Geography and Empire in Virgil’s *Georgics*

A Study of the Poem and its Reception in Britain and the British Empire, c. 1820-1930

by

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Declaration

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Summary

This thesis is a history of Virgil’s *Georgics*, which combines a reading of the text (Chapter 1) with a study of its reception in Britain and the British empire (Chapters 2 and 3). It argues for a more political reading of the poem and its tradition.

The Introduction (”Ways of Reading”) sets out the aims and methodology of the work, and argues that an aesthetic trend has been present in British *Georgics*’ scholarship from at least the time of John Dryden and Joseph Addison at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It surveys modern scholarship on the poem in order to assess to what extent such an aesthetic trend remains in place. It then suggests that, for a variety of reasons, comprehensive understanding of the poem must include political, as well as aesthetic, appreciation.

Chapter 1 (“The Geography of the *Georgics*”) is a reading of the poem’s geography, which surveys the extensive list of peoples and places from across the *orbis terrarum* evoked in its lines. I examine this geography in four sections – literary, economic, political, and Italian – in such a way as to highlight the importance of geography as a theme in the poem. Throughout these four sections my focus is on the politics of representation, which is to say how the poem describes peoples and places implicated in Roman imperialism, and how one might read such descriptions. The poem at times appears to endorse aspects of Roman imperialism, but it can also be read in a way which recalls those who suffered, rather than those who wielded, Roman power.

Chapter 2 (“*o fortunatos*: Reception 1820-1899”) moves from Rome to Britain and the British empire. After an historical introduction to orientate the reader, it traces the roots of the aesthetic trend in eighteenth-century reception, before examining its consistent presence in scholarly writing in the nineteenth century. A broad range of archival material is then used to offer an alternative history, one which explores how the poem’s primary (i.e. agricultural) subject matter was of relevance to readers in Britain, and how the poem was used to describe peoples and places in the British empire and the wider world. The highly-political nature of many of these receptions serves as a counterpoint to the aesthetically-inclined scholarly history of the poem.
Chapter 3 (“tot bella per orbem: Reception 1900-1930”) follows the same pattern as Chapter 2. After an historical introduction, an examination of scholarly reception finds the aesthetic trend still dominant in the period 1900-1914. While the First World War did have an impact on Georgics’ scholarship, the aesthetic trend in scholarly writing was not decisively challenged. Further investigation of popular reception shows that the primary subject matter of the poem remained of relevance and of interest to its readers, and that the poem was again used to describe peoples and places around the world. I conclude with a study of receptions directly related to the First World War, which show how wartime contexts brought renewed relevance to the poem.

Chapter 3 thus continues the work of Chapter 2 in highlighting an aesthetic trend in the poem’s British reception, and then seeking to complicate this picture by exploring the political and imperial contexts of that reception.

The Conclusion reviews the main arguments of the thesis, notes certain continuities which link its Roman and British contexts, and offers suggestions as to how it might be of broader relevance: to the study of Augustan literature, to classical reception, and further afield.

An Appendix (“The Geography of the Georgics”) is designed for use in conjunction with Chapter 1. It provides a comprehensive list of the poem’s toponyms and ethnonyms, allowing readers to explore more fully, and in their own way, the geography of the poem.
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Abbreviations

Abbreviations of Greek and Latin authors and their works follow those used in the OCD; abbreviations of journal titles those used in L’Année philologique.

**ANRW**  
*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (1972-) (Berlin: De Gruyter).

**CIL**  
*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (1863-).

**Cobbett**  

**DK**  

Erren  

**FGrH**  
F. Jacoby (ed.) (1923-), *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*.

**GGM**  

**Hansard**  

**IDélos**  

**ILLRP**  

**ILS**  

**Inscr. Ital.**  
*Inscriptiones Italiae* (1931- ) (Rome).

**Mynors**  

**Oakley**  

**OCD**  

OED  The Oxford English Dictionary, online edition (Oxford)


TLL  Thesaurus Linguae Latinae (Leipzig and Munich, 1900- ).
Introduction

Ways of Reading

What follows is a history of Virgil’s *Georgics*, considering the poem both in its original Roman context and its receptions in Britain and the British empire, c. 1820-1930. It will be necessary at the outset to say a few words about methodology, structure, and argument.

The first part of the argument is that an aesthetic trend is visible in British scholarly writing on the *Georgics*, from at least the time of John Dryden and Joseph Addison at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By this “aesthetic trend” I mean a broad tendency for the poem to be lauded as a work of descriptive beauty and technical perfection. Dryden called the poem “the best poem of the best poet”,¹ a judgement echoed by Addison’s verdict on the *Georgics* as “the most complete, elaborate, and finished piece of all antiquity”.² For Addison the poem’s aesthetic beauties were at the heart of its didactic technique. “It raises in our minds”, he wrote, “a pleasing variety of scenes and landscapes, whilst it teaches us: and makes the driest of its precepts look like a description.”³ In an issue of the *Spectator* in June 1712, beauty becomes the chief characteristic of Virgil’s poetry (in contrast to Homer’s imagination and Ovid’s strangeness): the *Aeneid* is “like a well-ordered garden”, while in the *Georgics* Virgil has given readers “a collection of the most delightful landscapes that can be made out of fields and woods, herds of cattle, and swarms of bees.”⁴ This emphasis on the poem’s perfection is one of the most striking and consistent elements of British Virgilian scholarship of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is closely associated with Italy and with Italian travel. This aesthetic trend will be examined chronologically in Chapters 2 and 3, but here it will suffice to quote perhaps the most succinct iteration of this view of the poem, when T. E. Page, in the preface to his commentary of 1898, remarked that “there is nothing in the Aeneid – or indeed in Latin poetry – which surpasses

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¹ Dryden (1709) I: 63.
² Addison (1709) 91 (I have modernised the spelling).
³ *Spectator* no. 417 (28 June 1712), = Bond (1970) 195.
⁴ *Spectator* no. 417 (28 June 1712), = Bond (1970) 196.
the artistic perfection of the Georgics.”

The *Georgics* is, of course, a work of poetry, and aesthetic responses such as those just cited are valid and important. I do not wish to enforce an overly simplistic distinction between aesthetic and political modes of criticism, nor to dismiss aesthetic interpretation of a patently artful work, nor to denigrate what is a rich and learned scholarly tradition. These points cannot be emphasized enough: indeed it is precisely the complexity of the *Georgics*’ descriptions of the world which allow for the reading contained in Chapter 1. But my problem lies in the fact that an approach to the poem which is so thoroughly aesthetic is necessarily limiting. Berger speaks, in an art-historical context, of the way in which disproportionately aesthetic appreciation can obscure other, equally important, modes of criticism: “All conflict disappears. One is left with the unchanging ‘human condition’, and the painting considered as a marvellously made object.”

Closer to home, Meiksins Wood and Wood have argued for the importance of situating the political thought of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle within its contemporary political contexts, and the concomitant limitations of an essentializing and ahistorical approach. The issue with this aesthetic trend, then, lies in the fact that the contemporary historical contexts surrounding the *Georgics*’ composition have been obscured, and the poem has been depoliticised to an unnecessary and problematic degree.

On my reading, this is an enormously political poem, one of whose central themes – land and its use – is highly controversial in a Roman context. We need only mention here the century 133-31 B.C., with its history of repeated (attempts at) agrarian legislation, the settlement of veterans, the extra-judicial appropriations of land and property which accompanied the Sullan and triumviral proscriptions, the effects of a series of civil wars on the population and land of the Italian peninsula, the slave basis of Roman agriculture only obliquely hinted at in the poem, and the growing spread of Roman imperialism in the Mediterranean, for the reader to get some idea

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5 Page (1898) iii.
7 Meiksins Wood & Wood (1978) 12: “Paradoxically, we radically historicize past political theories in the most un-historical way, by simply dehistoricizing them. They are transformed from living political works into mere passive vehicles for our own values to be exploited at our own will and to serve our own ideological purposes.”
of the politics of land in this period. It is also a post-war poem, completed in the years following the Battle of Actium in 31. Octavian’s reported burning of documents related to the civil conflicts\(^8\) reminds us of the tensions and suppressions which accrue to any post-war political context, and makes the \textit{Georgics’} primary subject matter all the more striking. There are historical contexts to the aesthetic trend in Britain also: the development of agrarian capitalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the continuing importance of land as the basis of wealth and status (and thus of political exclusion), the politics of land in the expanding British empire, as well as the system of education in which Latin and Greek became a means of social exclusion and of the maintenance of elite, gendered, privilege.

Full examination of the aesthetic trend follows in Chapters 2 and 3. Here I offer a very brief survey of twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholarship, in a bid to assess to what extent this trend is still visible. Scholars have continued to highlight the poem’s aesthetic achievement, in particular the relationship between its form and its content, and the ways in which its didactic aims are thereby advanced. Wilkinson labelled the \textit{Georgics} “a descriptive poem”, “the first poem in all literature in which description may be said to be the chief \textit{raison d’être} and source of pleasure”,\(^9\) while, for de Saint-Denis, the difficulties of translation only emphasized the poem’s quality:

\begin{quote}…l’affaire est plus périlleuse que jamais, quand le texte allie avec tant de souplesse et de virtuosité indications techniques et notations pittoresques, science et poésie, à l’intérieur d’une phrase, d’un vers, d’un groupe de mots. Cette conjonction de la précision et de la fantaisie fait peut-être des Géorgiques le chef-d’œuvre de Virgile.\(^{10}\)\end{quote}

Musical metaphors have been commonly employed to describe the \textit{Georgics} and Virgil’s poetry in general. Otis, in 1963, suggested an analogy between the four-book structure of the poem and

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\(^8\) App. \textit{B Civ.} 5. 132. 548.
\(^{10}\) De Saint-Denis (1956) xl.
the four movements of a classical symphony, while W. R. Johnson, in 1981, called the poem “Virgil’s masterpiece, not only technically but also emotionally and intellectually”, and asked:

Why is it that in the *Georgics* the usual contradictions and oppositions of Virgil’s poetry are gathered into lustrous harmonies? Why is it that here, and not really elsewhere, the figure of Augustus becomes part of lyrical harmonies, is itself a principal instrument of those harmonies?

If such superlative statements are less conspicuous in scholarship of more recent decades, literary and aesthetic interpretations have remained a major mode of *Georgics*’ criticism. Scholars continue to enhance our knowledge of the poem’s complex appropriations of Greek and Roman literary traditions, a process most commonly conceptualised as intertextuality. Thomas has argued that Batstone’s article on the poem “points the way to a sort of didaxis of aesthetics, a spiritual didaxis (such as emerges from contemplation of the failure of Orpheus and Eurydice) that does not directly help us to get along in a world that is deeply problematic, but that impresses us and compensates us through its artistic and aesthetic qualities.” Erren writes of the *Georgics* as belonging amongst “the most beautiful and most representative works of Roman literature”, while Thibodeau, in introducing his own reading of the poem, also dwells on its aesthetic achievement. I also argue that the relative lack of scholarly interest in the poem’s agrarian

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11 Otis (1963) 151, whose “movements” for the four books of the poem are, in order: I. allegro maestoso II. scherzo III. adagio IV. allegro vivace. Owen-Lee (1996) draws on the symphony of Western classical music, particularly those of Gustav Mahler, as an interpretive aid (see p. 78 and *passim*), while Batstone (1997) 133 and Gale (2000) 11 speak of the *Georgics*’ thematic complexity in terms of polyphony.


16 Thomas (2007) 73.


18 Thibodeau (2011) 2: “The passages of its four short books follow one another in a finely tempered ebb and flow that has aptly been likened to a symphony. The lyricism of its verse is such that any study of euphony in Latin verse risks turning into an anthology of lines from the poem…”.
politics is highlighted by the notion, prevalent enough for Volk to cite it as a communis opinio,\textsuperscript{19} that the poem is not really or simply about agriculture, but about deeper and more complex themes. This is, of course, true, but, given the relative paucity of political treatments of agriculture in the poem, it is an interesting and perhaps limiting way in which to frame the \textit{Georgics}.

Treatments of the poem’s politics have, nevertheless, become increasingly visible. Virgilian scholarship in general over the last half century has focused, understandably, on the immediate context of Roman elite society, and on the relationship between Virgil and Octavian as poet and princeps, a sort of court politics which often seeks to determine Virgil’s (or, his poems’) attitudes to Octavian.\textsuperscript{20} This theme emerged from broader discussions of the poems’ viewpoint, whether they are optimistic or pessimistic (or neither), the pessimist “Harvard school” of interpretation having its origins in 1960s and 1970s America at the time of the Vietnam War.\textsuperscript{21} This binary approach of optimistic / pessimistic has been substantially critiqued,\textsuperscript{22} but remains one of the most consistent themes in scholarship of recent decades. In terms of the \textit{Georgics} specifically, treatments of the poem’s politics have tended to focus on the civil wars, in particular on the end of book 1 (\textit{G}. 1. 465-514),\textsuperscript{23} and on book 4: the stories of Aristaeus and Orpheus (\textit{G}. 4. 315-558), and to what extent the bees are to be considered an allegory for contemporary Roman society.\textsuperscript{24}

The politics of the poem’s agricultural instruction is, by contrast, much less discussed, with some important exceptions.\textsuperscript{25} What is still largely lacking, I argue, is work that comes to grips with the political resonance of this poem in a much larger context, by which I mean Italian society beyond the world of the Roman elite, and the Mediterranean world beyond Italy. This

\textsuperscript{19} Volk (2002) 120: “While the \textit{Georgics} continues to be labelled didactic poetry, it is now the communis opinio that the poem’s explicit claim to teaching agriculture, viticulture, animal husbandry, and bee-keeping (see \textit{G}. 1. 1-5) is nothing but a pretext and that its technical instructions to the farmers are but the packaging of a more universal message.”
\textsuperscript{21} The phrase “Harvard school” was coined and is discussed by Johnson (1976) 11. See Zanker (2011), Morgan (1999) 1-14, and Cramer (1998) on optimism and pessimism in the \textit{Georgics}.
\textsuperscript{22} See in particular Kennedy (1992), with Giusti (2016).
\textsuperscript{24} Griffin (1985), Nadeau (1984).
\textsuperscript{25} See Thibodeau (2011), Doody (2007), Spurr (1986), and Heitland (1921).
first aspect has attracted recent attention, but there has been little or no focus, it seems, on the imperial contexts of the *Georgics*. My intention here is to switch focus from metropolis to periphery, from Rome and Roman society, that is, to the Mediterranean world and beyond, and to Rome’s relationship with that wider world. The question is one of balance. The student searching out help in the stacks gets a picture of the poem which is, I suggest, still largely aesthetic and, where political, focused too narrowly on Rome. This is the imbalance which I hope to redress in what follows.

The second part of the argument, corresponding to Chapter 1, investigates the *Georgics* in its original Roman context. I examine the geography of the poem, the peoples and places of the *orbis terrarum* which it evokes, and investigate to what extent these peoples and places are implicated in the history of Roman imperialism. It is a personal reading of the poem, meant as a series of suggestions, offering historical contexts which may be of interest or of use to students of the poem. I stress the independence of the reader, and that what follows is not meant to be prescriptive: as Batstone notes, the *Georgics* is an endlessly interpretable and open text. Similarly, I intend to leave Virgil out of things as much as possible. Or rather, I leave readers to their own relationship with the poet, finding speculation as to the poet’s motives, intentions, or worldview not a very helpful way forward. This approach is informed by the tenets of reception studies, which has for some time now been the dominant way in which students of Greek and Latin texts have thought about tradition and influence.

But it is worth pointing out that reception studies, as conceptualised by Martindale, has

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26 e.g. Dominik (2013), Powell (2008), Ando (2002). Habinek (1998) investigates the political nature of Latin literature more generally (cf. the response of Hinds (2001)), while Leigh (2016) is a study of the politics of representation in *Eclogue* 2, of a kind which is, with the exception of Lambert (1988), notably absent from work on the *Georgics*.

27 Parker (2011) examines the representation of India, Egypt, and Parthia in Augustan poetry within the framework of Said’s *Orientalism*, but includes only brief discussion of the *Georgics*. Spencer (2010) 38-41 discusses the imperial landscape of *G. 3. 1-48* and Harrison (2008) emphasizes the orientalist material in the *laudes Italiae*, while O’Rourke (2011) and Wyke (1992) include the *Aeneid* (but not the *Georgics*) in their discussions.

28 Batstone (1997) 125: “If we are to understand more fully what this poem does, we need to abandon the interpretive paradigm that seeks some authoritative discursive unity without taking refuge in mere relativism (*quod homines, tot sententiae*). I would like to argue that the diversity of compelling interpretations is part of the *Georgics*’ larger value and meaning.”

become more inclined towards aesthetic than political interpretation. Indeed, Martindale’s claims for the disinterestedness of reception studies I find untenable and unhelpful in a subject with so political a history as Classics. Hans Robert Jauss, on whose work Martindale draws in *Redeeming the Text*, emphasizes by contrast “that properly *socially formative* function that belongs to literature.” We might push this further by saying that literature is both socially formative and socially formed. Understanding of the *Georgics* in any context is influenced by what is written about it, and the poem itself, in turn, can inform a reader’s attitudes to the world. Meaning is always realised at the point of reception, as Martindale suggests, but this meaning involves not just the individual reader, but also much wider social and political contexts.

Chapter 1, then, argues that geography is a theme of some importance in the *Georgics*, an importance which can be seen as independent of the particular reading I pursue. An appendix provides a list of the poem’s toponyms and ethnonyms for the further consideration of the reader. I discuss the geography of the poem in three sections – literary, economic, and political – with a fourth section focusing exclusively on the geography of Italy. I have tried to highlight a series of tensions or ironies which serve to complicate certain assumptions about this poem. I argue that a central paradox of the *Georgics* is that it depicts an intensely diverse picture of the known world, and yet seeks to define that world in Roman terms. It portrays Roman political power, and the power of Octavian, in universal terms; it confidently translates the cultural and literary geography of the Greek world to Italy; it names a range of products and produce from around the world,
emphasizing Rome’s economic reach; it engages with the orientalist propaganda of Actium and writes the history of the Italian peninsula in an ambivalent way. Throughout, I focus on how seemingly picturesque descriptions of peoples and places can, with some historical context, focus our attention on the history of Roman imperialism in Italy and in the Mediterranean. What does it mean for a Roman poet to “write” those peoples and places implicated in the history of Roman imperialism? With which perspective do we find ourselves in sympathy? Said has written of “that deeply symbiotic relationship” between Western imperialism and culture, and it is Said’s strategy of contrapuntal reading which informs this study of the *Georgics* in Chapter 1. It is hoped that by paying attention to the poem’s geography, we can begin to recover, or at least to imagine, the experience of the periphery as much as the metropolis. In this context, the poem becomes a much more broadly political text than has been previously thought.

The third and final part of the argument advanced here focuses on the reception of the *Georgics* in Britain and the British empire c. 1820-1930. The central question is, in what ways can the history of a text like the *Georgics* be written? A history of its scholarship is one way, but this offers a limited perspective. By focusing on popular receptions of the poem, we can bring to light new source material and thus complicate and enrich our understanding. This reveals a text appropriated in both agricultural and, particularly, political contexts. Some methodological points are relevant here. I have made use of a number of online archives in order to search a wide range of material, primarily contemporary British newspapers and periodicals. By searching for certain key terms (“Virgil”, “Georgics”) and then by searching more selectively for those Latin quotations from the poem which I found appearing on multiple occasions, I was able to accumulate a critical mass of relevant and intriguing material. Many such sources are, by their nature, anonymous. Given, however, the social bias in Greek and Latin education, it should be

35 Said (1994) 59: “As we look back at the cultural archive, we begin to reread it not univocally but contrapuntally, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts.” [emphasis original].
36 The online archives used are: *The Times*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The Times of India*, *The Observer*, *The (Manchester) Guardian*, *The Spectator*, as well as *British Newspapers Online* and *British Periodicals*. Full details of these resources are given in “Online Sources & Archives”, below.
stressed that “popular” reception implies a relatively limited section of British society. And yet despite this, it is hoped that what follows will bring to light a more diverse group of readers than those usually considered, if only to aspire to McElduff’s inclusive vision of reception: “…the history of the book must be a history of the reader: this means all readers, not just a select few.”37

Chapters 2 and 3 both include historical introductions in order to orientate readers to relevant social and political contexts.

It is also important to consider what a “reception” of the Georgics implies in this setting. The vast majority of readings, then as now, are personal, private, and thus unavailable to the historian. What is available are quotations from and references to the poem recorded in the extant historical archive. With these a picture can be built, not so much of readers’ precise opinions of the poem, but rather of the ways in which a text has influence in, and is influenced by, the social and political contexts of its reception. The overwhelming emphasis on Greek and Latin in elite education is no guarantee of familiarity with Virgil: the potential discrepancy between rote learning and actual comprehension is important. And yet it is clear that most of those who appear below and who quote the Georgics do so knowingly. They are aware of what the lines mean and adapt them to a specific context, often in striking and inventive ways. They respond to the agricultural material in the poem, taking from it advice for beekeeping, reflections at harvest-time or during a cattle plague, advice for wartime allotment gardens, and so show that, for many, the agriculture of the poem and its relevance to contemporary British life was attractive. As we have seen, this contrasts with modern scholarly perceptions of the poem, which tend to overlook its agricultural themes.

