> *ferveat ut lacus et multo completa Falerno*
> *exundent pingui spumantia dolia musto.*
>
> Thee we celebrate, Bacchus, that in our vats the grape–juice may ferment, and that our jars with much Falernian filled foaming with rich wine may overflow.[472]

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[469] See Theocritus 1.124. Virgil mentions the *Maenalian* identity of Pan in *Georg.* 1.17. García–Romero (1997, 139) understands that Columella gives the epithet *Maenalium* to Bacchus: *La aplicación a Baccho, exclusiva de Columella, no deja, por tanto, de sorprender al lector, ya que no parece haber motivo para relacionar al hijo de Sémele con aquel lugar. De todas formas, es compresible que esta montaña, ligada al culto divino, se asocie circunstancialmente a Baco (cuyos festivales, además, incluían con frecuencia la ὀρειβασία). Por otra parte, aun a riesgo de que la apreciación resulte atrevida,* Maenalius *o Μαινάλιος guarda semejanza con términos relacionados por una u otra razón con Dionysos: Μαιναλίς (–ίδες, Nonn.* D. 14.346, 34.164, etc.*), μαινάδες (*Il. 22.460, h. Cer. 386, etc.*), etc.* ('The attribution to Bacchus, only found in Columella, surprises the reader, since there does not seem to be a reason to associated the son of Semele with that place. Nevertheless, it is understandable that this mountain, linked to divine cult, is associated circumstantially to Bacchus, whose festivals also frequently included the *ὀρειβασία*. On the other hand, at the risk of making a daring statement, Maenalius or *Μαινάλιος* shows similarity with terms related one way or another with Dionysus: *Μαιναλίς (–ίδες, Nonn.* D. 14.346, 34.164, etc.*), μαινάδες (*Il. 22.460, h. Cer. 386, etc.*), etc.*')

[470] *L.S.J.*: 'belonging to the wine–press; esp. epithet of Dionysius, *as god of the wine press*.'

[471] *Georg.* 2.228–229: *altera frumentis quoniam favet, altera Baccho, / densa magis Cereri, rarissima quaeque Lyaeo*. ('For one is closer to grains, the other to the vine; the closer to Ceres, all the lightest to Lyaeus.') See also Shroeter (1882, 40).

[472] Forster–Heffner (1955, 44).

Columella echoes here verse 44, where *Autumnus… sordidus et musto spumantis exprimet uvas*.[473] Both places find precursors in Virgil. To paraphrase Schroeter on verse 44, '*Clausulae versus, similes locos haud paucos invenies apud Vergilium*'.[474] Of the three *loci* which he names, *Georg.* 2.4–8 has particular resonances in Columella's final passage:

> *Huc, pater o Lenaeae (tuis hic omnia plena*
> *muneribus, tibi pampineo gravidus autumno*
> *floret ager, spumat plenis vindemia labris),*
> *huc, pater o Lenaeae, veni nudataque musto*
> *tingue novo mecum dereptis crura cothurnis.*
>
> Hither, Lenaean sire! Here all is full of your bounties; for you blossoms the field teeming with the harvest of the vine, and the vintage foams in the brimming vats. Come hither, Lenaean sire, strip off your buskins and with me plunge your naked legs in the new must.[475]

The address to Bacchus *Lenaeus* and his *munera* (which Columella mentions in 10.3 and 426), the *autumno* which Columella recalls in verses 10.44 and 10.432 (*spumantis uvas* – *spumantia dolia*), and the *musto novo* recalled in verse 10.432, give us an idea of the complex of words and images changed by Columella using the technique of *variatio.* But we have also seen examples similar to the parallel use of anaphora in *Georg.* 2.4 and 2.7 (*Huc, pater o Lenaeae… huc, pater o Lenaeae*) in, e.g., verses 10.71–72 (*Tu gravibus rastris cunctantia perfode terga, / tu penitus latis eradere viscera marris / ne dubita*).