But study of this popular reception also reveals the poem’s appropriation in highly political contexts, by which I mean contexts bound up with the working of the British polis, both domestically and internationally. The poem is quoted in relation to contemporary domestic politics, about issues like land reform and the value of hard work. It is used to express patriotism and imperial self-confidence, as part of a larger discourse of national identity. It is quoted in

foreign and imperial contexts, in ways which imagine and construct Britain’s relationship with
the rest of the world. Tourists quote the poem abroad, and journalists quote it to contextualise
foreign reports for a domestic readership. Most strikingly, the lines which begin *o fortunatos* (*G.* 2. 458-459) are consistently used to construct the experience of the colonial subject in Ireland,
India, Australia, and South Africa, and to emphasize their lack of appreciation for the blessings
of British rule. Chapter 3 concludes with a study of receptions relating to the First World War,
which further highlight these domestic and international aspects in wartime and post-war contexts.

A key distinction is to be made, then, between Chapter 1, and Chapters 2 and 3. It is not
the geography of the poem to which British readers at this time appear to respond, a geography
which is often intensely literary and obscure. But the poem *is* quoted in geographic and imperial
contexts, in ways, as we shall see, not unrelated to the geography of the *Georgics* in Chapter 1.
Given the way in which this body of source material was assembled, caution is required in
generalising as to larger trends in the reception of the *Georgics*.* For reasons of clarity, and in
order to master both aspects of this interdisciplinary project, I have restricted my focus entirely
to the *Georgics*, without giving attention to the *Aeneid* or to other Latin poets. Despite these
limitations, I hope the reader will agree that, even with a limited body of evidence, some striking
trends in reception are apparent.

Britain between 1820 and 1930 is an attractive context for a number of reasons: these
dates (roughly) correspond to the earliest and latest primary sources quoted. Firstly there is the
system of classical education which provided generations of men (it was an overwhelmingly but
not exclusively male system) with a knowledge of Greek and Latin, and thus of Virgil’s poetry.
By the nineteenth century this system had become integral to the self-expression and self-
identification of a broad swathe of Britain’s political class. With the abolition of the compulsory
Greek requirement for entry to Oxford and Cambridge after the First World War, the dominance
of Greek and Latin in the British elite curriculum began to decline. Secondly there is the context
of the British empire, which reached its greatest territorial extent in the 1920s and which, during
our period, gave Britain international political and economic power. Crucially, to a large extent
these two contexts intersect: men who had been educated in Classics were often the ones who staffed, had experience of, or travelled in, this British empire. This affords us a unique opportunity to examine the relationship between culture and imperialism at a particular point in British history. This is also the period in which the growing professionalisation of scholarship in Britain and elsewhere created the academia we know today. With this process came increased scholarly publication and so increased production of knowledge about classical authors. Given that every generation of scholars inherits the work of its predecessors, we can trace the roots of our modern assumptions and opinions about Virgil and his work. To extend the period of investigation forward to 1945 or later would have made, I felt, the scope of the project too broad; the receptions of Cecil Day Lewis, T. S. Eliot, and others have been examined elsewhere. As such 1930, the year of international bimillennium celebrations in honour of Virgil’s birth, seemed an appropriate place to end.

This period and context are also attractive because of the scholarship now being produced. Scholars have examined the institutional and societal basis for classical education in Britain, exploring how Classics formed a core part of elite expression and exclusivity; they have investigated the comparisons made between the British empire and the Roman empire; they have explored more broadly the relationship between Classics and empire in imperial and postcolonial contexts. Stead and Hall, meanwhile, have argued against what they call an “exclusionist model” of classical reception, which sees such reception as solely the preserve of elites, and in their edited volume have explored, with the help of other scholars, receptions of the classical world amongst non-elite and previously understudied demographics. And while there has been work on Virgilian receptions in this context, the focus has largely been on the Aeneid.

40 Butler (2012); Vasunia (2005); Vance (2000).
42 Stead & Hall (2015) 2. See also the ongoing research project led by Stead and Hall, “Classics and Class in Britain 1789-1939”, the fruits of which can be explored at http://www.classicsandclass.info (last accessed 11 August 2017).
43 e.g. Vasunia (2009a) and Harrison (2008a) 113-117.
demonstrating, for instance, that moments like the speech of Anchises (*Aen.* 6. 847-853) provided fuel for the imagination of more than one imperially-minded Briton.  

My intention, then, is to make use of this range of scholarship on the relationship between Classics and empire, and to apply it to a particular text, in this case the *Georgics*. It is hoped that this close focus will complement the broader historical approach of other work, and provide a useful addition to it. The source material examined here is somewhat protean. The great era of literary reception of the *Georgics* in Britain is the eighteenth century. It continues to be studied and is not my main focus here. Many of the receptions discussed below emerge from the elite of classically-educated men, and yet the wide range of material precludes any neat assumptions about this poem’s readers. While the challenge of Hall & Stead is a welcome development, I would only caution that explorations of the receptions of classical culture among non-elite groups should not preclude awareness of just how exclusive access to Greek and Latin was (and, importantly, to a large extent still is). The ability even to read this poem has, until the advent of cheaply available paperback and now online translations, been unavailable to many. Finally, reception is, ultimately, a private affair, and historical investigation should not be mistaken for a complete picture of a poem’s history: all poetry is continually re-imaginable.

This history seeks, then, to complicate and enrich our understanding of the *Georgics* and of the ways in which it has been read in Britain. It will argue for a more politicised poem in both these contexts, in order to complement and challenge the more aesthetically-inclined scholarly history of the poem. Before concluding this introduction, there are a few final points I would ask the reader to bear in mind for what follows. Comparisons between the Roman empire and the British empire (both vastly more complex that these neat terms suggest) are as easy to make as they are hard to define. Comparisons, where made, if made at all, need to be rigorous and judicious. And yet trepidation about accuracy should not obscure important continuities. In particular, I would ask the reader to consider the ways in which the wider world is imagined from an imperial centre.

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45 Eighteenth-century literary reception is discussed in Chapter 1. For literary reception of the poem in other contexts see the survey of Thomas (2001a), with Simons (2016), (2001).
The geography of the *Georgics* imagines the world and its peoples, drawing on the traditions of ethnography and historiography, within the context of the ancient Mediterranean. It constructs from Rome (or Italy) an image of the world in Latin, including those peoples and places which are implicated in Roman imperialism.

In a similar way, the London of the British empire, and Britain more generally, operated as a focal point for the production of knowledge about the wider world. Readers of the *Georgics* used the poem to reflect on their experiences abroad. There is the myopic condescension of the tourist, who travels abroad and sees only deprivation and social problems without considering the (fundamentally unequal) geopolitical, imperial, or colonial realities which often inform such situations. There are the journalists who report back to British readers on the state of the world, paradoxically using a Latin text like the *Georgics* as a frame of reference, as a way of making their stories more relatable. There is also the imperial civil servant, who draws on his classical education to process or to relate his experience of the British empire and the wider world. My suspicion is that such imaginings of the world, Roman or British, can serve, more often than not, to facilitate or to obscure, rather than to challenge, the political realities which underlie them. As we shall see, the *Georgics* is quoted to depict people in Greece and Italy, in colonial Algeria and in Abyssinia, as picturesque, simple, apolitical, their ways of life timeless and carefree. Such texts serve to highlight the complex processes by which (imperial) power is legitimised in society.

Another, related, point of comparison is the relationship between Europe and the wider world. Virgil’s text depicts the diversity of the world, and yet is clear, I think, about Roman dominance and control. Imagined or historical Roman enemies appear in its lines, depicted on stage curtains, on temple doors, in descriptive settings. It resorts to stereotypical depictions of “the mysterious East” which have a long tradition in European literature and art. The geopolitics of Roman literature, and of Augustan poetry in particular, permeates these later European traditions: as in so many other areas of life, European identity is partly based on the idea of inheritance from Rome. British subjects, then, use the *Georgics*, as they use Classics more

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46 On the politics of tourism, in an Antiguan context, see Kincaid (1988).
47 The phrase is Said’s (1994: xi).
generally, as a way of thinking about the relationship between Britain and the wider world. This is, I argue, a fact of the utmost importance. There is a need to distinguish between any reader’s private enjoyment of the literature of Greece and Rome, and the uses to which the classical past is put in the construction of identity, or as a political tool, or as a means of promoting a specifically “Western” culture.

Said, in the introduction to Culture & Imperialism, speaks of his realization of how “the alleged universalism of fields such as the classics (not to mention historiography, anthropology, and sociology) was Eurocentric in the extreme, as if other literatures and societies had either an inferior or a transcended value.” By highlighting the geopolitics and complex “othering” which underwrites both Virgil’s text and its reception, this thesis implicitly draws attention to the role which Classics still plays in the self-definition of the West (the U.S. as well as Europe), and invites readers to consider this self-definition in the light of recent geopolitical history, not least the atrocities perpetrated against the Afghani and Iraqi people since 2001. A full appreciation of the Georgics can, it is argued, teach not just the tools and the traditions of philology or the appreciation of literary beauty, but can also serve to contextualise the most contemporary of political problems.

The challenge is to try to “provincialize” Rome (as one scholar puts it⁴⁹), to incorporate the periphery as much as the metropolis into our readings of Virgil and of Augustan poetry more generally. “Classic” is a label of local, rather than universal, significance, and to forget this is to risk cultural and political short-sightedness.⁵⁰ Berger, for instance, argues that the often supine portrayal of female sexuality in European art is not echoed in other, non-European traditions.⁵¹ In particular, I would draw readers’ attention to the work of Pollock, who, in his study of the cultural formations of pre-modern South Asia, includes a comparative study of Roman and South

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⁴⁹ The phrase is from the title of Fitzpatrick (2011).
⁵⁰ Note for instance the way in which a recent introduction to the ancient Greeks, while keenly aware of the politics of representation and of the colonial and imperial implications of Classics, continues to employ a model which places the Greeks as pre-eminent in world history (see Hall (2016) xiii-xvii).
⁵¹ Berger (1972) 53.
Asian imaginings of political power. His work serves to emphasize that some of the most prominent concepts in European history (that of empire, for instance) are not universal, but local:

We approach the core of this large contrast between the two cosmopolitan formations when comparing their two “foundational fictions”, whose opening words…offer the most concentrated expressions of their respective thought worlds. At the beginning of the Aeneid, Vergil “sings of arms and the man,” the flight from Troy to Italy, the origins of the Latin people (genus latinum), the high walls of Rome, and imperium sine fine, power without limit. In his Raghuvaṃśa, Kālidāsa bows down to the mother and father of the universe, who are “fused together like a word and its meaning,” in order that he might more deeply understand word and meaning when he tells the story of a universalistic political power – diganta rājya, power as far as the horizons – and the dynasty of the mythopoetic Raghus. Two visions of “cosmo-politan” order are offered here, and they differ profoundly.

To conclude this introduction, it is necessary to say a final word about rationale. What is the larger goal behind a reading of the Georgics which, in both its Roman and its later British contexts, seeks to reassert a balance between aesthetic and political interpretation in scholarship on the poem? What follows is based on a conception of history and literature that is active rather than passive, one which views history and literature not as inert and timeless media but rather as implicated in politics and society; one which realises, that is, the ways in which history and literature are often used as a means of facilitating, rather than challenging, the structures of power which shape our world.

Classics is, despite a contemporary bias which tends to prioritise research above teaching, an intrinsically pedagogical subject. The question then arises, what is the difference between reading the Georgics in private and reading it in a university? Surely one answer must

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52 See Pollock (2006) 274-280 for a comparison of Roman and South Asian conceptions of empire. Pollock (2014) investigates the discrepancy in the perceived importance of Western and South Asian knowledge in contemporary academia.
be, alongside training in philology, an opportunity to gain the fullest possible appreciation of how the poem relates to the wider world, past and present. This is, after all, a poem which celebrates the person who has got to the heart of things (G. 2. 490: *qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas*). It is worth noting that both Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht imagined the dangers and the possibilities of history in terms of the Roman triumph, that institution which brought the world in subjection to Rome.  

Brecht, in his *Questions From a Worker who Reads (Fragen eines lesenden Arbeiters)*, imagines an unnamed worker asking a series of questions about ancient history:

Das große Rom

Ist voll von Triumphbögen. Wer errichtete sie? Über wen

Triumphierten die Cäsaren?

Great Rome

Is full of triumphal arches. Who erected them? Over whom

Did the Caesars triumph?  

Benjamin, in his essay *On the Concept of History (Über den Begriff der Geschichte)*, imagined the dangers of a certain kind of history as a triumphal procession. History is most often written by the victors and, Benjamin writes, “empathy with the victor invariably benefits the rulers. Historical materialists know what that means. Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate. According to traditional practice, the spoils are carried along in the procession. They are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment.”

That the *Georgics* should be one of the “cultural treasures” mentioned here is both a challenge

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54 For the friendship between the two men, see Wizisla (2009).
55 The text and translation of this quotation are from Brecht (2006) 62-63.

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to, and an opportunity for, readers of the poem. Endlessly interpretable and endlessly open, it can, by alerting us to the histories of power, also suggest the capacity for change.
Chapter 1

The Geography of the *Georgics*

Describing the World

In order to offer a more political reading of the *Georgics*, I turn to the poem’s geography, to the broad range of peoples and places it presents to the reader. Geography in its modern guise implies the study of the earth’s physical features and their impact on human societies, encompassing as it does both political and anthropological concerns.¹ It is a capacious subject, and we might distinguish three strands at the outset. Geography is primarily scientific, concerned with inquiry into, and study of, the physical world. It is also an inherently political subject, as even the briefest history of cartography will prove. Geographical knowledge has been, throughout history, both a stimulus to, and a result of, imperial exploration and conquest. Thirdly, geography is also cultural, which is to say prominent in literature and art, an imaginative field which has a place in popular conceptions of the world. Before moving on to contextualise geography in the ancient world, it is necessary to say a few words about empire in a Roman context. By the first century B.C., and especially by that century’s close, Rome’s political relationship with the Mediterranean world was fundamentally (if not exclusively) unequal and exploitative, defined and controlled by Rome. This relationship was in the first instance political (military), but it was also economic and, which is of great importance for what follows, cultural. Rome’s power was built on military strength but relied on the exploitation of the Mediterranean’s economic resources. In cultural terms, much Roman literature and rhetoric of the first century B.C. is keenly aware of Rome’s power and can be seen to legitimate and endorse its position in the world. This will become clear as we progress.²

Detailed investigation of Roman imperialism in particular contexts is beyond the scope

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¹ *OED*, s. v., 2a: “The field of study concerned with the physical features of the earth and its atmosphere, and with human activity as it affects and is affected by these, including the distribution of populations and resources and political and economic activities…” All dates are B.C. unless otherwise stated.

² Useful discussions of Roman imperialism: Webster (1996) 1-17, Harris (1979), Finlay (1978), Badian (1968) 1-15; see Gruen (1984) 1: 273-287 and Cornell (1995) 364-386 in the context of the Hellenistic World and 3rd-2nd century Italy respectively. Mattingly (2011) 1-41 is the best recent discussion. See also the working definition of Said (1994) 8, which I think applies adequately to Rome in the 1st century B.C. – imperialism as “the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominant metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory.” (Rome’s empire was, of course, not confined to distant territories.)
of this Chapter, but it will suffice to make two points. Firstly, that Roman imperialism predates the Principate of Octavian, and thus what is commonly referred to as the “Roman empire” by several centuries. Secondly, that while “imperialism” is a modern, not an ancient term, I do not view Roman imperialism and British imperialism as fundamentally incomparable, as will become clear.

Our earliest knowledge of scientific geography in the ancient Greek world takes us to the Ionian intellectual milieu of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C., to figures like Anaximander (RE 2) and Hecataeus of Miletus (RE 3). Anaximander was, according to tradition, a pupil of Thales and the first map-maker, while over three hundred fragments survive of Hecataeus’ geographical work, which explored the ancient Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The extant work of Herodotus provides a window into this world and its geographical concerns: the Histories provides a good example of the way in which geography, from the very beginning, was a prominent theme in literature of varied genres. Strabo followed a tradition which saw Homer as the first geographer, while Plato referred to the Greeks as frogs living around a Mediterranean pond. Geography was never a strictly-defined genre, rather it can be seen as a constituent part of ethnography, historiography, and poetry, something which offered ancient authors an abundant source of what Rawson calls “paradoxa or admiranda”, strange and marvellous details about the world and its people as enlightening or entertaining additions to their work. The imaginative potential of geography is highlighted by works like the Ἱερὰ ἀναγραφή of Euhemerus of Messene, which included a journey to the mythical islands of Panchaia, and fragments of which are preserved in the work of Diodorus Siculus. Geography was also a concern for the intellectual world of Hellenistic Alexandria, in particular for Eratosthenes, the polymath head of the Library

3 Thomson (1965) remains a comprehensive and useful study of ancient geography; see also Romm (1992). For testimonia and fragments relating to Anaximander see DK 1: 81-90; to Hecataeus, FGrH I: 1-47. Short entries on both, in English, are found in the OCD, s.v.
4 Diog. Laert. 2. 1. 2 (Anaximander’s map).
5 Strabo 1.1.2 (= 2 C).
6 Pl. Phd. 109b.
8 Euhemerus: FGrH 63. F 3 = Diod. Sic. 5. 41-46. See also the OCD, s. v. “Euhemerus”.
at Alexandria, who used an ingenious technique to postulate a measurement for the circumference of the earth.\(^9\) Also relevant here is the impact of Alexander’s campaigns in Asia (327-325) on geographical knowledge and Indography in particular: works by Alexander’s general Nearchus and the Seleucid ambassador Megasthenes were important sources on India for Diodorus, Strabo, and Arrian.\(^10\)

Ionian intellectuals inherited a tradition, first visible on the Shield of Achilles in *Iliad* 18, which conceived of the earth as a disc surrounded by an encircling Ocean, a conception explicitly criticized by Herodotus.\(^11\) As theory advanced with Eratosthenes to recognize a spherical earth divided into five zones, this disc-shaped image did not fully disappear, an ambiguity, Vogt argues, implicit in the Latin phrase *orbis terrarum*, with “disc”, “circle”, and “sphere” all attested meanings of *orbis*.\(^12\) *Orbis terrarum* therefore defined the inhabited world, οἰκουμένη in Greek, a world stretching from the Straits of Gibraltar to India and centred on the Mediterranean. It was Greek writers like Polybius who first defined Roman imperial power as being commensurate with this Mediterranean world, and in the first century B.C. this conception is especially prominent in Roman literature, as we shall see below. But given the extremely limited nature of our knowledge, it is impossible to be definitive about Greek or Roman conceptions of the physical world.

In the first century B.C. geography was prominent in the literature and politics of the late Republic. Rome’s rapidly expanding empire had given generals like Pompey and Julius Caesar the opportunity to cast themselves as extenders of Roman power, geographical explorers associated with Asia and Gaul respectively. Comparison with Alexander the Great was cultivated by Pompey, but in Caesar’s case our evidence is too paltry for certainty: at any rate, the figure of

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\(^9\) On Eratosthenes, his *Geography*, and his measurement of the earth’s circumference, see Thomson (1965) 158-168 and Roller (2010).


\(^11\) Romm (1992) 11-20 and in particular 13: “[The] scheme of an island earth surrounded by a circular Ocean became a pervasive feature of the archaic Greek worldview, dominating both literary and visual representations of the *peiraita gaiēs*.” For Herodotus’ criticisms see Hdt. 2. 23, 4. 8, 4. 36.

Alexander loomed large and will be discussed further below.\textsuperscript{13} The geographic writings of Posidonius and Varro survive only in fragments;\textsuperscript{14} better-preserved is the Βιβλιοθήκη of Diodorus Siculus, a work with a keen geographical interest and which appears to have been composed and published in the period 60-30, making it broadly contemporary with the \textit{Georgics}.\textsuperscript{15} Strabo’s seventeen-book work, dating from the end of the first century B.C., preserves for us a huge compendium of geographical information. Geography was a theme in diverse genres, in Catullus’s poems of travel and in Sallust’s description of Africa, in Caesar’s depiction of Gaul and in Horace’s \textit{Odes}. So geography in the ancient Mediterranean world and in the world of Virgil’s Rome encompassed scientific, political, and literary concerns, although it is impossible to chart geographical knowledge precisely over such a broad period and with such meagre evidence. It is not the scientific aspect of ancient geography which will be my primary concern in relation to the \textit{Georgics}, but rather its imaginative potential for the reader and how this relates to the politics of the poem.

The \textit{Georgics} presents the reader with a diverse picture of the known world.\textsuperscript{16} It does this through a series of toponyms and ethnonyms which name cities and peoples, mountains, rivers, and lakes from throughout the \textit{orbis terrarum}. The world is brought to the reader: Thule in the farthest north (according to Pytheas some six days sail north of Britain\textsuperscript{17}), Iberia and the Balearic Islands, Egypt and the Nile as far south as ancient Ethiopia, Thrace and the Black Sea, western Asia and the Levant, the Caucasus and Media, Bactra (now the site of Balkh) in modern Afghanistan, the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Sall. \textit{Hist.} 3. 88 Maurenbrecher: \textit{Sed Pompeius a prima aulaescentia sermone fautorum similem fore se credens Alexandro regi, faca consultaque eius quidem aemulus erat} (“But Pompeius from his earliest youth believed, with the encouragement of his admirers, that he would be like King Alexander, and indeed strived to equal his deeds and plans.”) See Green (1978) 4-5 on Pompey’s imitation of Alexander and the problems in assuming a similar imitation on the part of Caes.\textsuperscript{14} For the geographical fragments of Posidonius of Rhodes, the polymath and philosopher active in the early first century B.C., see Edelstein & Kidd (1972) F49, F241-251. For Pliny’s geographical references to Varro see \textit{HN.} 3. 8, 3. 142, 4. 62, 4. 66, 4. 78, 6. 38, 6. 51-52 and Rawson (1985) 265 n. 85.\textsuperscript{15} Sacks (1990) 167-168 (Diodorus’ Βιβλιοθήκη), Donat. \textit{Vit. Verg.} 25, 27, followed by Thomas (1988) I: 1, says that Virgil took seven years to compose the \textit{Georgics} and read it to Octavian in 29.\textsuperscript{16} Horsfall (1997) is a brief survey of the poem’s geography, focusing mainly on its Italian and Greek toponyms, which it classifies in an appendix. Goodfellow (1981) examines the poem’s north Italian geography, and for brief, older, treatments of geography in Latin literature and in Virgil, see Thomson (1951), (1955).\textsuperscript{17} On Pytheas, the Massiliot explorer who claimed to have circumnavigated Britain and reported information about Thule (perhaps Iceland) see Cunliffe (2002) 130-131 and Thomson (1965) 143-151. Strabo 1.4.2 (= 63 C) records Pytheas’ claim that Thule was six-days’ sail north of Britain.
\end{itemize}
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great river systems of South Asia, even the Seres, the “silk people”, evoking what is now China. Unsurprisingly, Italy and Greece are the places most often alluded to, from the Cyclades to the Peloponnesse and Macedonia, through the whole Italian peninsula to the Alps. There are mythical or semi-mythical places like Thule and the islands of Panchaia off Arabia, associated with Pytheas and Euhemerus respectively, there are fantastical geographies both magical and dreadful: Cyrene’s underwater home with its hall of rivers, and the underworld silenced by the music of Orpheus. Virgil’s apparent inaccuracies\(^\text{18}\) can be considered poetic licence or geographic confusion: it is the imaginative potential of this geography which is important, as evoked by such densely-laden hexameters as:

\[
\text{Sed neque Medorum siluae, ditissima terra,}
\]
\[
nec pulcher Ganges atque auro turbidus Hermus
\]
\[
\text{laudibus Italiae certent, non Bactra neque Indi}
\]
\[
totaque turiferis Panchaia pinguis harenis.}\(^\text{19}\) \hspace{1cm} G. 2. 136-139.
\]
\[
\text{But let not the forests of the Medes – a land of the greatest wealth – nor the beautiful}
\]
\[
\text{Ganges and the Hermus clouded with gold, compete with the praises of Italy; not}
\]
\[
\text{Bactra nor Indians, nor all Panchaia rich with incense-bearing sands.}
\]
or:

\[
\text{Praeterea regem non sic Aegyptus et ingens}
\]
\[
\text{Lydia nec populi Parthorum aut Medus Hydaspes}
\]
\[
\text{obseruant.} \hspace{1cm} G. 4. 210-212.
\]
\[
\text{Besides, neither Egypt nor great Lydia, nor the Parthian peoples nor the Median}
\]
\[
\text{Hydaspes, pay such respect to their king.}
\]

In what follows I discuss a necessarily selective group of the peoples and places in the poem. I have provided an appendix which lists in full its toponyms and ethnonyms: I cannot hope

\(^{18}\) E.g. putting the River Hydaspes in Media (G. 4. 211) and India as the source of the Nile (G. 4. 293).

\(^{19}\) All Latin translations are my own unless otherwise stated. I use Mynors’ text (1969) throughout. In the passages from the Georgics quoted here there are three significant divergences between this text and that of Conte (= Ottaviano & Conte (2013)), for which see n. 199 (p. 64), n. 138 (p. 202), and p. 231 below.
to cover in depth every particular instance, and so invite the reader to browse the appendix and bring his or her own associations and experience to the poem’s geography. These words are often obscure and easy to half-translate, to say, that is, “Idumean” for *Idumaeas* (*G*. 3. 12) and move on, unaware of the location or history of the place described. In many cases Virgil’s poetic geography remains opaque, but detailed investigation can often provide us with illuminating context. Readers may find helpful resources such as the Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World or pelagios.org, which provides a free, searchable map of the ancient world.20 Throughout this Chapter’s four sections, I would ask the reader to consider the tension between the imaginative power of this descriptive geography and the political contexts of Roman imperialism directly relevant, as we shall see, to many of the places described. Given our distance from the first century B.C., the former is, I think, more easily accessible to us than the latter. But without an appreciation of the politics of the *Georgics*’ description of the world, we miss much.

The poem’s geography is intensely literary, and is bound up with the literature and history of the Greek and Roman worlds. Its dense network of allusion (or reference, or intertextuality)21 is often presented in geographic terms: readers will find their own examples to match the ones mentioned here. So Virgil describes his poem as an *Ascreaeum carmen* (*G*. 2. 176), an “Ascraean song”, which connotes the town of Ascra on Mt. Helicon in Boeotia and, by extension, the town’s most famous resident, Hesiod. Mt. Ida and Gargara may evoke for some readers the Homeric poems,22 while the description of the sands of Libya in Book 2 may recall the same image in Catullus 7.23 It has also been suggested that Virgil’s *Medus Hydaspes* (*G*. 4. 211), referring to what is now the river Jhelum in Pakistan, is an allusion to a fragment of

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21 What the title of Hinds (1998) calls “the dynamics of appropriation in Roman poetry” is a much-debated issue, as is the particular import of the different terms (allusion, reference, intertextuality) used. For an overview of the issue see Hinds (1998) 17-51. Thomas (1986) discusses the *Georgics*’ “art of reference”.
Posidippus, which reads Ἰνδὸς Ὑδάσπης. A fragment of Eratosthenes’ *Hermes,* meanwhile, is echoed in Virgil’s description of the heavenly zones:

\[
\text{quinque tenent caelum zonae: quarum una corusco}
\]
\[
\text{semper sole rubens et torrida semper ab igni;}
\]
\[
\text{quam circum extremae dextra laeauaque trahuntur}
\]
\[
\text{caeruleae, glacie concretae atque imbribus abris;}
\]
\[
\text{has inter mediumque duae mortalibus aegris}
\]
\[
\text{munere concessae dioium…}
\]

*G. 1. 233-238.*

*Five bands occupy the sky: one of these is always red from the blazing sun and always scorched by its fire; around it on the left and right edges stretch two blue ones, hardened by ice and black showers; between these two and the middle zone are two which have been given to poor mortals by the gods’ gift...*

Moreover, the poem describes not just places but peoples: Scythians, Libyans, Indians, Iberians, Dacians, Britons, and many Italian peoples to name a few. In its sustained depictions of foreign peoples, particularly of the Scythians wintering out and of the Libyan herdsman in Book 3, we can detect the influence of the ethnographic tradition in Greek and Latin literature, elucidated by Thomas. As we shall see, such descriptions can be considered highly political if one places them in their proper historical contexts.

This literary geography reaches levels of considerable sophistication, with complex references as well as periphrases and apparent neologisms. When Virgil recounts his meeting with the *Corycius senex* in Book 4 he names Tarentum by periphrasis: “under the towers of an Oebalian citadel”, referencing the Spartan king Oebalus and hence the Spartan origins of the town. The phrase *Cecropias...apes* (*G. 4. 177*) evokes the legendary king Cecrops of Athens and so means

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26 Thomas (1982).
27 *G. 4. 125: sub Oebaliae...turribus arcis.* Cf. Serv. ad loc. and *OCD* s.v., “Oebalus”.

24
something like “Attic”, “Athenian” bees. Servius says that by the “groves of Molorchus” (G. 3.19) Virgil means Nemea, referencing the story of the poor host of Hercules and, by extension, Callimachus’ Aetia, in which this story featured; Gigante, meanwhile, has argued that the description of “the shore close to Vesuvius’ slope”, uicina Vesaeuo | ora iugo (G. 2. 223-224), is a periphrasis for Herculaneum. “The happy people of Pellaean Canopus” (G. 4. 287) relies on the reader’s knowledge of Pella in Macedonia for the reference to the Ptolemies and Ptolemaic Egypt, and Ceres is referred to at G. 1. 163 in a two-word periphrasis as Eleusinae matris, recalling her religious role at Eleusis near Athens.

Two final examples highlight the complexity of this literary geography. The adjective Narycius (G. 2. 438) refers primarily to Narycum in Locris (OLD s. v.), but by extension connotes its colony of Lokroi Epizephyriori in the ager Bruttius (modern Calabria), Italy, whose groves Virgil names. This is one of five examples where the Georgics provides the first extant instance of a toponym or ethnonym in Latin, and while we cannot say for certain whether these words are neologisms or merely our first references, this does point, I think, to the innovative nature of Virgil’s picture of the world. Arcadia is referred to eight times in the poem, twice by name and six times by a periphrasis. At a basic level it evokes the central Peloponnese and by extension Greece. For a reader of Virgil, ancient and modern, Arcadia may recall the Eclogues; for a modern reader, Arcadia can summon up the whole range and complexity of the pastoral tradition in Renaissance and modern poetry and art. This particular example neatly points out how many

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28 Serv. ad loc. says Athenian, Serv. Dan., Attic. A reference to the honey of Mt. Hymettus is perhaps intended (see Appendix 1A, s.v. Hymettus).
30 Gigante (2004) 88-91, who also discusses the history of an alternative reading in these lines. Aulus Gellius claimed (6. 20. 1-2) that the text had originally read uicina Vesaeuo | Nola iugo, but that the poet changed it after being slighted by the Nolans. Gigante, following Barchiesi (1979), regards this story as fictional and reads ora.
31 sc. Seres, “silk people” (G. 2. 121), Narycius, “Narycian” (G. 2. 438), Idumaeus, “Idumaean”, (G. 3. 12), Cinyphius, “Cinyphian” (G. 3. 312), Bisaltae, a Thracian people, (G. 3. 461). For all of these words see the relevant entries in the OLD.
32 Virgil’s appropriation of Arcadia is to be firmly distinguished from its subsequent role in the European pastoral tradition. See Jenkyns (1989) and the comment of Clausen (1994) 289 n. 4: “Arcadia conceived as an ideal or symbolic landscape, ‘la pastorale Arcadia’, is the invention of Jacopo Sannazaro and Sir Philip Sidney – that is, a feature of the pastoral tradition, and should not be imposed retroactively on Virgil…” Nevertheless, I would argue that readers remain free to bring whatever associations they wish to the appearance of Arcadia in the Eclogues. For a history of pastoral poetry in Europe see Alpers (1996).
layers of potential meaning a toponym can have for different readers, something relevant to the poem’s literary geography as a whole.

Thus the *Georgics*’ pervasive allusions to Greek and Latin literature often take a geographical form. But the poem’s literary geography can also be taken to represent a process of cultural appropriation familiar to readers of Augustan poetry, whereby a Latin poem offers a confident assertion of its mastery of Greek literature.\(^{33}\) It is important to realise that behind this cultural appropriation lies Rome’s political dominance of the Mediterranean, and, in particular, of the Greek world. The two processes are interrelated and interdependent. Polybius recognized Rome’s swift rise to dominance over Greece in the second century B.C.,\(^ {34}\) and Horace provided the most memorable, and ambivalent, commentary on the cultural aspect of Roman imperialism.\(^ {35}\) At two moments in the *Georgics* this appropriation becomes strikingly visible. Firstly, in the poem’s opening lines, Virgil invokes twelve deities from the Greek and Italian worlds, in a passage whose ostensible model is Varro’s *De Re Rustica*.\(^ {36}\) Italian deities Liber, Silvanus, and the *Fauni* appear alongside Minerva, Triptolemus, Neptune, Dryads, and, in particular, Pan, who is called to leave Arcadia and be present at the opening of the poet’s song:

\[
\text{ipse nemus linquens patrium saltusque Lycaei}
\]

\[
\text{Pan, ouium custos, tua si tibi Maenala curae,}
\]

\[
\text{adsis, o Tegeace, fauens… } \quad \text{G. 1. 16-18.}
\]

\[
\text{As you yourself leave your native forest and the woodlands of Mt. Lycaeus, Pan,}
\]

\[
\text{guardian of sheep, if you care for your Maenalus, then come, o Tegean one, and be}
\]

\[
\text{propitious...}
\]


\(^{34}\) Polyb. 1. 1. 5-6 with Walbank (1957-1979) ad loc.

\(^{35}\) Hor. *Epist.* 2. 1. 156-157: *Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artis \textbf{| intulit agresti Latio}* (“Captured Greece took its wild conqueror captive, and brought its arts to rustic Latium.”)


26
For Virgil, Nelis & Nelis-Clément argue, “Greece is a place of cultural origins, but it is also a part of the world ruled by Rome and it is a place in which the fate of Rome is played out.” This act of translation from Greece to Italy foreshadows the remarkable opening to Book 3, the passage in which all Greece comes to the banks of the River Mincius at Mantua to witness the poet’s procession, games, and newly-built temple.

\[\text{cuncta mihi Alpheum linquens lucosque Molorchi} \]
\[\text{cursibus et crudo decernet Graecia caestu} \]

_G. 3. 19-20._

All Greece as it leaves the Alpheus and the groves of Molorchus will compete for me in foot-races and rough boxing contests...

Wilkinson’s analysis of this passage highlights the influence of Pindar and of the Roman triumph; the green plain (G. 3. 13) is, Spencer notes, “saturated in the civic Roman imagery of conquest and imperialism”. The whole passage neatly highlights the political dominance which underlies Roman appropriation of Greek culture, in particular the use of the verb _deducere_ in line 11, whose root meaning is “to lead away”, “carry off”, but which can be used both of taking captives to Rome for triumphal processions and of the act of writing poetry:

\[\text{primus ego in patriam mecum, modo uita supersit,} \]
\[\text{Aonio rediens deducam uertice Musas…} \]

_G. 3. 10-11._

_I shall be the first, provided my life endures, to bring back the Muses with me as I return from the Aonian peak to my own land._

We have seen that _lucos Molorchi_ refers to Nemea and can be taken as a reference to Callimachus’ _Aetia_. A further geographical reference to the Cyrenean poet can perhaps be

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38 Scholars continue to explore the significance of the temple. See Meban (2008), Harrison (2005), Nelis (2004).
40 Spencer (2010) 41.
41 For the triumphal connotation see Hor. _Carm._ 1. 37. 30-32 (Cleopatra unbowed) and _TLL_ 5. 1. 274. 51-62. For _deducere_ and poetic composition cf. _G._ 3. 10-11, Hor. _Carm._ 3. 30. 14, Ov. _Met._ 1. 4., and _TLL_ 5. 1. 282. 55-76.
detected in the phrase *Cinyphii...hirci* at G. 3. 312. *Cinyphius* denotes the River Cinyps, the modern wadi Ka’am in western Libya, which appears in a fragment of Callimachus’ epinician poem for Sosibios.\footnote{Callim. fr. 384. 24 Pfeiffer.} There may also have been a town of the same name nearby.\footnote{[Scylax] 109 (see *GGM* I: 85) and [Probus] ad G. 3. 312 refer to an *urbs* and an *oppidum*, respectively, called Cinyps. The river is also mentioned by Herodotus: Hdt. 4. 175, 198.} What has been called “Callimachus’s aesthetics of learned elegance”\footnote{Acosta-Hughes & Stephens (2012) 204. For Callimachus’ influence on Roman poetry see Fantuzzi & Hunter (2004) 461–467 and Hunter (2006) 1–41.} is perhaps what many readers will think of when considering the sophistication of the *Georgics*’ literary geography, but it would be truer to say that the poem owes a great deal to the intellectual culture of the Hellenistic world more generally, to figures like Callimachus, Eratosthenes, and Aratus. Nevertheless, readers may be interested in the links which Acosta-Hughes and Stephens draw between the geographical interests of the two poets. They start by noting the structural and thematic similarities between the *Aetia* and the *Georgics*,\footnote{Acosta-Hughes & Stephens (2012) 239–240: both poem have four books and Hesiod as a primary model, both poems end with a *sphragis*, and are “fundamentally about homeland”.} but also note that Callimachus can be seen to engage in an act of cultural translation similar to Virgil. Whereas Virgil brings the Greek and Hellenistic worlds to Italy, Callimachus before him had brought the Greek world to north Africa. The *Aetia*’s “Libya-centric geography”, they argue, is a deliberate strategy, one which re-orientates the Greek world towards Ptolemaic Alexandria, in order to reflect the fact that that city had superseded others as the political and cultural capital of the Greek world.\footnote{Acosta-Hughes & Stephens (2012) 172. See in particular pp. 148–203, on Callimachean geography and geopolitics.}

What is clear is that Virgil’s geography is somewhat two-tiered. On a basic level readers can appreciate the locations evoked in the poem for their own sake, but much of the poem’s geography assumes a detailed knowledge of literary history. This can serve to alienate or attract the reader depending on his or her knowledge, and is an undoubted challenge for the modern reader. The *Georgics*’ literary geography is a confident assertion of Rome’s place, politically and culturally, at the centre of the Mediterranean world, and poetry is thus implicated in political
reality. In a bid to recover some of this geography’s political contexts, I turn now to further examples from the poem.

Many of the peoples and places described in the *Georgics* are directly involved in the history of Roman imperialism, and I note here the “extraordinary bellicosity”\(^{47}\) of the Roman state as it came to dominate the Italian peninsula and, in the decades following the second Punic War, gained control of more and more of the Mediterranean world. The civil conflicts of the first century B.C. did little to dampen this foreign aggression, which continued throughout Virgil’s lifetime and the Principate.\(^{48}\) One need only look at the *Fasti Triumphales*, an epigraphic record, largely extant, purporting to show the triumphs awarded to Roman generals from Romulus down to 19, for cursory confirmation of this belligerence.\(^{49}\) So as well as appreciating the imaginative, aesthetic, and literary qualities of Virgil’s geography, we must also consider the relationship between empire and geographical knowledge. We must consider, that is, what it means for a Roman poet to describe places of Roman conquest and aggression in picturesque terms. One could see such literary portrayals as facilitating, rather than challenging, the power of the Roman state, as a confident assertion of its dominance. At the very least, one can see how, without proper knowledge of important historical contexts, the reader might fail to see how political many of the *Georgics*’ descriptions are.

At *G.* 3. 24-25 an image of Britons (*Britanni*) appears at the poet’s celebration by the Mincius, woven into the fabric of a stage curtain as it rises to cover the stage. The people described in *Eclogue* 1 as “cut off from the whole world”\(^{50}\) have been transported to the green plain with its imagery of imperial conquest, in another example of the centripetal dynamic of the *Georgics*’ literary geography. But there is a real political context here too. Octavian,\(^{51}\) Dio tells

\(^{47}\) Cornell (1989a) 383.

\(^{48}\) For a comprehensive survey of Roman imperialism under Octavian, to which this section is much indebted, see Gruen (1996).

\(^{49}\) The *Fasti Triumphales* are published in Degrassi (1954) 90-110; Ehrenberg & Jones (1976) 32-43 conflates all extant epigraphic fasti for the years 43 B.C. – A.D. 37. For a critical discussion of the *Fasti* as historical sources, see Beard (2007) 61-67, 72-80.

\(^{50}\) Verg. *Ecl.* 1. 66: *toto diuisos orbe Britannos*.