Columella, far from mechanically reproducing Virgil's images, words or figures, creates the personal poetic language we read in this last invocation. The assonance of nasals in verses

[473] See above under the sub–chapter 'Autumnal cycle: part I'
[474] Shroeter (1882, 20) gives the following examples: *Ecl.* 5.67 (*Pocula bina novo spumantia lacte quotannis*), *Georg.* 3.309–310 (*quam magis exhausto spumaverit ubere mulctra, laeta magis pressis manabunt flumina mammis*).
[475] Fairclough–Goold (1999, 137).

10.430–431 enhance the invocation to Bacchus, and the mention of *Lenaean* Bacchus contributes to the sonorous quality of the two verses through which it is carried (quite distinct from the use Virgil gives it in *Georg.* 2.4&7) [10.430–431]:

> *Et te Maenalium, te Bacchum teque Lyaeum*
> *Lenaeumque patrem canimus sub tecta advocantes.*
>
> Thee god of Maenalus, who loosest cares, lord of the wine press, thee we celebrate, Bacchus, and summon thee beneath our roofs.

Thus Columella closes with an invocation of the first divinity invoked by Virgil in the early verses of *Georg.* 1: here under the name of *Liber*.[476] The invocation to the gods of agriculture which Virgil had presented in the opening section of his first *Georgic* and which Columella had avoided finds finally a place in the cyclical return to autumn by the end of book 10.[477]

Bucolic intertextuality

Columella's intertextual relationship with Virgil does not limit itself to the repetition *cum variatione* of poetic expressions or figures. The metaphor of agricultural tools as *arma* would have been an easy choice, yet, perhaps because of his double duty as soldier and farmer, he avoids it. Columella's individual poetic voice comes through in his highly organized poetic construction and clever use of poetic figures. We have witnessed Columella's concentration of

[476] If *Maenalium* in verse 10.429 is accepted as *Pan*, we would have two of the main divinities and that invoked by Virgil in *Georg.* 1.17 where the poet does associate him with the *Maenalus*.
[477] Mention of some of the other major or minor divinities invoked by Virgil appear scattered in other places of the poem or in the prose books: Neptunus 10.61 Tellus 10.208 Dryadum 10.264 Ceres 10.269 Aristaeus 1.pr.32, 9.2.4, Pan 10.427, Minerva 1.pr.31, 1.pr.33, 11.1.32.

expression, facilitated greatly by his intimate knowledge of the appropriate technical field. His exchange with the georgic world of Hesiod and Virgil is patent; but so is his play with Horace, Ovid, Propertius and, as we shall see in the following example, with the world of the *bucolics*.[478] A reference to Corydon and Alexis prefaces the theme of *merces vernae* around the statue of Vertumnus (10.308). Verse 10.298 – *Et tu, ne Corydonis opes despernat Alexis, [fer calathis violam]*[479] – is a very brief allusion to Virgil's second *Eclogue* [2.19–22]:

> *Despectus tibi sum, nec, qui sim, quaeris, Alexi,*
> *quam dives pecoris, nivei quam lactis abundans:*
> *mille meae Siculis errant in montibus agnae;*
> *lac mihi non aestate novum, non frigore defit.*
>
> You scorn me, Alexis, and ask not what I am – how rich in cattle, how wealthy in snow–white milk! A thousand lambs of mine roam over the Sicilian hills; new milk fails me not, Summer or Winter.

Coleman points to the unreal dimensions of this exaggerated statement: 'If he were a free man, a flock that produced a thousand ewe–lambs would make him wealthy indeed; if he [Corydon] is a slave, then to claim such numbers as his own, even for use *precario* in gathering his *peculium* is preposterous.'[480] Clausen agrees: on this interpretation, Corydon is boasting about the *peculium* obtained from such flock: 'Being a slave, Corydon cannot be the legal owner, the *dominus*, of this absurdly large flock; it is his *peculium*, the fruit of his industry,

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[478] With respect to Ovid, Boldrer states (1996, 23–24): *Tra i poeti latini che Columella ebbe maggiormente presenti il primo posto spetta, dopo Virgilio, ad Ovidio, di cui utilizza specialmente le* Metamorfosi *ed i* Fasti *traendone suggestivi spunti utili per le rappresentazioni della natura, umanizzata ed associata a miti e metamorfosi, e di cui mostra di apprezzare soprattuto la lingua, brillante ed originale, riprendendone termini ed espressioni e condividendo pienamente il gusto ovidiano per lo sperimentalismo anche audace, di cui Columella stesso da ampia prova.* For Horace, Lucretius and Propertius see ibid. p. 24–26.