\(^{51}\) Octavian took the honorific title Augustus in 27: as this postdates the completion of the *Georgics* I refer to him as Octavian throughout.
us, planned an expedition to Britain on at least three occasions – 34, 27, and 26 – none of which went ahead.\textsuperscript{52} These years are contemporary with the composition and completion of the \textit{Georgics}, and Octavian’s abortive expeditions are but one part of a much longer history of Roman imperialism in Britain, beginning with Julius Caesar. Britain will become a centre of empire in later centuries, but in the \textit{Georgics} the \textit{Britanni} are very much imagined subjects of Roman power, their appearance on stage much more than an imaginative flourish. This reinforces the fact that the rhetoric of Roman imperialism under Octavian often outstripped its actual military activity, something particularly evident in the \textit{Res Gestae}, examined below. \textquotedblleft The regime\textquotedblright, Gruen argues, \textquotedblleft persistently projected the impression of vigour, expansionism, triumph and dominance.\textquotedblright\textsuperscript{53}

One landscape which features prominently in the \textit{Georgics} is Thrace, an ill-defined area in Greek and Roman sources but corresponding roughly to modern Bulgaria and southern Romania. Reference is made to the rivers Hebrus, Strymon, and Hister (Danube), the mountain ranges of Rhodope and Haemus, wine from Mt. Ismarus, the \textit{Bisaltea} and the \textit{Getae}. The whole Thracian landscape mourns Eurydice:

\begin{center}
\texttt{at\ chorus\ aequalis\ Dryadum\ clamore\ supremos\\}
\texttt{impleu\it{it\ motis;\ flerunt\ Rhodopeiae\ arces\\}
\texttt{altaque\ Pangaea\ et\ Rhesi\ Mauoria\ tellus\\}
\texttt{atque\ Getae\ atque\ Hebrus\ et\ Actias\ Orithya;\quad G.\ 4.\ 460-463.}
\end{center}

\textit{But a chorus of Dryads, her companions, filled the mountain tops with a cry; Rhodopeian peaks weep and high Pangaeum, the warlike land of Rhesus, the Getae, the Hebrus, and Attic Orithya…}

and is then one setting for Orpheus’ final wanderings and death in the frozen wilderness:

\begin{center}
nulla\ Venus,\ non\ uilli\ animum\ flexere\ hymenaei:\n\end{center}

\textsuperscript{52} Dio Cass. 49. 38. 2, 53. 22. 5, 53. 25. 2.
\textsuperscript{53} Gruen (1996) 197.
No love, nor any marriage interested him. Alone he was traversing the Hyperborean ice and the snowy Tanaïs, and lands which are never lacking Riphaean hoar frost, complaining of the theft of Eurydice and the useless gifts of Dis. Offended by this behaviour, Ciconian mothers, during the rituals of the gods and the nocturnal rites of Bacchus, scattered the young man’s butchered body across the broad fields. Even still, as the Oeagrian Hebrus bore along in mid-stream his head severed from a marble-white neck, his very voice and cold tongue, as his life ebbed away, were calling out “Eurydice”, “oh poor Eurydice!”, and the banks all along the river’s course echoed back “Eurydice.”

These two passages are vivid and dramatic, with many literary and mythical associations: Rhesus, the Thracian king killed by Diomedes in *Iliad* 10; Orithyia, the daughter of Erechtheus raped by Boreas and brought to Thrace; “Hyperborean” ice, referencing perhaps the mythical people who lived, as their name suggests “beyond the north wind”.\(^{54}\) Dexter has explored how the second

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passage quoted here relates to a fragment of the Alexandrian poet Phanocles.\textsuperscript{55} Nor should we expect a factual, scientific topography. But this depiction of a wild, cold, and warlike land should be contrasted with Roman activity in the area in the late first century B.C.

I will discuss the association Thrace had with the Roman civil wars below, but here it is important to note wars recorded in the extant summaries to Livy’s 135\textsuperscript{th} and 140\textsuperscript{th} books, covering the years 28-25 and 13-11 respectively:

\begin{quote}
Bellum a M. Crasso adversus Thracas et a Caesare adversus Hispanos gestum refertur, et Salassi, gens Alpina, perdomiti.\textsuperscript{56}
\end{quote}

\textit{The war waged against Thracians by Marcus Crassus and against Spaniards by Caesar is reported, and the subjugation of the Salassi, an Alpine people.}

\begin{quote}
Thraces domiti a L. Pisone, item Cherusci Tencteri Chauci aliaeqe Germanorum trans Rhenum gentes subactae a Druso referuntur.\textsuperscript{57}
\end{quote}

\textit{The subjugation of Thracians by Lucius Piso, and likewise the subjugation by Drusus of Cherusci, Tencteri, Chauci and other German peoples beyond the Rhine are reported.}

Such notices highlight the breadth of Roman military activity in these years (we shall say more about the wars in Spain and against the Salassii presently). Marcus Licinius Crassus, the proconsul of Macedonia, spent 29-27 fighting the Bastarna, a Scythian people who had crossed into Thrace, and was awarded a triumph \textit{ex Thraecia et Geteis} in 27.\textsuperscript{58} Lucius Piso’s suppression of rebellion in Thrace is recorded by Velleius Paterculus and by Dio.\textsuperscript{59} In the years directly following the \textit{Georgics}’ appearance, then, Thrace remained an area in which people were actively resisting Roman rule. This is perhaps as much as can be said given the dearth of evidence, but it is an important observation nonetheless. The details of Velleius’ and Dio’s accounts hint at the brutality of Rome’s treatment of rebellion, something which we can all too easily gloss over when

\begin{footnotes}
\item[56] Livy, \textit{Per.} 135.
\item[57] Livy, \textit{Per.} 140.
\item[58] Dio Cass. 51. 23-27. For Crassus’ triumph in 27 see Degrassi (1954) 110.
\item[59] Vell. Pat. 2. 98. 1-2; Dio Cass. 54. 34. 5-7.
\end{footnotes}
reading Roman accounts of Roman victories: huge loss of life, ravaged lands, enslaved captives. Virgil’s depiction of the “warlike land of Rhesus” can thus take on a highly political dimension.

In Book 3 of the *Georgics* there is a description of Africa and a nomadic African herdsman, *armentarius Afer*:

Quid tibi pastores Libyae, quid pascua uersu
prosequar et raris habitata mapalia tectis?
saepe diem noctemque et totum ex ordine mensem
pascitur itque pecus longa in deserta sine ullis
hospitiis: tantum campi iacet. omnia secum
armentarius Afer agit, tectumque laremque
armaque Amyclaeumque canem Cressamque pharetram;
non secus ac patriis acer Romanus in armis
iniusto sub fasce uiam cum carpit, et hosti
ante exspectatum positis stat in agmine castris.  

What should I go on to tell you in verse of the shepherds and pastures of Libya, its settlements occupied by scattered huts? Often day and night the whole month through the herd grazes and travels in great deserts lacking any shelters: so far the plain extends. The African herdsman carries everything with him, his roof and his hearth, his weapons, his Amyclaean dog and his Cretan quiver – not unlike the fierce Roman carrying his nation’s arms, when he moves along the road under an unfair burden, and having set up camp stands in the line before he is expected by the enemy.

This passage can be divided into three sections: a description of north African nomadism (vv. 339-343), a sketch of the herdsman (vv. 343-345), and a simile comparing him to a Roman soldier (vv. 346-348). The first section emphasizes the harshness of the environment. The herdsman is depicted as carrying all his possessions with him, including a Spartan hunting dog (from Amyclae in Laconia) and a Cretan quiver. While literary imagery does not require an explanation, these particular items are striking. “Unseasonable reminiscences…the Numidian was not likely to be
thus equipped”, Conington commented. Thomas suggests they are “absurd it taken literally”, but imply “a moral strength which contrasts with the miserable conditions of Libya.” And there may be an allusion to Nicander.

I suggest another way of reading this passage is to think of it in terms of contemporary history. In particular, to read the lines with one eye on the imperial contexts of Rome’s long involvement in north Africa, including the sack of Carthage in 146, the colonization plans of C. Gracchus, the wars with Jugurtha, and Caesar’s civil war campaigns in north Africa. Five proconsuls were awarded triumphs *ex Africa* in the years 34-19, including the very last triumph recorded by the *Fasti Triumphales*, awarded to L. Cornelius Balbus against the Garamantes, a Berber people who appear in *Aeneid* 6. Africa was also a vital economic resource for Rome: Cicero had called it one of the three pillars of the Roman grain supply, while Julius Caesar was able to impose a tax of one million litres of olive oil on Tripolitania.

North Africa, at the time of the *Georgics*’ composition, had been a site of Roman imperialism for over a century. In a certain sense, these lines aestheticize an imperial location and an imperial subject. Libya is a land of endless desert, and the herdsman is given literary equipment. The otherness of Africa is rendered less strange by the poetic register of the epithets. The word *Lar*, used of the herdsman’s hearth or fire, further assimilates him into the Roman world. So one way of reading these lines is to see poetry echoing history. As indigenous north African history has been continually subsumed beneath the history of its colonisers (not just Roman, but Arab, French, and Italian, as we shall explore in Chapters 2 and 3), so indigenous experience is depicted here in highly literary, and Roman, terms, by a Roman poet writing for a Roman audience. It is this metropolitan perspective that makes life in north Africa seem so

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61 See Thomas ad G. 3. 345.
62 i.e. Nic. *Ther.* 670: τοῦ δικτυόσωμα τὴν ἀμφικλάθρη ταξικῶν, “calling to his Amyclaean whelps”, suggested by Richter (1957) 304 and noted by Thomas ad G. 3. 345 (where the translation given here is also found).
63 For surveys of Roman political involvements in north Africa from 146 see Lintott (1994) 27-31 and Whittaker (1996).
64 *Fasti Triumphales* (Degrassi (1954) 110) for triumphs *ex Africa* in 34, 21, 19; *Fasti Barberini (= Inscr. It. XIII. 1, 343, 345) for those in 33 and 28; all five are conflated at Ehrenberg & Jones (1976) 34-36. cf. Virg. *Aen.* 6. 794.
65 Cic. *Leg. Man.* 34, where Sicily, Sardinia, and Africa are called *tria frumentaria subsidia rei publicae.*
66 BAfr. 97, with Whittaker (1996) 587.
strange and so inhospitable. The lines become an example of Augustan poetry’s relationship to Augustan imperialism. As those five Africa triumphs were being awarded between 34 and 19, Virgil was writing the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid*, where, on the shield of Aeneas, Octavian is predicted to bring Roman *imperium* beyond the Garamantes and the Indians.⁶⁷

But that is not the whole story, either. The complexity of the poem allows for a further level of interpretation. The African herdsman is depicted in military terms. Far from a passive figure, he is like a Roman legionary on the march. This image can be seen as part of the Romanising language just described, but it can also suggest the violence and militarism of the Roman presence in north Africa. This is a land where Roman armies do march, subjugating local peoples. Perhaps the poem itself, that is, supplies a hint to the reader to consider the imperial context behind the life of the *armentarius Afer*.

In Book 3 the reader is also advised that guard dogs will ensure that one’s property and livestock remain safe:

\[
\text{Nec tibi cura canum fuerit postrema, sed una}
\text{uvelocis Spartan catulos acremque Molossum}
\text{pasce sero pingui. numquam custodibus illis}
\text{nocturnum stabulis furem incursusque luporum}
\text{aut impacatos a tergo horrebis Hiberos.} \quad G. 3. 404-408.
\]

*Don’t let care for dogs be the least of your priorities, but feed the swift Spartan pups and the fierce Molossian together on fattening whey. With those dogs guarding your stalls you’ll never tremble because of a thief in the night, or an attack of wolves or unsubdued Iberians at your back.*

The inclusion of “unsubdued Iberians” in this list of threats to the farm is striking. Most modern commentators (Conington, Page, Mynors, Thomas, Erren) quote Varro who, in a discussion of things to be wary of in choosing the location of a farm, cites the “brigandage of local people”, of

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⁶⁷ *Aen.* 6. 794-795: *...super et Garamantas et Indos | proferet imperium*… (“He [sc. Augustus Caesar] will bring *imperium* beyond both the Garamantes and Indians.”)
a kind he associates with Spain. Page suggests the phrase gives “a local colouring”; Thomas, that *Hiberi* may simply be “generic.”

Of interest is the explanation given by Servius and *D. Serv.* in relation to the passage, both for its stereotyping and its confusion:

**HIBEROS abactores; fere enim Hispani omnes acerrimi abactores sunt. et aliter: Hiberi gens in Ponto; sed magis de Hispanis intellegendum, quorum in latrociniis fama praeponderat.**

IBERIANS cattle thieves; for almost all Spaniards are the most violent cattle thieves.

*Another interpretation: Iberians are a people in Pontus; but it is better to understand this as referring to Spaniards, who had more of a reputation for brigandage.*

The depiction of the *Hiberi* as thieves reflects, the Servian tradition suggests, historical fact. And yet the crude stereotyped explanation offered here is undermined by the ambiguity of *Hiberi*, which can refer to the inhabitants of another Iberia, in what is now Georgia. The area was invaded by P. Canidius Crassus in 37/6, and Iberian kings, so the *Res Gestae* claims, sent ambassadors to Octavian. I read the line as referring to Spain, and not to Georgia, because of the sustained nature of Rome’s military involvement in Spain during the years of the poem’s composition, but the ambiguity remains.

If *Hiberi* is taken to refer to Spaniards, I suggest two, related, interpretations. The lines can be read as comic in tone, with *Hiberos* forming an unexpected punchline in a series of dangers to the farm: “watch out for thieves, wolves, and Spaniards.” An awareness of comic potential

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68 Varro, *Rust.* 1. 16. 2: *refert infesta regio sit necne. multos enim agros egregios colere non expedit propter latrocinia vicinorum, ut in Sardinia quosdam, qui sunt prope *Ôelium, et in Hispania prope Lusitaniam.* ("It matters whether or not the area is dangerous. For many fine lands are not worth farming because of the brigandage of the local people, as with certain lands in Sardinia that are near to *Ôelieia, and in Spain close to Lusitania."")
69 Page (1898) 324.
70 Thomas ad *G.* 3. 408.
71 Serv. (the un-italicised text) and *D. Serv.* (the text in italics) ad *G.* 3. 408.
72 See Cass. Dio 49. 24. 1-2 and *RG* 31. 2 respectively. For background see Braund (1994) 205-217.
73 Varro, *Rust.* 1. 16. 2 could also be cited as evidence that the lines refer to Spain, and not to Georgia. All the commentaries I have consulted save Richter (Conington & Nettleship, Page, Thomas, Mynors, Erren) assume that they refer to Spain.
does not preclude a reading which sees the lines as referring to actual dangers faced by Roman farmers and colonists, of the kind mentioned by Varro. But however the reader judges the tone of the passage, its highly-politicized nature becomes clear once contemporary imperial contexts are borne in mind. As in the example of the *armentarius Afer*, the hint to the reader to consider such contexts comes from the poem itself: the *Hiberi* are “unsubdued”, “unpacified”.

This rebellious characterization cannot be understood without an awareness of the extraordinary history of resistance to Roman rule in the Iberian peninsula, stretching from 218 and the beginning of the second Punic War, through the second century and to, at least, the very end of the first century B.C.74 This history is best exemplified by the town of Numantia (now Garray, near Soria), which was attacked repeatedly in the second century – perhaps by Cato in 195, by Q. Fulvius Nobilior (153), M. Claudius Marcellus (152), Q. Pompeius (140), Popillius Laenas (139-138), and Hostilius Mancinus (137), before finally falling to Scipio Aemilianus.75 The city’s final defeat drew from Appian a eulogy for its citizens, who records that Scipio took fifty captives for his triumph, sold the rest, and razed the city to the ground.76

In Virgil’s time, too, Spain provoked Rome into action. Triumphs were awarded for victories in Spain in 36, 34, 33, 28, and 26.77 The Cantabrian and Asturian war, against the peoples of north-western Spain whose names survive in two provinces of the Spanish state, prompted Octavian to re-open the doors of the Temple of Janus and proceed to Spain in order to personally direct the war there in 26.78 Gruen highlights the propaganda value of the campaign,

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74 The main extant source for this history is App. *Hisp.*, with Cass. Dio 53-54 for the wars and rebellions of the 20s; for a succinct narrative account see Richardson (1996).
75 Appian’s account does not put Cato at Numantia, we have only a fragment of a speech (= fr. 17 Malcovati = Gell. 16. 1) apparently given by Cato *Numantiae apud equites* (“at Numantia to the knights”). For the actions of Nobilior, Marcellus, Pompeius, Popillius, and Mancinus see App. *Hisp.* 46, 50. 211-215, 76-78, 79, and 80 respectively. For Scipio’s siege see App. *Hisp.* 84-98, and note the way Scipio’s honorific military titles *Africanus* and *Numantinus* reflect another aspect of the relationship between Roman geography and imperial politics. References to Appian throughout refer to the Teubner editions of Viereck, Roos, & Gabba (1962) and Mendelssohn & Viereck (1905). For more on Appian’s Iberian history see Richardson (2000).
77 *Fasti Triumphales* (Degrassi (1954) 109-110) for triumphs in 36, 34, and 26; *Fasti Barberini* (= Inscr. It. XIII. 1, 343, 345) for 33 (two triumphs to two separate commanders) and 28: all six are conflated at Ehrenberg & Jones (1976) 34-35.
which formed the concluding part of Octavian’s autobiography.\textsuperscript{79} But Octavian’s efforts did not pacify the region, and we hear of further rebellions in 24, 22, 19 and 16.\textsuperscript{80} Of particular note are the actions of L. Aemilius, the governor of Spain, in response to further rebellion of the \textit{Cantabri} and \textit{Astures} immediately after Octavian had departed the province. Dio records that in revenge for the murder of Roman hostages, Aemilius pillaged the countryside, razed forts, and cut off the hands of captives.\textsuperscript{81} This history of Iberia in response to Roman rule is, I argue, an extremely important context for the reader who comes across \textit{impacati Hiberi} among the many dangers to the farm. Rather than following uncritically the metropolitan viewpoint preserved in the exegetical tradition, which associates the \textit{Hiberi} only with cattle-theft, the lines can instead prompt us to consider those who resisted, rather than those who exercised, Roman power in Europe.

Lastly, I move to the setting of the plague in Book 3, where Virgil takes several lines to establish the areas affected and impress on the reader the gravity of the event:

\begin{quote}
\textit{tum sciat, aërias Alpis et Norica si quis}
\textit{castella in tumulis et Iapydis arua Timavi}
\textit{nunc quoque post tanto uideat, desertaque regna}
\textit{pastorum et longe saltus lateque uacantis.}
\end{quote}

\textit{G. 3. 474-477.}

\textit{Should anyone see even now, so long afterwards, the lofty Alps, the hilltop garrisons of Noricum and the fields by the Iapydian Timavus, the deserted kingdoms of shepherds and the woodlands empty far and wide, then they would know.}

We are in an area which radiates out from modern Trieste: the Alps and north-east Italy, southern Austria, Slovenia, and north-west Croatia. As Foster notes, “Virgil’s plague may have owed more to Lucretius 6 than to unvarnished historical fact, but the hostility to Rome of the peoples in the area where it is set certainly is historical.”\textsuperscript{82} It should be noted that, at the time of the \textit{Georgics’}

\textsuperscript{79} Suet. \textit{Aug.} 85. 1, with Gruen (1996) 164.

\textsuperscript{80} Dio Cass. 53. 29. 1-2, 54. 5. 1-3, 54. 11. 2-5, 54. 20. 3.

\textsuperscript{81} Dio Cass. 53. 29. 1-2.

\textsuperscript{82} Foster (1988) 34.
composition, this area was not an inert and willing partner in Roman politics, and that the historical record, slim as it may be, offers evidence of resistance to Roman rule. Again it is Appian who provides the relevant information: Octavian’s campaigns against numerous peoples in Illyricum 35-33, for which he claimed the first of his three triumphs in 29, as well as the resistance of the Salassi and the Iapydes.

Those who gave him the most trouble were the Salassi, the transalpine Iapydes, the Segestani, the Dalmatians, the Daesitiatae, and the Pannonians, far distant from the Salassi, who occupy the higher Alpine mountains, difficult of access, the paths being narrow and hard to climb. For this reason they had not only preserved their independence, but had levied tolls on those who passed through their country.

According to Appian (III. 52-53) the Iapydes repelled the Romans twice in twenty years, overran Aquileia (near modern Trieste) and attacked the Roman colony of Tergestus, before Octavian’s army defeated them.

Iapydes do appear in the Georgics in connection with the River Timavus, not so the Salassi. Nevertheless, the Salassi’s Alpine homeland does, both in the lines quoted above and as one of the threats to a Rome weakened by civil war: insolitis tremuerunt motibus Alpes (G. 1. 475). They controlled the Little and Great St. Bernard Passes in the western Alps and imposed tolls on travellers; they also worked local gold mines which the Romans took over once the Salassi had been expelled from the area. They were subject to three Roman campaigns in ten years, led by C. Antistius Vetus, by Messalla Corvinus, and finally by Terentius Varro in 25, who imposed a tribute and sold captives into slavery. The best of their land became the new foundation of Augusta Praetoria, now Aosta. The Alps continued to give trouble, and

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83 App. Ill. 16-28, Dio Cass. 49. 36-37 (Octavian in Illyricum); Dio Cass. 51. 21. 5 (Octavian’s triumph). Dio (49. 36. 1) notes that Octavian’s campaign in Illyricum was unpremeditated, and designed to keep his soldiers practised.
84 App. Ill. 17. 49 (The translation = White (1912) 81).
85 “The Alps shook with strange disturbances.”
86 On the Salassi see Strabo 2. 6. 7. (= 205-206 C) and OCD, s.v.
87 App. Ill. 17. 50-51 (Vetus and Messalla Corvinus), Dio Cass. 53. 25. 1-5. For a brief summary of Roman military activity in the Alps in this period see Cooley (2009) 222-223.
88 Dio Cass. 53. 25. 1-5.
occasioned the joint campaign of Tiberius and Drusus in 15/14 against peoples in Raetia and Noricum:⁸⁹ eventual Roman dominance was emphatically advertised by a monument at what is now La Turbie above Monte Carlo, set up in 7/6, listing all the conquered tribes by name, a list recorded by Pliny the Elder.⁹⁰ So we can find evidence that across the whole Alpine region there were people actively resisting Roman rule in the final decades of the first century B.C., something which provides historical context for the location of the plague described in the poem, and which introduces an unsettling ambiguity into the phrase *deserta regna pastorum*: ostensibly a countryside laid low by a devastating animal plague but also, for the historically-minded reader, evocative of the relentless progress of Roman imperialism, its targets, and histories of resistance which we can only glimpse.

We can thus see that the literary geography of the *Georgics* is multi-faceted. It evokes the world but also engages with a variety of influences from Greek and Latin literature. It is a confident act of translation, centring the Mediterranean world on Italy and, by extension, on Rome; this translation echoes and expresses the political shift which saw Rome become the major power in that world. Yet by appreciating this geography only for its literary, aesthetic, or descriptive qualities, the reader can lose sight of important political contexts, without which our understanding of the poem is greatly impoverished. We know barely anything about the peoples described above: their names, political organisation, and culture remain unclear, our only information in most cases is that recorded from a Roman point of view. Yet for the attentive reader, the *Georgics* maps out not just the triumphalist history of Rome, but also the places and peoples caught in its wake.

**The World's Bounty**

The growth of Roman power in the Mediterranean in the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C. had a profound impact on the Roman economy. Of the period 133-31, Nicolet writes of “the establishment of a whole new map of production, consumption and exchange”, as Rome’s economic influence

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⁸⁹ Dio Cass. 54. 22. 1-5, Strabo 4. 6. 9 (= 206 C).
increased in concert with its political influence. Harris identifies some salient features of this development, including the financial gains of foreign wars, the influx of vast amounts of tax revenue to Rome, and the increased presence of Roman and Italian landowners in the provinces. I cannot hope to examine this complex process in detail, but can nevertheless highlight some of the evidence. This includes the abolition of the *tributum*, a direct tax on the land of Roman citizens, in 167 after the end of the Macedonian wars, the law of C. Gracchus which gave *publicani* the right to bid for contracts to collect the tax of the province of Asia, evidence for the manufacture and export of Italian goods all over the Mediterranean – what Potter calls “an extraordinary boom in the export market of later Republican Italy” – as well as epigraphic evidence for the presence of Italian merchants at Alexandria and at Delos in the late second century. Delos in the late-second and early-first century was a major hub for the Mediterranean slave trade, and a place where Italian businessmen were conspicuous and successful. Rome’s wars created an abundance of new slaves for this market and catered for the slave economy of Roman Italy.

In tandem with this Mediterranean context, we need to bear in mind that Rome was part of a global network of trade, whose workings can only be faintly discerned. It was apparently only in the late second century that Ptolemaic Egypt gained knowledge of the monsoon winds,

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Nicolet (1994) 600. Harris (2011) 257-287. Harris identifies some salient features of this development, including the financial gains of foreign wars, the influx of vast amounts of tax revenue to Rome, and the increased presence of Roman and Italian landowners in the provinces. I cannot hope to examine this complex process in detail, but can nevertheless highlight some of the evidence. This includes the abolition of the *tributum*, a direct tax on the land of Roman citizens, in 167 after the end of the Macedonian wars, the law of C. Gracchus which gave *publicani* the right to bid for contracts to collect the tax of the province of Asia, evidence for the manufacture and export of Italian goods all over the Mediterranean – what Potter calls “an extraordinary boom in the export market of later Republican Italy” – as well as epigraphic evidence for the presence of Italian merchants at Alexandria and at Delos in the late second century. Delos in the late-second and early-first century was a major hub for the Mediterranean slave trade, and a place where Italian businessmen were conspicuous and successful. Rome’s wars created an abundance of new slaves for this market and catered for the slave economy of Roman Italy.

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the winds which blow from the southwest across the Arabian sea in summer and then from the northeast in winter, which allowed Greek ships to reach the west coast of India and then return safely to Egypt.\(^{101}\) By the late first century B.C., and after Rome’s annexation of the Ptolemaic kingdom, Strabo reports that 120 ships were making the trip from Myos Hormos in Egypt to India.\(^{102}\) This trading network, incorporating the east coast of Africa, the Arabian Sea and the coasts of Pakistan and India, is revealed to us by a document of the first century A.D., the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*. This source, dating between A.D. 40 and 70, is a guide for traders written by an Egyptian Greek, which gives information on ports and goods along the network just described, from Egypt to Sri Lanka and as far as the mouth of the Ganges. Casson notes the belatedness of Greek and Roman sailors’ arrival into what was a centuries-old network of Indian Ocean trade, and that the *Periplus* alludes to a trade in commodities, not luxury goods, in which Roman traders played little part: in contrast to the Mediterranean, this was a world in which Rome was by no means a major player.\(^{103}\)

As well as this ocean network there was the trade over land between China and Europe, via Bactria, Parthia, and Mesopotamia.\(^{104}\) The impetus for this trade was the expansive foreign policy of Han China under Emperor Wu in the final two decades of the second century B.C. The Han court began sending delegations to Parthia, Rome, Mesopotamia, and India along a network that included what became known as the Silk Roads: from western China along either side of the Tarim basin, through central Asia to Parthia and the Mediterranean.\(^{105}\) And while most of the evidence we have for this system of global trade dates to the decades and centuries after the composition of the *Georgics*, late-Republican Rome was by no means isolated from this world. In fact, as we shall see, the *Georgics* evokes Asia and Asian trade on a number of occasions. For the moment, it is sufficient to note that, as Fitzpatrick argues,\(^{106}\) the Roman economy should not

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\(^{101}\) Strabo 2. 3. 4 (= 98-99 C), on the pioneering voyages of Eudoxus of Cyzicus to India from Egypt. See Casson (1989) 283-284 for further discussion of these monsoon winds.

\(^{102}\) Strabo 2. 5. 12 (118 C), what Casson (1989: 96) assumes was an annual voyage, whereas previously the number had been not more than 20 (Strabo 17. 13 (798 C)).


\(^{105}\) Chuanxi (2012) 63-65.

be seen as residing within a hermetically-sealed Mediterranean world, but rather as one part of a much larger Eurasian and African system of trade.

As part of the world it presents to the reader, the *Georgics* depicts a range of produce from across the *orbis terrarum*. While bearing in mind the literary and imaginative elements of this geography – taking into account, that is, Virgil’s poetic license – we can still see it, I think, as reflective of Rome’s relationship with the wider world, and, with the help of some context, as evocative of Roman economic imperialism. Many plants and products are associated with different places. There are ropes (*retinacula*) from Ameria in southern Etruria (*G*. 1. 265), oysters from Abydos at the entrance to the Hellespont (*G*. 1. 207), lentils from Pelusium\(^{107}\) at the eastern edge of the Nile delta (*G*. 1. 228), and slingshots from the Balearic islands (*G*. 1. 309). There are olives from Mt. Taburnus near Beneventum (*G*. 2. 38), pears from Crustumérium (north of Rome) and Syria\(^{108}\) (*G*. 2. 88), boxwood from Mt. Cytorius in Pontus (*G*. 2. 437-438), Jupiter’s acorns from Chaonia in Epirus (*G*. 2. 67), myrtle from Paphos (*G*. 2. 64), lumber from the Caucasus (*G*. 2. 440), and yew bows from Palestine (*G*. 2. 448). There is bronze from Corinth (*G*. 2. 464), dye from Assyria (*G*. 2. 465) and Tyre (*G*. 2. 506), as well as a catalogue of wines from Thasos, Lesbos, and Rhodes in the Aegean, Egypt, Pontus, and Italy (*G*. 2. 89-108). And there are palms from Idumæa in Judea (*G*. 3. 12), fleeces from Miletus (*G*. 3. 404-405, 4. 334) and marble from Paros (*G*. 3. 34). Some of these toponyms have literary or cultural associations: Chaonian acorns and Paphian myrtle, for instance, recall the oracle of Jupiter at Dodona in Epirus and Venus respectively.\(^{109}\) Others, like Ituraean bows and Idumean palms, have, as we shall we presently, political contexts. We know something of the reputation of Corinthian bronzeware and Parian marble as luxury products in the Roman world.\(^{110}\) And some of the items mentioned, like the wines, olives, and pears, perhaps reflect real origins of produce consumed in Rome in the late

\(^{107}\) Van Minnen (1991) notes that, as well as lentils, beer, linen, salt, and fish are all called “Pelusian” by various classical Latin authors. He argues (pp. 168-169) that Pelusium’s status as a major export hub for Egyptian products lies behind this.

\(^{108}\) Or perhaps Tarentum. *Syrius* can mean “Syrian” (*OLD* s.v. *Syrius*\(^1\)), but cf. Columella, *Rust*. 5. 10. 18 for a possible Tarentine provenance: …*[pira] Tarentina, quae Syria dicuntur…* (“…Tarentine pears, which are called ‘Syrian’…”).


\(^{110}\) See Plin. *HN*. 34. 6-12 and *HN*. 36. 14 respectively.
first century. This list reflects, therefore, the movement of goods from across the Mediterranean world to Rome, and can be seen, like the poem’s literary geography, to position Rome at the centre of that world.

On two occasions we find a passage which explicitly references products and their places of origin. The first is at G. 1. 56-59:

…nonne uides, croceos ut Tmolus odores,
India mittit ebur, molles sua tura Sabaei,
at Chalybes nudi ferrum uirosque Pontus

Don’t you see how Tmolus exports fragrant saffron, India ivory, the effeminate Sabaeans their frankincense, but the naked Chalybes export iron, Pontus rank castor, and Epirus the palms for Elean mares?

These lines are used to illustrate regional variety, that different places produce different crops. The instruction to look (nonne uides) is a familiar didactic trope found in Aratus and Lucretius, but it is also a stimulus to the reader to engage with the poem’s imaginative geography (smells, good and bad, heighten the sensory aspect of these lines). There are literary and cultural references we can discern: the Chalybes, a people of the south-eastern coast of the Black Sea, appear in literature as archetypal forgers of iron; the palms of Epirus are prizes for horses at Olympia in Elis. Yet there are political connotations here too, some of which we can recover. India in Augustan poetry and in the Georgics can evoke Alexander the Great, and, as part of the hyperbolic rhetoric of Roman imperialism, the fiction of Octavian’s world power. I note also the vagueness of the toponym, covering a vast area and one associated primarily with luxury

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111 Aratus, Phaen. 733, Lucr. 2. 196, 2. 207, 2. 263 etc.
113 Elis is associated with horses in Homer (Od. 4. 635, 21. 347), but Mynors ad loc. reads the phrase as an enallage for Eliadas equarum palmas, “prizes to be won at Olympia in Elis by mares.”
114 See the section “Roman Power”, below.
produce and trade. Further context can be gleaned from Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History*, a source which, although a century younger than the *Georgics*, still provides useful information on some of the poem’s products. Pliny (*HN* 32. 26-31) discusses castor at length, a liquid extracted from the inguinal glands of the beaver, which was believed to be efficacious for a variety of ailments including vertigo and epilepsy. This foul-smelling substance, we are told, is exported from Pontus, on the southern shoreline of the Black Sea, a place which for Roman readers may have brought to mind Mithradates VI (120-63), the famous enemy of Rome.

The latent politics of these lines is most clearly apparent in the case of the Sabaeans, the people of southern Arabia who were known to the Romans as producers of myrrh and frankincense. Pliny (*HN* 12. 51-65) describes the frankincense-producing district of the Sabaeans, Sariba, and describes the route the finished product took to reach the Mediterranean. In spite of Roman military operations in Arabia, however, the appearance of the plant which produced frankincense was still a mystery. Pliny mentions explicitly only the invasion of C. Caesar, Octavian’s grandson, in A.D. 1, but we should note that, in 26/25, Aelius Gallus led a campaign from Egypt which besieged Mariba (modern Mar’ib, Yemen) but which ended in disaster due, in part, to the effect of desert conditions on the Roman army. Cooley discusses the debate surrounding the motives of this campaign, which may well have been economic. Within a few years of the *Georgics*’ appearance, then, the homeland of the *Sabaei* was directly attacked by a Roman army. In the poem they are soft (*molles*), a word which conjures up stereotypes with a

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116 On the *Natural History* see Murphy (2004).
117 For a brief introduction to Mithradates VI, see *OCD* s.v. “Mithradates”.
118 Plin. *HN* 12. 55: *ne arboris ipsius quae sit facies constat. res in Arabia gessimus et Romana arma in magnum partem eius penetravere, Gaius etiam Caesar Augusti filius inde gloriam petuit, nec tamen ab ullo, quod equidem sciam, Latino arborum earum tradita est facies.* (“Nor is it known what the tree itself looks like. We have had dealings in Arabia and Roman arms have penetrated a great part of it. Gaius Caesar, the son of Augustus, even sought distinction there, and still, as far as I know, the appearance of these trees has not been related by any Latin writer.”) For discussion see Murphy (2004) 99-105.
120 Cooley (2009) 227: “It may have been motivated by simple imperialism, or by the wish to gain control of a region noted for its wealth derived from trade in spices, and believed to contain quantities of gems, gold, and silver […] Alternatively, it may have been part of a larger strategy, whereby Augustus desired to influence the Parthian succession…”
long history in Western depictions of the non-European world: weakness, effeminacy, passivity. By juxtaposing this description with the subsequent Roman invasion, we can begin to see the cultural imperialism of the Augustan age at work: a people described as weak and passive in poetry are simultaneously a target for political control.

In Book 2 the poem turns to the variety of trees in the world, and we read the following lines:

aspice et extremis domitum cultoribus orbem
Eoasque domos Arabum pictosque Gelonos:
diuisae arboribus patriae. sola India nigrum
fert hebenum, solis est turea uirga Sabaeis.
quid tibi odorato referam sudantia ligno
balsamaque et bacas semper frondentis acanthi?
quid nemora Aethiopum molli canentia lana,
uelleaque ut foliis depectant tenuia Seres?

G. 2. 114-121.

Look also at the world conquered by cultivators at the world’s end, the eastern homes of Arabs and the painted Geloni: countries differ in their trees. Only India yields black ebony, the sprig of frankincense is the Sabaeans’ alone. What should I tell you of balsam oozing from fragrant wood, and the fruit of the ever-flowering acanthus? What of the woods of the Ethiopians, white with soft wool, and how the Seres comb soft fleeces from leaves?

The first thing to note is the geographic range of these lines: Scythia, Arabia, India, Ethiopia, China. There are several continuities with the first example. The emphasis on sight (aspice) kindles the reader’s geographic imagination, as do the descriptions of foreign peoples. There are literary models to be borne in mind, but the reader might pause to consider how the language of v. 114, with its description of a conquered world, relates to the poem’s imperial rhetoric. For

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121 Stereotypes examined by Said (1978).
122 See Theophr. Hist. pl. 4. 1. 5 – 4. 11. 13 with Mynors ad G. 2. 109-135.
the moment, we can again uncover some instructive political contexts.

Virgil cites India as the sole producer of ebony (*hebenum*), something which Pliny tells us (*HN* 12. 20) was first seen in Rome at the triumph of Pompey in 61. Balsam, we learn, was native only to a small area of Judea near Jericho.\(^{123}\) What is more, Pliny describes the plant in explicitly political terms. During the First Jewish Revolt (A.D. 66-70), Jews sabotaged balsam plantations in resistance to Roman rule: now (i.e. when Pliny is writing) the plant is a subject of Rome, just like the Jewish population in Judea:

\[
\text{ostendere arborum}^{124} \text{ hanc urbi Imperatores Vespasiani, clarumque dictu, a Pompeio Magno in triumpho arbores quoque duximus. servit nunc haec ac tributa pendit cum sua gente […] saeviere in eam Iudaei sicut in vitam quoque suam; contra defendere Romani, et dimicatum pro frutice est; seritque nunc eum fiscus, nec umquam fuit numerosior.}^{125}
\]

*Vespasian and Titus showed this tree to the City and, famously, since the triumph of Pompey we have also led trees in triumph. Now it is a subject and pays levies along with its people […] The Jews vented their rage upon it as they did against their own life; but the Romans defended it, and there was fighting over a plant. Now the Treasury cultivates it, and it has never been more abundant.*

We can add some further context: Pompey stopping in the balsam-producing area of Judaea before the capture of Jerusalem in 63,\(^{126}\) and Crassus’ stripping of the gold from the Temple in advance of his Parthian expedition.\(^{127}\) Just like frankincense, therefore, balsam was, at the time

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\(^{124}\) A textual crux. The major manuscripts have *arbutum*, which is printed but obelized in Ernout’s edition (see Ernout: 1949). Mayhoff, whose text I print here, has *arborum*, his own conjecture (marked *ego* in the critical apparatus – see Mayhoff (1875) 307), but I have not been able to find any other instances in Latin of *arborum* as accusative singular. In spite of this difficulty, it is clear from the context of the passage that it is balsam to which Pliny refers.

\(^{125}\) Plin *HN* 12. 111, 113. Note that at *HN* 12. 118 Pliny gives information on what seems to have been an economic benefit resulting from Rome’s (re-)conquest of Judea between 66 and 70: within five years of the conquest balsam shoots sold for 800,000 sesterces. See McLaughlin (2014) 46-49.


\(^{127}\) Joseph. *BJ* 1. 179.
of the *Georgics*’ composition, uniquely associated with an area subject to contemporary Roman imperialism.

Two further toponyms in the *Georgics* from the same region are also relevant. The Ituraeans were bedouin Arabs who fought with Caesar in north Africa and provided the bodyguard of archers which protected Antony in Rome in 43, described in Cicero’s attack as “the most barbaric of all peoples”. But we also have epigraphic evidence for the suppression of the Ituraeans in A. D. 6. Palms from Idumaea in southern Judea – Pliny notes the fame of Judean palms – recall the birthplace of Herod the Great, who had supported Antony but who, after Actium, met and was reconciled with Octavian at Rhodes. Octavian was returning from Egypt to Italy for the first time since the battle, and on his return Virgil is said to have read him the poem at Atella: all of which gives *Idumaeas palmas* (G. 3. 12) a striking contemporary relevance. The appearance of these palms amidst the triumphal imagery which opens *Georgics* 3 can perhaps be seen to evoke this settlement as another aspect of Octavian’s comprehensive victory, especially when it is noted that the dedication of a palm is part of the triumphal formula found on the *Fasti Barberini*. For the poem’s first Roman readers, then, the topography of Judea may have evoked Roman military success.

Ethiopia in ancient geography implied (as best we can tell) not modern Ethiopia, but rather the area of the upper Nile in what is now northern Sudan. As early as the *Odyssey*, it is a land characterised by its farness. The *Georgics* tells us of its “woods white with soft wool”.

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which is to say, its cotton plants, noted also by Pliny (HN 13. 90). Does this imply that Ethiopian cotton was to be found in late-Republican Italy? We cannot say, but the poem invites such speculation. And we can again contrast this descriptive picture of the Ethiopians’ cotton groves with political reality. A trilingual stele set up by Cornelius Gallus in 29 proclaims his defeat of rebellions in the Nile Delta and in the Thebaid, his unprecedented progress upriver, and his reception of ambassadors from Ethiopia.\footnote{134} In 25/24 P. Petronius suppressed an Ethiopian revolt, attacked and captured the royal residence of Napata, and sent one thousand prisoners to Octavian in Rome.\footnote{135} So in the years after the Georgics’ composition, Ethiopia was not just a picturesque and far-off destination, but a site of Roman military action.