[479] 10.298: 'And that Alexis may not scorn the wealth of Corydon, come, Naiad, [baskets of violets bring].'

[480] Coleman (1977, 95–96)

which he naturally speaks of as his own.'[481] The exaggeration of Corydon's 'absurdly large flock', which would make him 'wealthy indeed' can hardly be unrelated to Columella's own purpose. Corydon's '*peculium* obtained from such a flock' – to use Coleman and Clausen's terms – not only already relates to one of Columella's themes, the principle of self–sufficiency, but is a well–established theme in the bucolic tradition. As Clausen points out, Virgil's own *mille agnae* is also a reference to Theocritus' song of Polyphemus, appropriately boasting about the abundance of his own flocks and their product [*Id.* 11.34–37]:

> *Ἀλλ᾽ οὗτος τοιοῦτος ἐὼν βοτὰ χίλια βόσκω,*
> *κήκ τούτων τὸ κράτιστον ἀμελγόμενος γάλα πίνω·*
> *τυρὸς δ᾽ οὐ λείπει μ᾽ οὔτ᾽ ἐν θέρει οὔτ᾽ ἐν ὀπώρᾳ,*
> *οὐ χειμῶνος ἄκρω· ταρσοὶ δ᾽ ὑπεραχθέες αἰεί.*
>
> Yet, though such I be, I tend a thousand head of cattle, and draw and drink from them the finest milk. Cheese I lack not, neither in summer, nor in autumn, nor in the depth of winter, and my racks are ever heavy.[482]

The reference to Corydon's wealth of cattle, abundance of milk, and the thousand lambs from *Eclogue* 2, with its long–established intertextual background is strategically placed a mere 10 verses (in 10.298) before the appearance of the *madefactus gerulus* celebrating his own *peculium* (10.308) and the section on the theme of *merx*.[483] Columella prepares the reader for the event through a variant of the technique he was using in the prose books: a more or less direct quote is now taken up by a fleeting allusion to signal *opes* associated with the themes of *fecunditas* and *quaestus*. Calpurnius Siculus uses this intertextual locus, not nearly as fleetingly

[481] Clausen (1994, 70)
[482] The translation is Gow's (1950, 89)
[483] See ch. 2.

as Columella, when in a contest between Idas and Astacus to show who can offer the greatest profusion of georgic produce, Idas states [Calpurnius Siculus 2.68–71]:

> *Mille sub uberibus balantes pascimus agnas*
> *totque Tarentinae praestant mihi vellera matres.*
> *Per totum niveus premitur mihi caseus annum:*
> *si venias, Crocale, totus tibi serviet annus.*
>
> We graze a thousand lambs bleating under the udders, and as many Tarentine mothers provide me their fleeces. Throughout the year I press a snowy cheese: if you come, Crocale, the whole year will produce it for you.

The parallels between Theocritus, Virgil, and Calpurnius Siculus are striking and show a depth in the intertextual exchange that, although difficult to trace with precision, is unequivocally present. Calpurnius Siculus reflects Virgil's *Despectus tibi sum* (*Ecl.*2.19) in Idas' prior intervention (Calpurnius Siculus 2.60): *Ne contemne casas nec pastoralia tecta.* Columella briefly states the '*Despectus*' motif but leaves it there without further reference to the *βοτά χίλια* or the *mille (ballantes) agnae* of Theocritus, Virgil, or Calpurnius Siculus. Neither does he present Theocritus' *κράτιστον γάλα*, nor Virgil's *niveum lac*, nor Calpurnius Siculus' *niveus caseus.* With this allusion, Columella introduces the theme that leads to the paragraph with the *gerulus* (10.310–311) with which he finishes the long section of Winter tasks.