The most remote ethnonym in the Georgics is Seres, a derivation from the Chinese suu and meaning “silk people”.\footnote{136} As noted above, the silk trade from China to the West seems to begin in earnest only upon the initiative of the Han court at the end of the second century B.C. It is in Augustan poetry that silk first begins to appear in Roman literature: Seres is first here (G. 2. 121) but Horace in the Epodes writes of silk cushions, and there are later instances in the Odes, in Propertius, and in Ovid.\footnote{137} It has been argued that Seres must refer, not to Chinese, but to intermediary peoples or traders along the Silk Road.\footnote{138} Whatever the knowledge of China at Rome in the 30s (and it may well have been greater than we can tell), Seres is an inherently imaginative word, which seems to me to connote the makers, rather than the traders, of silk. This is reinforced by the poem’s imagining of the process of silk production as one of combing from trees. The Seres thus evoke the most remote place in the Georgics’ geography, a people at the furthest extremes of the orbis terrarum who provide a unique product to Rome. Unlike Arabia, Judaea, and Ethiopia, eastern Asia was far beyond the range of Roman military intervention; unlike south Asia, eastern Asia did not have associations with Alexander the Great. The Seres

\footnote{134} ILS 8995 = CIL 3. 14147, Strabo 17. 1. 53 (819 C); Gruen (1996) 148. Note that Gallus (RE 164 s.v. “Cornelius” and OCD s.v. “Cornelius, Gallus”) is a figure associated with Virgil, and that the dating of the stele is contemporary with the completion of the Georgics.

\footnote{135} Strabo 17. 1. 54 (820-821 C), RG 26. 5, Dio Cass. 54. 5. 4; Gruen (1996) 149-150.

\footnote{136} RE II A. 2 (1923) 1678, Ferguson (1978) 582.

\footnote{137} Sericus (adj.), “silken” (OLD s.v. 1b, 2) = Hor. Epod. 8. 15, Prop. 1. 14. 22, 4. 8. 23; Seres = Hor. Carm. 1. 12. 56, 3. 29. 27, 4. 15. 23, Ov. Am. 1. 14. 6.

\footnote{138} Ferguson (1978) 583.
and their unique product, rather, evoke the location in the *Georgics* farthest from Rome, a useful reminder of the limits of Roman imperialism, and of Rome’s place within a larger world beyond the Mediterranean.

The *Georgics*, then, has what might called be an economic geography, in which places in the world are evoked with reference to certain plants and products. On two occasions, when the poem considers regional variation of crops and of trees, this economic geography comes into particular focus. The world is again brought to the reader. The visual emphasis in both passages, coupled with the political contexts we can discern for some of the items, suggests an analogous process. The Roman triumph brought people, products, and even geography to the city, allowing spectators to see the world and Rome’s dominant position within it. Beard writes of the triumph as “a microcosm of the very processes of imperial expansion”,\textsuperscript{139} while Murphy highlights its “imperial geography”:\textsuperscript{140}

The Roman triumph, which is usually thought of in ceremonial and religious terms, as a way of marking the return to the city of Rome of a victorious commander and his army, was also an instrument for educating the Roman people about the lands and nations newly added to its dominion. In the triumph, the fringes of the Roman world were exhibited to the centre, not just plundered as coin, works of art, and other treasures, but also as river-gods from the conquered territory, great maps on placards, images of mountains and cities, trains of handsome captives, exotic animals and plants never seen before in Italy.\textsuperscript{141}

This is, I suggest, very similar to what the *Georgics* does in bringing the peoples, products, and geography of the world to the reader, in a way which advertises Roman mastery of that world, or which, at the very least, asserts a confident Rome-centric worldview. The triumph appears in the poem at *G.* 1. 504 and at 2. 148, when sacrificial animals bathed in the river

\textsuperscript{139} Beard (2007) 160.
\textsuperscript{140} Murphy (2004) 155.
\textsuperscript{141} Murphy (2004) 23.
Clitumnus are pictured at the head of a triumphal procession. But the opening of Book 3, as we have seen, is also full of triumphal imagery: in what is perhaps the most imperialistic moment in the poem, Rome’s abject and defeated enemies appear on the temple doors (G. 3. 26-33). Ebony (G. 2. 117) can recall the triumph of Pompey, when trees appeared in a triumphal procession for the first time;\(^{142}\) the Idumean palms (G. 3. 12) and balsam (G. 2. 118-119) can remind us of the brutality of Roman imperialism in Judea, most famously represented by the reliefs on the Arch of Titus: Jewish captives, their holy objects, and even the River Jordan brought in humiliation to Rome.\(^{143}\)

This geographic aspect of the triumph is echoed by the *Georgics*’ depiction of defeated or resistive rivers and mountains: Mt. Niphates in Armenia (G. 3. 30), the flooded Nile (G. 3. 28-29), and the Euphrates along which Octavian thunders at the poem’s end (G. 4. 561).\(^{144}\) We think back to G. 2. 114, when the reader is asked to look at a conquered world (albeit a world conquered by farmers), and at Arabian houses and “painted” Geloni. Whereas the *Georgics* only imagines Rome’s defeated global enemies, the triumph had historically brought them to the city itself. To take one example of how literary depiction and political reality intersect, Dacians, who appear threateningly crossing the Danube at G. 2. 497, fought in mass combat in Rome in 29, the year in which we assume the *Georgics* was completed.\(^{145}\) One can perhaps imagine the first Roman readers of the *Georgics* reading of this Dacian threat and then going to view Dacian prisoners fighting in the city.

To conclude this section I note three tensions for the reader to consider. Firstly, between the explicit didactic theme – the harsh rural life of “unskilled country people” (*ignaros agrestis*, G. 1. 41) – and this range of (often exotic) produce from all over the world; between the small-scale

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\(^{142}\) Plin. *HN* 12. 111.

\(^{143}\) Joseph. *BJ* 7. 132-162, esp. 138-149 on the floats which showed the crowds scenes from the war. cf. Murphy (2004) 156. For an overview of the Arch, see Claridge (2010) 121-123.

\(^{144}\) See Murphy (2004) 138-154 for the “ideological weight” rivers and mountains could bear in Roman literature.

\(^{145}\) Dio Cass. 51. 22. 6. Cf. G. 2. 497: *aut coniurato descendens Dacus ab Histro* (“Or a Dacian coming down from the conspiratorial Danube...”).
life of the farmer and a vast international network of trade.\textsuperscript{146} The poem makes such tension explicit at certain points, in particular at the end of Book 2 (vv. 458-540), where luxurious modernity is contrasted with the blessings of country life. Yet any sense of the condemnation of “luxury” we might detect in that passage must take account of the intensely cosmopolitan world which is continually evoked in the poem. Secondly, despite this economic geography the realities of economic life are only hinted at in the poem. Unlike the works of Cato and Varro, we get no discussion of the villa, one of the main units of Roman economic life.\textsuperscript{147} This can partly be explained, perhaps, by the extraordinarily political nature of property in the era of the triumviral proscriptions, when a luxury property could be either a fatal liability or a means of personal enrichment.\textsuperscript{148} And while many parts of the poem make clear the harsh reality of agricultural life, the slave basis of Roman agriculture is alluded to only obliquely, through a workforce most likely drawn from free and unfree labour.\textsuperscript{149} Lastly, there is the tension between the poem’s imaginative curiosity about the orbis terrarum and its political Roman rhetoric. We can again note a centripetal dynamic. The produce of the world is displayed for the reader, and yet, like the triumph, the final destination of many of the items is Rome, creating a further element to the poem’s Rome-centric worldview. The challenge for the reader is then, as Fitzpatrick suggests,\textsuperscript{150} to try to provincialize Rome, to see it not as the Mediterranean world power so often suggested by the expansive political rhetoric of Augustan poetry, but rather as one part of a much wider, more complex, world.

\textsuperscript{146} Cf. the much more rudimentary and practical range of products advocated for farm work and for recipes in Cato’s De Agricultura, chief among them the versatile amarca, or olive-lee: Cato. Agr. 36, 46, 49, 93, 96–99.

\textsuperscript{147} Cato, Agr. 1. 1. 4., 2. 1. 1. 3. 2; Varro, Rust. 1. 2. 14, 2. pr. 2-3. See Potter (1987) 94-124 and Lomas (2014) 249-253 on the villa in the Italian economy, and for a late-Republican example – the villa at Settefinestre – see Carandini et al. (1985).

\textsuperscript{148} See App. B Civ. 4. 5. 19-20 on a nice house in town or country being enough to get someone proscribed, and B Civ. 4. 35. 147 on soldiers’ unscrupulous and illegal behaviour.

\textsuperscript{149} Spurr (1986) 175 n. 46. The Georgics’ workforce includes the harvester (messor G. 1. 316), the shepherd (pastor G. 3 402), and the pruner (putator G. 2. 28), the digger (fossor G. 2. 264), the vineyard worker (vinitor G. 2. 417), and the mule-driver (agitator G. 1. 273).

\textsuperscript{150} Fitzpatrick (2011) 47.
Roman Power

I spoke above of the *orbis terrarum*, the Latin phrase used to denote the world as it was known to the ancient Mediterranean, a world encompassing in its fullest extent Europe, north Africa, and Asia. It is in the early first century that we begin to find evidence of a theme of some importance to this study of the *Georgics*, namely, the tendency to imagine Roman power as being commensurate with the *orbis terrarum*, a kind of universal rhetoric, what Nicolet calls “an ecumenical conception” of Roman power.\(^{151}\) It appears first in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, is present in Cicero’s speeches, and becomes prominent in Augustan literature.\(^ {152}\) The globe appears on Roman coins of the first century B.C.,\(^ {153}\) and in statues like the colossal male nude now at the Palazzo Spada in Rome. This figure, which has long been thought to represent Pompey, stands beside a palm trunk and holds a globe in its outstretched hand.\(^ {154}\) This idea that Rome’s power embraced the entire inhabited world had, by the Augustan period, become what Vogt calls “a firm component of national identity”, at least for the Roman elite, something we can trace in Livy and in Ovid, and particularly in the *Aeneid’s* image of *imperium sine fine*.\(^ {155}\)

One precedent for such universal power was the campaigns of Alexander the Great, who three hundred years earlier had conquered the *orbis terrarum* and reached Punjab. As Green notes, imitation of Alexander is more easily assumed than proven, and he was by no means an unproblematic model for Roman generals.\(^ {156}\) Nevertheless, it seems clear that Pompey cultivated the comparison.\(^ {157}\) The only evidence we have for Caesar’s thoughts on Alexander is the story of

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\(^{152}\) *Rhet. Her.* 4. 13. 21-24: …*imperium orbis terrae, cui imperio omnes gentes, reges, nationes partim ui, partim voluuntate consenserunt, cum aut armis aut liberalitate a populo Romano supera ti essent* (“…power over the world, to which all peoples, kings and nations assented, either through force or voluntarily, when they had been conquered by the arms or the munificence of the Roman people.”) Cf. Cic. *Leg. Man.* 53, *Mar.* 22 with further examples at Vogt (1960) 156 n. 13.


\(^{154}\) See Beard (2007) 26-27 for discussion of this statue, which may in fact be authentic.


\(^{156}\) Green (1978) 1, 4-5.

his melancholy reflection on seeing the Macedonian’s statue at Cadiz: while Green is sceptical as to Caesar’s conscious imitation of Alexander, Krebs argues that Alexander and Pompey are models to be outdone in Caesar’s own account of his campaigns in Gaul.\textsuperscript{158} For our purposes it is important that Octavian does seem, as Antony had before him,\textsuperscript{159} to have cultivated comparison with the Macedonian general. There is circumstantial evidence like Octavian’s private seal bearing Alexander’s image or the paintings of Alexander placed in the \textit{Forum Augustum}, as well as Octavian’s enormous Mausoleum, which Nicolet argues was designed in conscious imitation of Alexander.\textsuperscript{160}

Where the comparison seems clear, however, and where it links with the idea of universal Roman power, is in the \textit{Res Gestae Diui Augusti}, Octavian’s record of his achievements. The Latin text begins with an explicit notice, that these are the deeds of Augustus, \textit{quibus orbem terrarum imperio populi Romani subiecit}.\textsuperscript{161} The text is also full of geography: fifty-five toponyms and ethnonyms particularly prominent in chapters 26-33, chapters “liberally sprinkled with the exotic names of places and persons, calculated to inspire awe and to evoke the ends of the earth.”\textsuperscript{162} “The \textit{Res Gestae},” writes Nicolet, “asserts from the very first line that there was Roman control of the inhabited world (\textit{orbis terrarum}). And it proves this methodically, without symbolism, by using a series of topographic lists that correspond to precise geographical knowledge….”\textsuperscript{163} Certain parts of the \textit{Res Gestae} can be seen, Cooley argues, to evoke the achievements of Alexander: Octavian’s claim to have conquered from Cadiz to the Elbe (\textit{RG} 26. 2), his restoration of artworks to Asia Minor (\textit{RG} 24. 1), and his reception of ambassadors from India while at Tarraco (now Tarragona), Spain (\textit{RG} 31. 1).\textsuperscript{164} \textit{India}, in particular, is a toponym

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[159]{See Spencer (2002) 24-26, and MacGóraín (2014) 3-9 on the Dionysiac aspect of Antony’s self-fashioning as Alexander, and thus of the complex and potentially problematic nature of Octavian’s subsequent self-fashioning.}
\footnotetext[161]{\textit{RG.} pr., “[Deeds] by which the world was subjected to the power of the Roman people.” I have used the edition of Cooley (2009) throughout.}
\footnotetext[162]{Cooley (2009) 219.}
\footnotetext[163]{Nicolet (1991) 23.}
\footnotetext[164]{Cooley (2009) 36-37, 211, 222. The extant historiographical tradition claims that Alexander had plans, before his death, to campaign in Western Europe as far as the Straits of Gibraltar (\textit{Arr. Anab.} 7. 1. 1-4,}
\end{footnotes}
which may have evoked the achievements of Alexander, and the imagined (if not actual) subservience of the most remote peoples of the *orbis terrarum* to Roman rule.

In the *Georgics* we can trace both a universal conception of Roman power and, perhaps, an implicit comparison between Octavian and Alexander. At the beginning of the poem, Octavian is portrayed as ruler, not just of the *orbis terrarum*, but of the whole natural world:

> tuque adeo, quem mox quae sint habitura deorum concilia incertum est, urbisne inuisere, Caesar, terrarumque uelis curam, et te maximus orbis auctorem frugum tempestatumque potentem accipiat cingens materna tempora myrto;
> an deus immensi uenias maris ac tua nautae numina sola colant, tibi seruiat ultima Thule, teque sibi generum Tethys emat omnibus undis; \( G. 1. 24-31. \)

*And you too, Caesar, since it is unclear which Council of Gods is soon going to receive you, whether you want care of the earth and to watch over the cities, and the great world accepts you as augmenter of crops and lord of the seasons, ringing your brow with your mother’s myrtle; or whether you come as god of the immense ocean and sailors worship your divinity alone, farthest Thule obeys you, and Tethys purchases you for her son-in-law with all the waves…*

In these complex lines, Octavian is imagined deciding as to the realm of his power, whether he will rule the land or the sea or (in lines not quoted here) whether he will become a star in the sky. In lines 26-27 it is the entire world (*maximus orbis*) which may accept him as controller of agriculture and of the seasons: it is a strikingly capacious conception of his power, and one which matches the poet’s theme. In the lines which imagine Octavian’s marine power, “farthest Thule”

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Diod. Sic. 18. 4. 1-6, Curt. 10. 1. 17). According to Arrian (*Anab*. 7. 19. 2, 3. 16. 1) Alexander let the Greek ambassadors who met him at Babylon take back from that city the artworks stolen by Xerxes, and at Susa sent back to Greece the Greek artworks found there. For Alexander’s reception of embassies from Western Europe while on campaign see Diod. Sic. 17. 113. 2 and Arr. *Anab*. 7. 15. 4.
is his subject, a semi-mythical toponym connoting the very north-west of Europe, a place reported by Pytheas,\(^ {165}\) whose location is unclear. The poem thus imagines Octavian’s power as straining at the very limits of the known world.\(^ {166}\)

Further passages in the poem can be seen to link Octavian and Alexander, and to stress Rome’s power. Harrison suggests that the opening lines of the *laudes Italiæ* (G. 2. 136-138) echo Alexander’s career.\(^ {167}\) India, as we shall see presently, is a prominent location in the poem, not least in the image of the defeated *Gangaridae* on the doors of the temple in the proem to Book 3. Furthermore there are two references to the conquest of Asia and its people,\(^ {168}\) as well as the lines which imagine Octavian in the east:

\[
et te, maxime Caesar,
\]

\[
qui nunc extremis Asiae iam uictor in oris
imbellem auertis Romanis arcibus Indum.  
G. 2. 170-172.
\]

*And you, Caesar, greatest of all, who now turn back from the hills of Rome the unwarlike Indian, a victor on the farthest shores of Asia.*

The image is hyperbolic, and can be seen as part of the rhetoric of Octavian’s Actian victory: Rome’s universal ruler went no further east than Egypt and Syria.\(^ {169}\) The poem imagines what in reality did not occur: Octavian’s progress to India in emulation of Alexander. This can also be seen in the poem’s *sphragis*, with its martial image of Octavian on the Euphrates, dispensing Roman rule to willing subjects. Note that Octavian is here given the epithet (*magnus*) which

\(^{165}\) See n. 17 above.

\(^{166}\) An idea explored by Romm (1992) 157-171.

\(^{167}\) Harrison (2008) 233: “These lines outlining the superiority of Italy to the East also present some echoes of the career of Alexander the Great. Bactria (138) had been a key part of Alexander’s conquests, India (138) his final stopping-place, the river Ganges (137) his supposed ultimate destination, while the Hermus (137) as river of Sardis points to that city’s surrender to A. in 334 BCE. This can be closely linked with the young Caesar’s self-presentation as the new Alexander in the years 31-29…”.

\(^{168}\) *G.* 3. 30 *urbes Asiae domitias* (“the conquered cities of Asia”) and (more ambiguous) *G.* 2. 114-115 *aspice et extremis domitum cultoribus orbem | Eoasque domos Arabum pictosque Gelonos* (“Look also at the world conquered by cultivators at the world’s end, the eastern homes of Arabs and the painted Geloni…”).

Catullus gave to Octavian’s adoptive father, which Pompey adopted, and which Plautus first gave in Latin to Alexander: 

170

Haec super aruorum cultu pecorumque canebam  
et super arboribus, Caesar dum magnus ad altum  
fulminat Euphraten bello uictorque uolentis  
per populos dat iura uiamque adfectat Olympo.  

These things I was singing about the care of fields and livestock and trees, while great  
Caesar thundered by the deep Euphrates, and, a victor in war, gave laws to suppliant peoples, and sought a path to Olympus.

The geography of the Georgics thus imagines Roman power in universal terms, and can, furthermore, be seen to construct an implicit comparison between Octavian and Alexander. This is the poem’s geography at its most hyperbolic and its most imperial. However to see how this picture of the world is threatened and then, paradoxically, brought to its fullest extent, we need to examine the Georgics’ geography of civil war.

The end of Georgics 1 contains a famous depiction of the evils of civil war, as Virgil’s discourse on weather signs shifts into a history of recent internecine conflict. Some future farmer is imagined unearthing the bones of dead combatants (G. 1. 493-497). In stark contrast to the confident imperial rhetoric just discussed, the Roman world is under threat from external enemies, as war seems to embrace the entire orbis terrarum:

hinc mouet Euphrates, illinc Germania bellum;  
uitcae ruptis inter se legibus urbes  
arma ferunt; saeuit toto Mars impius orbe…

G. 1. 509-511.

170 Catull. 11. 10 (a link made by Krebs (2006) 128), Plut. Vit. Pomp. 13. 3-5. Plaut. Mostell. 775 is, at least, the earliest extant appearance of Alexander Magnus in Latin. I am grateful to Dr. Shane Wallace for letting me read his unpublished paper on the history of, and evidence for, Alexander’s epithet in Greek and Latin.
From here the Euphrates, from there Germany incites war; neighbouring cities take up arms, their treaties broken; unholy Mars rages across the entire world…

It is a famous passage, and yet one not without irony. During the decades of civil conflict Rome was never existentially threatened by foreign enemies. As we have seen, its foreign campaigns continued unabated, and many of the peoples perceived in the poem as threats – Alpine peoples, Dacians, Iberians – were defeated. One has to contrast the anguished pathos of G. 1. 489-514 with the confident assertions of imperial power elsewhere in the poem. When the doors of the Temple of Janus were closed in January 29, in a very public demonstration of the end of war, Dio notes that many foreign wars were still ongoing (the doors were open again before long, to mark the renewal of wars in Spain). 171 We have to consider, that is, the narrow metropolitan viewpoint of these lines, and compare the evidence we have for contemporary resistance to Roman rule in Europe. One of the central ironies of the poem is that while war is a cause for horror, it is also cause for triumphal celebration, over both civil and foreign enemies.

At the end of Book 1 Virgil references two major battles in the civil wars: Pharsalus, fought in 48 between the forces of Julius Caesar and Pompey, and Philippi, fought in 42 between the forces of Brutus and Cassius, Caesar’s killers, and Octavian and Antony, his avengers. The former battle took place in Thessaly in central Greece, the latter in Thrace (what is now north-eastern Greece). Virgil appears to have conflated the two locations: 172

\[
\text{ergo inter sese paribus concurrere telis} \\
\text{Romanas acies iterum uidere Philippi;} \\
\text{nec fuit indignum superis bis sanguine nostro} \\
\text{Emathiam et latos Haemi pinguescere campos.} \quad G. 1. 489-492.
\]

171 Cass. Dio 51. 20 (the closure in 29); Oros. 6. 21. 1 and Cass. Dio 53. 26. 3 for their re-opening and closure in 27 and 25 respectively. The third closure mentioned at RG 14. 2 is debated: see Cooley ad loc.
172 But see Mynors (1990) 94-95, following Cartault (1899), for the idea that Virgil is referring to two separate engagements at Philippi.
And so Philippi for a second time saw Roman armies matched in strength do battle with each other; nor did it seem shameful to the gods to fertilise for a second time Emathia and the broad plains of Haemus with our blood.

The first readers of the *Georgics*, many of whom may have been veterans of either conflict, find Pharsalus and Philippi included in the poem’s geography. Further locations can also evoke the battles: the river Enipeus (*G. 4. 368*), for example, which ran along the site of Pharsalus, or the river Strymon (*G. 1. 120, 4. 508*), some forty-five miles west of the battlefield at Philippi.¹⁷³ Thrace is thus not merely the scene for Orpheus’ final wanderings, but also the site of a climactic moment of civil war. A reference to the wine of the island of Thasos (*G. 2. 91*), meanwhile, may evoke the part played by that island in the Philippi campaign, as both the store depot for Brutus and Cassius’ army and the first point of escape for defeated survivors.¹⁷⁴

Other locations include those affected by the land distributions agreed by the triumvirs at Bononia in 43 and put into effect after the victory at Philippi. Capua (*G. 2. 224*) was one of the eighteen towns included for settlement,¹⁷⁵ and while Mantua was not, it suffered by its proximity to Cremona: *qualem infelix amisit Mantua campum* (*G. 2. 198*).¹⁷⁶ In Book 2 there are lines which describe Agrippa’s engineering works at the Lucrine Lake, works designed to provide safe anchorage while a new fleet was built for Octavian in the fight against Sextus Pompeius, defeated by Agrippa off Naulochus in 36:¹⁷⁷

an memorem portus Lucrinoque addita clausta
atque indignatum magnis stridoribus aequor,
Iulia qua ponto longe sonat unda refuso
Tyrrenhusque fretis immittitur aestus Auernis?

*G. 2. 161-164.*

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¹⁷³ App. *B Civ.* 2. 75. 313 on the site of Pharsalus. 4. 105 on the site of Philippi.
¹⁷⁶ “Such land as unhappy Mantua lost.” See Keppie (1981) 368: 70 per cent of Mantua’s territory was covered by the new centuriation grid around Cremona.
Or should I recall the ports and the barriers added to the Lucrine Lake, and the sea raging with great shrieks, where a Julian lake shut off from the ocean resounds far and wide, and the Tyrrenian tide is directed into the channels of Lake Avernus?

The geography of the *Georgics* includes, therefore, locations which were closely associated with the civil conflicts between 49 and 31. Because of the fleeting nature of such references they are non-prescriptive, a kind of ambivalent geographic register of recent national history with could evoke, for the poem’s first readers, all sides of the conflicts. Most of all, they serve to highlight that the *Georgics* is a post-war poem, and thus cannot simply be a poem which celebrates peace. Rather, Octavian’s reported burning of documents related to the civil conflicts¹⁷⁸ should remind us of the tensions inherent in any post-war society, of the competing narratives of the victorious and the defeated. In this light, the *Georgics*’ themes of land and homeland seem all the more audacious.

The culmination of the civil wars at Actium in 31, and the role that battle went on to play in the ideology of Octavian’s political power, lead to two further, complex, locations. South Asia is evoked eight times in the poem, and I again note the generalisation inherent in a toponym like “India”, which then as now refers to a massive geographical area full of many diverse languages and cultures.¹⁷⁹ The river Hydaspes appears at *G.* 4. 211 but is called a Median, not an Indian river. It is the modern Jhelum in Pakistan, which Alexander’s army crossed in 326.¹⁸⁰ “India” or “Indian” occurs six times in the poem, in ways which reveal the biases of representation. In one sense, images like the one of trees in Indian forests higher than the range of an arrow-shot (*G.* 2. 122-124) highlight the imaginative aspect of the poem’s geography, well captured by Steinmeyer: “As for Virgil, I see him viewing the great rainforests of India in his imagination, tingling with a sense of the immensity, variety, and freshness of his world.”¹⁸¹ But India is also a source of ivory

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¹⁷⁹ The ultimate origin of the toponym India is the Sanskrit word for river, *sindhu* (Keay (2000) 57-58). Ancient Greek and Latin accounts of India are collected and translated by Majumdar (1960). Note also that until 1947 “India” was used to designate in English what is now Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh.
¹⁸¹ Steinmeyer (1997) 139.
and ebony, its people are described in terms of skin-colour, climate, and perceived passivity. At the edge of the orbis terrarum, it is defined by its remoteness and its exoticism, revealing the poem’s Mediterranean-centric viewpoint and highlighting stereotypes about the “East” which have a long history in “Western” literature. Thomas regards the phrase imbellem...Indum (G. 2. 172), for instance, as part of the ancient ethnographical tradition, arguing against Servius’ explanation that the Indians’ passivity is not inherent, but a result of their defeat at the hands of Octavian. But if Thomas is correct, the political aspect of this ethnographical tradition should be noted: Indians are depicted as weak, foreign, and “other”.

The most intriguing Indian reference is an ethnonym, Gangaridae, the people who appear subjected on the temple doors in Book 3:

in foribus pugnam ex auro solidoque elephanto
Gangaridum faciam uictorisque arma Quirini…

On the doors I shall fashion from gold and solid ivory the battle of the Gangaridae and the arms of victorious Quirinus...

Gangaridae evokes the story of Alexander, who was forced to turn back at the Hyphasis river (the modern Beas in northern India) in 326. Three sources – Diodorus, Curtius Rufus, and Plutarch – say that Alexander heard of two peoples beyond the river Ganges, one of whom are the Gangaridae. Pliny (HN. 6. 66) stresses the size, and the elephants, of the Gangaridae army which Alexander would have had to face. Diodorus in Book 2 says that this people had never been conquered, and that when Alexander heard they had 4,000 elephants he gave up his campaign against them. In Book 17 he says something different: that Alexander wanted to lead

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182 G. 1. 57, 2. 116 (ivory and ebony), 2. 172 (imbellem...Indum), 4. 293 (coloratis...ab Indis), 4. 425 (sitientis...Indos).
184 Thomas ad G. 2. 170-172, with Servius ad loc.: id est auertendo reddis inbelle (sic) (“That is, by turning them back you make them ‘unwarlike.’”)
185 Plut. Vit. Alex. 62. 3-4 (οἱ Γανδαριτῶν καὶ Πρασίων βασιλεῖς), Curt. 9. 2. 2-3 (gentes Gangaridas et Prasios), Diod. Sic. 2. 37. 2 (τὸ ἔθνος τὸ τῶν Γανδαριδῶν), 17. 93. 2 (τὸ τῶν Ταβραισίων καὶ Γανδαρίδων ἔθνος).
his men against the *Gangaridae*, but they refused. Bosworth regards any suggestion that Alexander planned to reach the Ganges as pure fiction, but is important to note that this did become part of the Alexander legend. Pliny and Ptolemy locate the *Gangaridae* on the lower course of the river Ganges, in what is today Bengal and Bangladesh. And it should be said that Roman knowledge of the Bay of Bengal did exist. Strabo’s account of India dates from the last decades of the first century B.C., and he notes that some merchants did travel from Egypt as far as the Ganges, while the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, dating between A.D. 40 and 70, reports information as far as the Ganges’ delta. To add to the confusion, the word is similar to two other toponyms – Gandaris in Punjab, and Gandaritis or Gandhara in modern-day Pakistan. This latter region appears in Achaemenid sources, was home to a flourishing Buddhist tradition, and gave its name to a famous artistic genre. Most of the relevant manuscripts give *Gandaridae* (two d’s) rather than *Gangaridae*, and Kiessling suggests that *Gandaridae* became *Gangaridae* by an easy association with the great river. So, the first thing to note is that the meaning of this word, and any historical people(s) behind it, are totally unclear to us.

What are *Gangaridae* doing in the *Georgics*? Apart from Valerius Flaccus’ *Argonautica* (6. 67), the word occurs only here in Latin poetry. One option is to see them as part of the hyperbolic rhetoric of Actium, where Octavian is seen to save Rome from the eastern forces of Antony and Cleopatra, as part of an attempt to cast a civil conflict as a war against vague and effeminate (yet threatening) oriental forces. This is something which reaches fever pitch in the eighth book of the *Aeneid* and inspired, as David Quint shows, a whole tradition in later European epic. Syme put it like this:

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186 Diod. Sic. 2. 37. 3, 17. 93-94.
187 Bosworth (1988) 131-133. cf. Strabo 15. 1. 35 (702 C) for the letter of Craterus alleging that Alexander had reached the Ganges, and the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* 47 (with Casson ad loc.) for the same assertion.
189 Strabo 15. 1. 4 (686 C).
190 On Gandaris see *RE* 7. 1 (1910) 695-696 and Strabo 15. 1. 30 (699 C); on Gandaritis / Gandhara see *RE* 7. 1 (1910) 696-702 and Asheri, Lloyd & Corcella (2007) ad Hdt. 3. 91. 4.
191 On which see, for instance, Behrendt (2004) and Nadiem (2008).
192 *RE* 7. 1 (1910) 695. Kiessling’s article here provides the best introduction to *Gandaridai / Gangaridae*.
The official Roman version of the cause of the War of Actium is quite simple, consistent, and suspect – a just war, fought in defence of freedom and peace against a foreign enemy: a degenerate Roman was striving to subvert the liberties of the Roman People, to subjugate Italy and the West under the rule of an oriental queen. An expedient and salutary belief. Octavianus was in reality the aggressor, his war was preceded by a coup d’état: Antonius had the consuls and the constitutions on his side. It was therefore necessary to demonstrate that Antonius was ‘morally’ in the wrong and ‘morally’ the aggressor.\textsuperscript{195}

Another option is to see them as evoking Alexander and, implicitly, as portraying Octavian in Alexander-like terms. In Diodorus’ version of the story, remember, which is roughly contemporary with the \textit{Georgics}, the \textit{Gangaridae} intimidate Alexander and his men: in the \textit{Georgics} they are added to the list of Octavian’s conquests.\textsuperscript{196} It is of course possible that Virgil is referring to a specific and well-defined people, known to him but not to us. Yet leaving aside attempts at clear identification, we can note the rhetorical aspect of this people’s appearance in the \textit{Georgics}. They are the epitome of foreignness and of the threat of the “East”, the most exotic of the peoples from whom Octavian defends Rome. The doors of the temple (made partly from ivory) prefigure the triple triumph of \textit{Aeneid} 8, where the conquered peoples of the world are led in triumph through the streets of Rome.\textsuperscript{197} Both moments stand at the head of a long European tradition of ignorance and speculation about the “East”, and indeed about most of the world beyond Europe, a tradition which has, at certain historical moments, gone hand in hand with imperial exploitation.

Egyptian peoples and places occur eight times in the poem, in ways which echo the

\textsuperscript{195} Syme (1939) 270-271.

\textsuperscript{196} Note that to at least one reader, Octavian’s conquest of the \textit{Gangaridae} was factual. Serv. ad. G. 3. 27 has: \textit{Gangaridae populi sunt inter Indos et Assyrios, habitantes circa Gangen fluviun...hos vicit Augustus, unde est [ G. 2. 172] inbellem [sic] avertis Romanis arcibus Indian.} (“The Gangaridae peoples are between the Indians and Assyrians, living along the river Ganges [...] Augustus conquered them, whence the line [G. 2. 172] ‘You turn back the unwarlike Indian from the hills of Rome.’”)

\textsuperscript{197} Verg. \textit{Aen.} 8. 714-728, esp. 722-723: \textit{...incidunt uictae longo ordine gentes, | quam uariae linguis, habitu tam vestis et armis} (“Conquered peoples proceed in a long line, as different in their languages and their appearance as in their dress and their weapons.”)
diversity of the geography I have been examining. There are vines from the Maerotic Lake on Alexandria’s southern edge (G. 2. 91), lentils from Pelusium at the easternmost point of the Nile delta (G. 1. 227), and a Callimachean theme amongst those deemed clichéd at the start of Book 3: the altars of Busiris (G. 3. 5: Busiridis aras). The most concentrated reference to Egypt is in Book 4, where it is the setting for bugonia, the regeneration of bees from the carcass of a bull:

nam qua Pellaei gens fortunata Canopi
accolit effuso stagnantem flumine Nilum
et circum pictis uehitur sua rura phaselis,
quaque pharetratae uicina Persidis urget,
et diuersa ruens septem discurrit in ora
usque coloratis amnis deuexus ab Indis,
et uiu(ide)m Aegyptum nigra fecundat harena,
onmis in hac certam regio iactus arte salutem.  

For where the fortunate people of Pellean Canopus live by the pools of the flooded Nile, and are carried round their fields in painted boats, and where the proximity of the quivered Persian threatens, and the Nile, having made its way down from the coloured Indians, runs into seven different channels and, as it hurries along, makes green Egypt fertile with its black silt: the whole region puts its sure safety in this art.

These are picturesque lines, full of colour and geography, as the reader imagines boatmen on the flooded Nile. In narrative terms the only information conveyed in eight lines is that Egypt is the setting for bugonia. And yet such vivid description does not mention, and can obscure for the modern reader, the fact that Egypt had, since August 30 and the suicide of Antony and Cleopatra,

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198 Callim. Aet. fr. 44 Harder (= fr. 44 Pfeiffer), with Harder II: 369-370 for background: “Busiris, an Egyptian king who killed strangers in order to put an end to a nine-year draught and was eventually killed by Hercules.”
199 I follow Mynors’ text here: Conte prints 291, in italics, between 290 and 292, thinking that Virgil intended it as a replacement for line 292 that was left in the text by later editors. On this see the review of Heyworth (2014).
200 A point made by Thomas, ad loc.
been annexed by Octavian and was to remain under the princeps’ personal control.\textsuperscript{201} The third of Octavian’s three triumphs in 29 was dedicated to this Egyptian victory, as Cleopatra’s children were paraded, alongside an effigy of their mother, through the streets of Rome.\textsuperscript{202} Coins proclaimed the conquest.\textsuperscript{203} What the ancient sources remark upon is the impact of Octavian’s personal theft of Ptolemaic treasure: money became so abundant in Rome that interest rates fell and property prices rose.\textsuperscript{204}

At the time of the \textit{Georgics’} completion, therefore, Egypt was a place of the most recent and the most intense political relevance. In contrast to the conquest of India, vaguely imagined in the poem, the conquest of Egypt was very real. The Nile appears with the \textit{Gangaridae} on the temple doors:

\begin{quote}
\textit{atque hic undantem bello magnumque fluentem}
\textit{Nilum ac nauali surgentis aere columnas.} \hfill \textit{G. 3. 28-29.}
\end{quote}

\textit{And here [I shall fashion] the Nile in spate and surging with war, and columns standing tall with naval bronze…}

These lines appear to refer to the captured prows from Actium which Octavian had placed in the \textit{Forum Romanum}.\textsuperscript{205} The resistive and rebellious Nile appears helplessly on the temple doors on the banks of the Mincius, a further part of the poem’s imperial geography. This ugly imperial hyperbole reappears at the end of \textit{Aeneid} 8 but is first in Virgil here. And yet the scene on the temple doors should not obscure the fact that we do have evidence of resistance to Roman rule in Egypt. Dio refers to inhabitants who resisted the Roman annexation, and I have already discussed the suppression of rebellions in Egypt by C. Gallus.\textsuperscript{206} All of which can introduce

\textsuperscript{201} For Octavian in Egypt see Bowman (1996) 676-679 and Herklotz (2012).
\textsuperscript{203} See the silver denarius, minted c. 28, bearing an image of Octavian on the obverse and, on the reverse, a crocodile with the legend [\textit{A}]\textit{EGYPTO CAPTA} (= Grueber (1970) II: 536).
\textsuperscript{204} Suet. \textit{Aug.} 41, Cass. Dio 51. 21. 5.
\textsuperscript{205} Serv. ad \textit{G. 3. 29: Augustus victor totius Aegypti…multa de navali certamine sustulit rostra, quibus conflatis quattuor efficit columnas, quae postea a Domitiano in Capitolio sunt locatae, quas hodieque conspicimus.} (“Augustus as the conqueror of all Egypt…took many prows from the naval battle, and combining them together made four columns, which later were placed on the Capitoline hill by Domitian, and which we see today.”)
\textsuperscript{206} Cass. Dio 51. 17. 4. See for Gallus’ military activities see n. 134 above.
ambiguity into the description of the Egyptians as a *gens fortunata*, a fortunate people. The Latin word can, in a secondary sense, mean wealthy or rich, which can recall the wealth taken from that country to Rome in 29.\textsuperscript{207} The word is used, in its primary sense, of the farmers and of the lover of the countryside in Book 2, who are seen to lead a frugal and carefree life.\textsuperscript{208} Are we supposed to picture Ptolemaic Egypt in similarly utopian terms? A knowledge of contemporary Egyptian history provides the reader with cause for doubt.

The geography of the *Georgics* can be seen to chart the history of Roman imperialism in the Mediterranean. The poem conveys a universal image of Roman power, as being commensurate with the *orbis terrarum*, and can be seen to compare Octavian to Alexander the Great. This confident worldview appears to be undermined by the series of locations relevant to the Roman civil wars which appear in the poem, locations which may have resonated with those among the poem’s first readers with direct or indirect experience of the civil conflicts. Yet any sense of Roman power under threat needs to be kept in perspective. Rome was not sacked by foreign enemies, and Rome’s foreign policy remained as bellicose and as proactive as ever. At the same time, the *Georgics* participates in what we might call Actian politics, portraying the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra as the defeat of the threatening forces of the East, and so obscuring the fact that Octavian had in fact won out in a bloody civil war. Antony is subsumed within a picture of eastern passivity and wilful subjection. This rhetoric of otherness serves not only to make civil conflict, but also Roman imperialism, seem less problematic. For while India may have been beyond the scope of Roman power, Egypt and its people were directly affected by it. All of which brings into focus another important tension for the reader to consider: that between the passionate decrial of civil war at the end of Book 1, and the triumphalist tones in which Rome’s defeated enemies, real and imagined, are depicted throughout the poem. It is only

\textsuperscript{207} See OLD 2 s. v. *fortunatus*, with *TLL* 6. 1196-1197 and Gagliardi (2009) 94; “…considerato come participio perfetto, *fortunatus* dovrebbe infatti privilegiare il significato passivo di ‘chi è stato beneficato dalla fortuna’, ma non è sempre così […] poiché nell’uso sentito piuttosto come aggettivo, sinonimo di *felix* e di *beatus*, talora con un accento più forte sul rapporto con la ricchezza materiale (in linea con uno dei significati di *Fortuna*, quello concreto di ‘ricchezza’).”

\textsuperscript{208} Verg. *G.* 2. 458, 493.
after one realises its intensely Roman worldview, that one can begin to critique the *Georgics*’ imperial geography.

**Tota Italia**

I move now to the geography of the Italian peninsula. The *Georgics* evokes locations across its length and breadth, including mountains, rivers, and lakes, as well as wines and other produce. There are rural vignettes – the Etruscan flute-player (*G*. 2. 193) and the revelries of the *Ausonii* (*G*. 2. 385-389) – and extended scenes in particular locations: the Calabrian snake\(^{209}\) (*G*. 3. 425-434) and the old man’s garden by the Galaesus (*G*. 4. 125-146). One of the most famous parts of the whole poem is the passage in praise of Italy, the *laudes Italiae* (*G*. 2. 136-176). This passage proclaims the fertility and bounty of Italy, its temperate climate and its supremacy over other lands. It is partly what Thomas calls “a rhetorical set-piece”, one of many passages in Greek and Latin literature praising the author’s native land.\(^{210}\) It can also be seen within the ancient ethnographical tradition, a miniature study of Italy and its people in keeping with the other ethnographic passages in the poem.\(^{211}\) Most strikingly, its tone of idealising celebration is at odds with the realism elsewhere in the *Georgics*, when the existential struggles which the farmer faces on the land are made clear.\(^{212}\) Partly to account for this discrepancy, perhaps, Ross and Thomas read the *laudes Italiae* ironically,\(^{213}\) identifying details in the passage (and in the rest of the poem) which contradict the sunny picture of Italian life, what Thomas calls “obvious fictions, demonstrably in conflict with the reality of Italy as it exists in the ‘technical’ sections of the poem.”\(^{214}\)

The patriotic tone of the passage can be also be read unironically, as part of Virgil’s

\(^{209}\) Roman Calabria refers to the “heel” of Italy, what is now modern south Apulia, and not to modern Calabria (the “toe”), which the Romans referred to as the *ager Bruttius*.