Transitions and endings

In the eight intervening verses (10.300–307) we return to one of Columella's taxonomic passages. A Naiad is asked to carry violets in baskets, balsam mixed with *ligustrum*, a shrub which appears in *Ecl.* 2.18 (the verse preceding Corydon's *Despectus tibi sum*), but not in

Columella's prose books.[484] The Naiad is asked to carry balsam and cinnamon bound to clusters of saffron (*croceos corymbos*) (10.301). She is asked to sprinkle them with wine, *nam Bacchus condit odores* (302). Now the *agrestes* are asked to gather hyacinths in a *sirpiculum* (a rush basket) to introduce the theme of the *stamina iunci* pressed by *caltha*. Flowers and spices, sprinkled with wine, bursting their containers, expand in these ten verses the theme of abundance, after *Corydonis opes* (10.398), who in Virgil (*Ecl.*2.20) was *pecudis dives*. Columella brings us to the statue of *dives* Vertumnus (10.308) to introduce the transition to Summer, clearly marked (10.311 ff.), just as the transitions to Winter and Spring were, with the Sun passing the Twin stars and consuming the claws of the constellation of the Lernaean Crab. In what Saint–Denis et al. interpret as a return to Autumn (10.421) comes after a brief meteorological statement in verse 420 (*Nube nova seritur, caeli pendentibus undis.*) The reappearance of Bacchus, as Evius, Maenalius, Lyaeus and Lenaeus (423–424) and his invocation in 429–430 is symmetrically positioned to balance the first part of Autumn with the identification of Bacchus with the season (verses 10.43–44).

The last four verses are positioned against the first five verses of the poem: the first verse began by establishing the program: *docebo* (10.1). This is also the last of the poem: *docebam* (10.433); and with it Columella has stated his own function as garden *didascalos.* The rest of the quatrain is a reference to the previous fountains of the tradition in hierarchical disposition. The reference to Virgil (*siderei vatis referens praecepta Maronis* (10.434)) reflects

[484] Pliny mentions it as the European equivalent of the Egyptian and Asian *cypros* in 12.109 and 24.74, and along with the *salix*, *alnus*, *populus*, and *siler* in 16.77. The *O.L.D*. entry gives 'probably privet'. Lewis & Short identifies this instance of *nigrum ligustrum.* Ovid associates it with Galatea in *Met.* 3.789.

that of the first five verses of the poem ([*quae*] *Vergilius nobis post se memoranda reliquit* (10.5)). But the end, Hesiod's position at the head of the *magna turba de rusticis rebus praecipiens* (1.1.7) is confirmed over that of Virgil [10.433–436]:

> *Hactenus hortorum cultus, Silvine, docebam*
> *Siderei vatis referens praecepta Maronis,*
> *qui primus veteres ausus recludere fontes*
> *Ascraeum cecinit Romana per oppida carmen.*
>
> Thus far, Silvinus, I have sought to teach the cult of gardens and to call to mind the precepts taught by Maro, seer divine, who first dared to unseal the ancient founts and sang through Roman towns the Ascraean lay.

The two verses are, at the same time, an allusion to Virgil's own two last verses of the *Georgics* (4.565–566). There Virgil states that he played the songs (*carmina*) of shepherds, and that his bold (*audax*) youth sang (*cecini*) Tityrus *sub tegmine fagi*. Columella, in turn, at the end of his poem, just as Virgil, has dared (*ausus*) to be first to unseal ancient fonts, sang (*cecinit*) the *Ascraeum carmen* through Roman cities.

Conscious of the position he was taking, Columella has carefully organized his georgic material in a balanced and well delimited ring–composition. Just as Clauss has described the composition of Apollonius' *Argonautica*, Columella, in good Alexandrine fashion, echoes at the end of specific sections or subsections one or more themes that have carried through the poem.[485] His concentration of expression and meaning, both poetic and technical, his use of personification and metaphor, his apparent excesses, need to be understood within the internal frame of the poem. This frame–as–form, mimicked by the poem's own imagery – the hedges, Priapus, the lists of flowers and vegetables, the turn of seasons, the ring–composition

[485] Clauss (1993, 11)

marked by the return of Autumn–as–Bacchus at the end of the poem, contains a carefully–designed message that is intended to illuminate the purpose whole treatise, a work on agriculture addressed to the *principes* mentioned at the beginning of the treatise.

These *principes* (L. Junius Gallio Annaeus, M. Trebellius, Claudius Augustalis, the once consul–suffect Eprius Marcellus) have vested interests in the continuity of the social and political institutions of the Roman Republic–turned–Principate – and should, therefore, care for its iconic economic activity – *agriculture.* For them Columella, the 'indefatigable applied agriculturalist [who] pupates into an enthused poet–priest of cosmic ecstasy', as Henderson states, with a remarkable sense of orderliness and poetic architecture, in tune with the aesthetic fashion of the time, creates, from the sources of his own experience, a highly personal poem – a tool to both perpetuate and bring up to date the activity that holds, in his mind, a privileged position in the Roman *ethos*, as he interprets it in the early decades of the Principate and, especially, during Nero's reign. He takes up the Neronian–Callimachean aesthetic principles in this poem, but, at the same time, he situates himself outside its literary circle and against the very Neronian city–centered ethos by telling the *principes* to return to the fields.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this dissertation we have read Columella's treatise on agriculture and animal husbandry, as well as the poem on horticulture, as two inseparable parts. We have offered an analysis of the four aspects proposed at the opening of the dissertation: form, method, intertextuality and ideology. Columella produces within the technical treatise a well–

structured poem. This poem, which is not, strictly speaking, a technical presentation of the subject, follows a ring–composition scheme with the seasons of the year as the moving principle. Columella shows in this poem a greater concentration of expression than that of his immediate poetic predecessors, including Virgil. Columella's closed structure shows in formal terms a high degree of restraint. Within this structure he allows his agricultural sources to expand and proliferate as far as he may consider necessary to make a particular point to his audience, but excess is not the dominant leading force of the poem. The enclosing of the poem within limits, rather, gets stressed in order to avoid the effect of excess. The poem is also given external boundaries between the two prose books which surround it and, especially, through the rhetorical preface to book 10 and, to a lesser extent, the introduction to book 11.

The form of the rest of the books is fairly straightforward and this aspect is closely related to aspects of method. We have seen that the ultimate purpose of the agricultural enterprise is the acquisition of profit. Method therefore is closely tied to management and the use of rational systems of exploitation, as formulated in Virgil's saying (*sententia*): *laudato ingentia rura / exiguum colito.* In this management scheme there are two fundamental supporting sides: the calendrical, that of the different functions to be performed during the different seasons; and the purely managerial aspect, which includes precepts to treat all plants, animals, and techniques to be used on them, combined with the timely execution of the necessary tasks.

Columella's text is in intertextual relationship with several sources. Virgil has traditionally been the only source critically assessed (with a few exceptional studies considering

other sources).[486] With respect to the technical treatise we have seen that sources which may seem as remote as Hesiod, Mago the Carthaginian, or the Sumerian Instructions of Ninurta have some degree of influence on Columella. Poetic sources are headed by Hesiod and Virgil, but include also Horace, Propertius and Horace. Some themes, such as that of the *inemptae dapes*, can be traced as far back as Aristophanes, and bucolic themes have roots in Theocritus as much as in Virgil. Columella resorts in direct quotation of different authors in the technical books also to poetry – Homer, Hesiod, and, especially, Virgil. This gives the dynamics of intertextuality a different character from that of free–standing poetry. The contrast between these direct quotations and the techniques of allusion in the poem give an unusual insight into how Columella has gone about building the themes – some of which are presented in the technical books – within the poem.

The first three categories are progressively less amenable to an exhaustive treatment. Hence the necessity to consider them in mutual relationship. Ideology is, not surprisingly, an aspect even more evasive and difficult to define. The three previous categories, however, have been helpful in delimiting the emphases under which this potentially broad category could be treated. We have seen that method has soon led us into the question of economic management and profit. This is an important component in the formation of a coherent ideology which is closely tied to the successful exploitation of mid– and large–size farms. Columella very carefully formulates the practical tenets associated with land exploitation, in one case, as we have seen, through direct quotation of Virgil and, at the same time, in intertextual relationship with a Hesiodic motif. Intertextual reference to the myth of the ages

[486] See, e.g., Boldrer (1996, 22–26).

also allows Columella to create or maintain a clear boundary between two social orders: the *summi* and the *humillimi*, or the higher order and the rest.

As we stated in the introduction, we were expecting to encounter the theme of the *mores maiorum*, and certainly this came early in the preface of book one when Columella gave the historical *exempla* of Cincinnatus, Fabricius and Curius Dentatus. More significantly, Columella represents, in Nero's Rome, what Roller has called 'the traditional, received ethical system of the late republican and early imperial aristocracy'.[487] This traditional ethical system is now well represented by an author who wrote during Nero's reign and who has seldom been read with this question in mind.

Problems of interpretation related to the apparent complexity of this work – containing both prose technical sections and poetry – have, so far, held back critical interpretation of the *Res Rustica* in ideological terms. What is especially significant about Columella is that he might well be the best witness of this traditional ethical system and that his treatise amounts to an adaptation of this system to contemporary times. Columella can certainly add a contrapuntal line to those of his contemporary fellow writers: above all Seneca, Lucan, Persius, Petronius, and Calpurnius Siculus, provided it is accepted that they were all writing during Nero's reign. Indirectly, Columella's intertextuality between the technical works and the georgic poem can give important clues for the understanding of Virgil's own *Georgics* in what pertains to the understanding of their relationship with other technical treatises.

In this dissertation we have been able to open, through the four aspects chosen for consideration, some paths of interpretation for a work which can shed much light on the state

[487] Roller (2001, 20–21)

of politics, society, and literary activity during the reign of Nero. We have also opened some interpretive paths for the georgic poem, without excerpting it from the treatise, its natural and naturally intended context. There are two recent excellent published commentaries on the poem: St–Denis (1969a) and Boldrer (1996). The poem, however, as Diederich (2007) has pointed out, has not been interpreted in its entirety. In what follows, I map some areas for future potential work in the wake of this dissertation. After having read critically and interpreted in detail the first 94 and the last 14 verses, and the significant passages in between, the next step should be to complete the interpretation of the Spring and Summer cycles. This analysis should include or invite further study of the external and internal intertextual relations of the different passages.

A comparative study with the other writers of the Neronian period, as we have stated above, will be the next step of literary interpretation. This interpretation will, in turn, offer a more complete view of the Neronian period for which Roller's notion of 'the traditional, received ethical system of the late republican and early imperial aristocracy' has assigned a specific role. A comparative analysis will add to the studies already conducted on the ideology of the period.

Because the case has been made by Henderson (2002, 110) not to separate the poem from the technical treatises, and because of the interpretation of the work as, conceivably, a carrier of that traditional ethical system, it will be necessary to study in detail and interpret the individual prose sections with a higher rhetorical component: mainly the prefaces of books 1, 6, 9, 10, and 12, and the introductions of the other books. If, as Richter (1980.3, 591) states, *die große Einleitung zum ersten Buch seines Werkes ist eines der bemerkenswertesten Zeugnisse*

des Ciceronianismus im 1. nachchristlichen Jahrhundert, this will imply considering its rhetorical characteristics and thoroughly addressing these sections' *elocutio* and rhetorical construction.[488]

Richter (1981.3, 624) also states that a systematic comparative study of Columella *vis–à–vis* Theophrastus, the one surviving source of the Hellenic world that precedes the Roman author, and source of most later treatises, will clarify the degree to which Columella draws directly from this source. Furthermore, such a study will offer invaluable insights into the development of the sciences of botany and agriculture in antiquity, for which the aid of the discipline of philology will prove essential. A study of the table of contents, for which textual criticism of manuscripts will have to be continued, will also aid in the assessment of Columella as an agricultural writer and practitioner.

[488] Richter (1981, 591)

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