\(^{210}\) Thomas (1988) I: 180, who gives a list of parallels. cf. Serv. ad *G*. 2. 136: *iam incipit laus Italiae, quam exsequitur secundum praecepta rhetoric*: *nam dicit eam et habere bona omnia et carere malis universis*. (“Now begins the praise of Italy, which proceeds according to rhetorical principles: for he says that it both has all good things and that it lacks every evil.”)

\(^{211}\) Thomas (1982) 36-51.

\(^{212}\) Most obviously the cattle plague at *G*. 3. 474-566, but also in the image of the boat carried downstream at *G*. 1. 199-203.


interest in the histories, peoples, and geography of the peninsula which so animate the second half of the *Aeneid*. Harrison, for example, notes the way in which the praise of Italy as superior to (specifically) eastern lands engages with the politics of the 30s B.C. Readers will form their own conclusions. But it is important to note that many of those readers whose receptions of the passage I trace in Chapters 2 and 3 read the passage unironically. The *laudes Italiae* offered a famous model for praise of Britain and the British empire, in which climatic conditions were seen to beget political supremacy. Yet there are tensions here which can be discerned distinct from the readings of Ross and Thomas. The *Georgics* can evoke not just Roman Italy of the late first century B.C., but the broader heritage of the peninsula, its Greek, Etruscan, and Oscan histories, its diverse range of peoples and languages from a time before the peninsula became Latin-speaking and “Roman”. And of course any notion of Roman Italy, even by the end of the first century B.C., as an homogenous, unified “state” is a simplistic and ahistorical view. A central tension in the poem, then, is the way in which the *Georgics* celebrates the diversity of Italian history, and yet suggests Rome’s pre-eminence in that same history.

Book 2 of the *Georgics* closes with an equally famous passage in praise of country life. The setting is Italian, if less explicitly so than in the *laudes Italiae*. The farmer’s life is free from the pains of Roman political life and civil war, his or her sustenance provided by devotion to the land:

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

G. 2. 458-460.

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215 For one aspect of this interest, the Sabellic etymological glosses in *Aeneid* 7, see Ferriss-Hill (2011).
216 Harrison (2008) 234: “Both this episode and the whole of the *Georgics* are…presented as praise of Italy as superior to rival eastern attractions, mirroring the political confrontations of the 30’s BC where Rome had faced first Parthia under Antony’s leadership and then the East joined with Antony under the leadership of the young Caesar at Actium.”
218 For a detailed study of the history of Rome’s relationship with Italy in the first century B.C., see Bispham (2007), esp. 436-446, who notes (p. 444) that any notion of Italian unity at the end of the century is, despite increased political homogeneity and the propaganda of Octavian, highly debatable.
O happy farmers, too happy, should they know their wealth! For whom the most righteous Earth pours from the ground easy sustenance, far away from clashing arms.

The happy life is a country life, away from the toils and troubles of the city. Kronenberg\textsuperscript{219} and Gagliardi\textsuperscript{220} note the poetic and philosophical contexts which contribute to the positive view of agriculture so at odds with other sections of the poem.\textsuperscript{221} Thibodeau, by contrast, suggests a different interpretation, based on the potential for agricola to connote a landowner and on the ambiguity of bona, which can refer to property. The lines thus become, in Thibodeau’s words, “…an invitation to wealthy landowners: come, get to know your estates out in the country (which you may have neglected) by inhabiting them, do so and you will be happy.”\textsuperscript{222}

As we shall see in Chapters 2 and 3, the lines which begin o fortunatos are the most commonly quoted in the sources I have studied. In British contexts these lines become remarkably politicised, but for the moment I would ask the reader to consider another way of reading this passage. To what extent can the two passages in Book 2, the laudes Italiae and the praise of country life, be seen to depoliticise the rural life of Italy? That is, to ignore the agrarian and political struggles of Italian life, so prominent in the years immediately preceding the poem’s composition, and instead paint a picture of a carefree existence? This is reinforced by readings which view the passage as allegorical or as a rhetorical set-piece. The line between celebration and condescension is, I argue, a fine one, particularly in the receptions of these lines to be discussed. Most of these receptions lack the balancing picture of the harshness of rural life which Virgil provides in other parts of the poem. British receptions of the poem, that is, tend to focus on the Georgics’ idealised countryside and to forget its more sombre visions.

\textsuperscript{219} Kronenberg (2000) 349-350: “…it seems clear that the farmer depicted at the end of Georgics 2 is not the realistic farmer of the rest of the Georgics, but is the creation of the pastoral poet….”.
\textsuperscript{220} Gagliardi (2009) 97 argues, in relation to this passage, for “il grande debito di questa concezione virgiliana verso l’ataraxia epicurea.”
\textsuperscript{221} Wilkinson (1963) 83: “It is quite inconsistent with the tenor of the rest of the Georgics: it is a townsman’s dream of the country…and indeed the dream of a literary townsman, who yearns for the romantic, poetic beauties of Greece…”.
\textsuperscript{222} Thibodeau (2011) 108.
In this section I offer a reading of the poem’s Italian geography. The first thing to note is the enormously political nature, in an Italian context, of the *Georgics*’ principal theme: land and its use. In the second and first centuries B.C., poor Italian farmers staffed Rome’s increasingly mobile army as it serviced Rome’s expanding Mediterranean power.\(^\text{223}\) The extant historical tradition relating to Tiberius Gracchus’ agrarian reforms frames them in terms of a crisis in Italian agriculture, whereby depleted numbers of free tenants and rising slave-labour on *ager publicus* left the state at once lacking in military manpower and vulnerable to slave revolt.\(^\text{224}\) Agrarian reform is therefore represented as being based on the need for a reliable army of farmer-soldiers to service the growing demands of Roman imperialism in the Mediterranean.\(^\text{225}\) The dual identity of the farmer-soldier in Roman society is thus an important context for the martial language used of farmers and farming in the *Georgics*.\(^\text{226}\) Land reform and land allocation remained a contentious issue throughout the final decades of the Republic, and we have evidence for repeated (attempts at) agrarian legislation between 133 and 59.\(^\text{227}\) Livy appears to write of the first such legislation at Rome with one eye on this first-century context.\(^\text{228}\) So the image of the farmer at the end of *Georgics* 2 as carefree and apolitical is doubly challenged, by both the military role played by farmers in the Republican army, and by the contentious agrarian measures which continually surface in the century 133-31.

Land was political in other ways too. Land-ownership was the chief basis of wealth in

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\(^{223}\) For an historical study of this development see Hopkins (1978) 1-98.


\(^{226}\) This “Catonian conception” of the Roman farmer-soldier (Cat. Agr. pr. 4: *at ex agricolis et uiri fortissimi et milites strenuissimi gignuntur* “But from farmers the bravest men and the keenest soldiers are born”) Gabba has argued (1993: 41-42) was at the centre of Tiberius’ policy. For military-agricultural language in the *Georgics* see G. 1. 160 (*arma*); G. 2. 114; 2. 370 (*imperia*); G. 2. 279-283 (the legion simile) and cf. Gale (1998) 109-125 on war in the poem.

\(^{227}\) Agrarian bills in this period, several of which are only indirectly attested in our sources, encompassed both the privatization and redistribution of *ager publicus* as well as specific measures designed to allot land to veterans. See the list at Brunt (1988) 241 with Brunt (1971) 294-344 and Roselaar (2010) 221-288.

\(^{228}\) Livy 2. 41. 3: *Tum primum lex agraria promulgata est, nunquam deinde usque ad haec memoriam sine maximis motibus rerum agitata.* (“At this time the first agrarian law was promulgated, something which down to this day has never been proposed without the greatest disturbances.”)
the Roman Republic, something which became starkly evident at the time of the Sullan and triumviral proscriptions, when property and land became incentives for extra-judicial killing. Throughout the first century B.C., from the *lex Appuleia* (103) until Octavian made veterans’ rewards solely financial in 13, land was periodically set aside for former soldiers: by Sulla, by Caesar in the 40s, after Philippi, after Naulochus, and after Actium. It is the *Eclogues* which offers the most famous picture of the social unrest and displacement this process could cause.

We should also remember that Roman history, as Badian notes, is more often than not elite history, and that many of those unknown to posterity were affected by the warring of the Roman elite. Agricultural production was one of the chief incentives for the growth of the slave economy of Roman Italy, and there were three major slave revolts in Sicily and Italy between 140 and 70, the most famous led by Spartacus. The peninsula was also farmed by free peasants, whose lives can only be glimpsed. Appian, however, gives us some requisite detail. In the late 40s and early 30s, when Lucius Antonius championed the cause of those affected by veteran settlements after Philippi, and when Sextus Pompeius was able to severely restrict Rome’s food supply from his base in Sicily, we hear of famine, protests, and revolutionary anger in Rome and Italy. Any notion of the *Georgics* as a paean to rural life and agriculture, to what it calls the *diuini gloria ruris* (*G.* 1. 168) must therefore be juxtaposed with the enormously and immediately controversial nature of its subject. For many in Italy in the first century B.C., agriculture was a much more sombre, mundane, and insecure occupation.

Roman imperialism begins in the Italian peninsula, as Rome expanded its power first in Latium, and then further afield. This extremely complex process was by no means complete by the

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229 See Brunt (1971) 300-312, 326-331 with App. *B Civ.* 1. 95. 442-1. 96. 449, 4. 5. 19-20, 4. 29. 125, 4. 31. 133-134.
231 For instance at *Ecl.* 1. 64-78.
232 Badian (1968) 92: “The study of the Roman Republic – and that of the Empire to a considerable degree – is basically the study, not of its economic development, or of its masses, or even of great individuals: it is chiefly the study of its ruling class.”
233 On which see Bradley (1989).
beginning of the first century B.C., and was only arguably so at its end. A glance at the *fasti triumphales* for the sixth to third centuries B.C. gives a list of seemingly endless triumphs over the peoples of Italy: Etruscans and Sabines, Aequi and Volsci, Gauls and Samnites. I turn now to examine certain locations in the *Georgics*, which can recall the history of Roman imperialism in the Italian peninsula.

The area in the extreme south-west of the Italian peninsula is now Calabria, but to the Romans it was known as *ager Bruttius* and its inhabitants as *Bruttii*. In the centre of this area is the mountainous plateau of La Sila, which in antiquity was heavily forested and a valuable source of timber and pitch. It is here that Virgil sets the battle of two bulls, rivals in love:

```latex
pascitur in magna Sila formosa iuuencia:
illi alternantes multa ui proelia miscent
uulneribus crebris; lauit ater corpora sanguis,
uersaque in obnixos urgentur cornua uasto
cum gemitu; reboant siluaeque et longus Olympus.  
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*A beautiful heifer grazes on great Sila: two bulls join battle, each in turn, with great force and constant blows; black blood soaks their bodies, and each one’s horns are turned and shoved against the opponent with a desolate moan; the woods and the whole sky resound.*

The *Bruttii* revolted against Rome during the war with Pyrrhus (280-275), and again during Hannibal’s occupation of southern Italy in 216. A fragment of Dionysius of Halicarnassus records that, in the aftermath of the Pyrrhic war, they ceded voluntarily to Rome one half of La Sila. We are not in a position to say how voluntary this was, but the history of resistance to Rome in the *ager Bruttius* is cause for scepticism. Toynbee and Brunt assume that the rest of La

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236 Degrassi (1954) 90-100.
Sila was annexed by Rome in retribution after the end of the second Punic War, but this is an assumption for which evidence is lacking. Dionysius speaks of a forest so dense as to offer continuous shade, populated with fir, poplar, pine, beech, oak and ash, with enough timber to supply the demands of the entire peninsula for ship-building and construction. Pliny says (HN 14. 127) that Bruttian pitch was sought after for sealing wine-casks, and Virgil refers, as we saw above, to the pitch groves of Lokroi Epizephyrioi. The Dionysius fragment thus offers us a window onto the expansion of Roman control in the south of the peninsula, and in particular the economic incentives and rewards of that control. But the wider historical record shows too the often violent nature of this process. The violence of the bulls can thus evoke for the reader not just an animal contest or even the conflicts of human love, but also the history of Rome and the ager Bruttius. Readers of the Aeneid will note that this scene, in the same setting, is reworked to describe Aeneas and Turnus before their final duel, the founding act of violence, as imagined by the poem, between settler and native.

Ancient Lucania comprised the modern regions of Basilicata and southern Campania, and, as in the ager Bruttius, there was active resistance to Rome here both during the war with Pyrrhus and the war with Hannibal. A succession of Roman colonial foundations across southern Italy in the 190s points to the extension of Roman control after the defeat of Hannibal.
and further evidence of Roman colonisation is visible. In particular, my focus here is on the Vallo di Diano, one of the main thoroughfares of Lucania, through which the river Tanagro (Tanager) flows, a tributary of the Sele (Silarus). It is in this precise area that we have evidence for the activities of Gracchan land surveyors, who, under the lex Sempronia of 133, surveyed and demarcated areas of ager publicus. We know of the inscriptions from a number of boundary stones (termini) in the area, near the sites of Atina, Cosilinum, and Tegianum, recording the activities of the surveyors.\(^{245}\) And it is in the Vallo di Diano, too, that Virgil sets the lines about the asilus, the pest\(^{246}\) which annoys cattle:

\[\text{est lucos Silari circa ilicibusque uirentem} \]
\[\text{plurimus Alburnum uolitans, cui nomen asilo} \]
\[\text{Romanum est, oestrum Grai uertere uocantes,} \]
\[\text{asper, acerba sonans, quo tota exterrita siluis} \]
\[\text{diffugijunt armenta; furit mugitibus aether} \]
\[\text{concussus siluaeque et sicci ripa Tanagri.} \hspace{1cm} G. 3. 146-151. \]

There is, around the groves of Silarus and Mt. Alburnus green with its holm-oaks, a very common insect, for which the Roman name is “asilus”, but the Greeks use a different name, calling it “oistros”. It is angry and makes a harsh sound, and makes the whole herd flee terrified from the woods. The air seethes, excited by bellowing cattle, so too the woods and the bank of the dried-up Tanager.

This part of Lucania is also where a famous inscription was found, recording the achievements of a Roman magistrate who, among other things, declares that he built a road \textit{ab Regio ad Capuam}, that is, from the Straits of Messina to the Bay of Naples.\(^{247}\) The identity of the

\(^{245}\) \textit{ILLRP} 469-472. For discussion see Isayev (2010) 123-124, 176-177.

\(^{246}\) Perhaps the gadfly, but we cannot identify it precisely (see Mynors ad G. 3. 147-148).

\(^{247}\) \textit{CIL} 1\(^2\) 638 ( = \textit{ILS} 23) with Wiseman (1987a), (1987b) and Bernard, Damon & Grey (2014). Wiseman (1987a) 109 provides a useful map of the road’s route, Bernard, Damon & Grey (2014) 956 provide a translation. The relevant extract is: VIAM FECEI AB REGIO AD CAPUAM ET | IN EA VIA PONTEIS OMNEIS MILIARIOS | TABELARIOSQUE POSEIVEI... (“I made a road from Rhegium to Capua and on that road I placed bridges (all of them), milestones, and tabelarii...”). Translation = Bernard, Damon & Grey (2014) 955.)
magistrate and the road he built are much-debated, and decisive evidence is lacking.\textsuperscript{248} I would
like to focus on what this road can tell us about Rome’s relationship with this part of Italy in the
late second century. Roads are means of communication but also means of control, in their
facilitation of the movements of armies and in their opening up of territories to outside influence.
Scholars have noted (and perhaps accepted too uncritically the bias in) Roman images of southern
Italy as lawless and bandit-ridden.\textsuperscript{249} The announcement of this road’s construction on an
inscription in Lucania, as such, leads us to consider the complex processes of Roman imperialism
at an important moment in its history. This is highlighted by the other details provided by the
inscription: the capture of fugitive slaves, building projects, a policy favouring arable over
pastoral farming on the \textit{ager publicus}. All of which reinforces what has been called “the
impression of multiple, complementary lines of antagonism between representatives of the
Roman state and exploiters and inhabitants of land in Lucania” given by the inscription.\textsuperscript{250}
Virgil’s lines about La Sila and the Vallo di Diano, which at first glance appear to be descriptive
Italian vignettes, can in fact recall sites implicated in the history of Roman imperialism in Italy.

In Book 2 there is a pair of ostensibly picturesque lines depicting Capua and the surrounding
area. We are in the fertile landscape of Campania:

\begin{quote}
\begin{equation}
\begin{array}{c}
talem diues arat Capua et uicina Vesaeuo \\
ora iugo et uacuis Clanius non aequus Acerris.
\end{array}
\end{equation}
\end{quote}

\textit{Such land rich Capua ploughs, and the shore close to Vesuusius’ slope, and the Clanius,
unfair to empty Acerraee.}

\textsuperscript{248} Wiseman argues (1987a: 108-115) that it was a \textit{Via Annia}, and that the eponymous magistrate is T.
Annius Rufus, \textit{pr.} 131, \textit{cos.} 128. Others have suggested P. Popilius Laenas, \textit{cos.} 132 and T. Annius Luscus,
\textit{cos.} 153 (Bernard, Damon, & Grey 954 n. 2). The date is thus also uncertain, with both Isayev (2007: 177
“the last decades of the second century BC” and Bernard, Damon & Grey (2014) 954 (second century
B.C.) exercising caution.

\textsuperscript{249} Wiseman (1987a) 112-114, who notes the “chronic brigandage of the region”; Bernard, Damon &

\textsuperscript{250} Bernard, Damon & Grey (2014) 975.
Servius notes that the river Clanius was prone to inundate the town of Acerrae, and so is “unfair”. Gigante, as we have seen, suggests that the phrase *uicina Vesaeuo | ora iugo* is a periphrasis for Herculaneum, a word not admissible in hexameters. But there are also political contexts which may colour our sense of “empty Acerrae”. Capua, a town successively Etruscan, Oscan, and Roman, defected to Hannibal in 216 before being besieged by Roman forces. Livy recounts that Acerrae remained loyal to Rome and was besieged by Hannibal, who razed the town after its inhabitants fled. Acerrae was also the scene of fighting during the Social War (91-89). During that conflict Rome’s Italian allies (mainly those inhabiting the central and southern Apennine region, but there was limited intervention on the rebel side by other groups) went to war against Rome, establishing a capital, “Italica”, at Corfinium, and minting their own coinage in the process. Fighting continued for almost two years before the last rebel stronghold, Asculum, fell in November 89; the *Fasti Triumphales* record the triumph of Pompeius Strabo for the final victory. After the war all Italians became or could become Roman citizens, a revolutionary process which extended well into the middle years of the first century, “a progressive integration, lasting over more than two generations, but…on a very large scale, doubling or trebling the number of citizens during that period.”

In the Social War a series of indecisive engagements was fought in front of Acerrae between the armies of the consul L. Caesar (*RE* 142) and a rebel army under C. Papius Mutilus.
(RE 12), a Samnite and one of the two supreme commanders on the rebel side.\textsuperscript{259} It was an important strategic town in the fight for control of Campania, and for the Romans provided a key link between the base of Capua and the Latin colony of Beneventum. Gabba calls it “the keystone of the Roman defence.”\textsuperscript{260} When Caesar came to relieve the town from Papius’ siege, a force of Marsi attacked the Romans, were repulsed and took shelter in a vineyard, but were then, according to Appian, routed as they tried to escape.\textsuperscript{261} The Marsi appear in the Georigcs as one of the hardy, primitive peoples of Italy. But this double historical context, the war with Hannibal and, in particular, the Social War (a conflict just within living memory, perhaps, for some of the Georigcs’ first readers), can introduce an ambiguity into the phrase “empty Acerrae”. The town’s political history, something not mentioned by modern commentators on this line,\textsuperscript{262} can suggest not just a town prone to flooding, but its destruction by Hannibal, the violence of an Italian war, and the violence of the complex process by which Rome became the pre-eminent power in the peninsula.

Towards the end of the laudes Italiae, several Italian peoples appear in the Georigcs. Italy is the land that bore them, and they are the precursors of Roman greatness:

\begin{quote}
haec genus acre uirum, Marsos pubemque Sabellam
adsuetumque malo Ligurem Volscosque uerutos
exutit, haec Decios Marios magnosque Camillos,
Scipiadas duros bello et te, maxime Caesar,
qui nunc extremis Asiae iam uictor in oris
imbellem auertis Romanis arcibus Indum.
\end{quote}

This land bore a fierce stock of men, the Marsi and the Sabellian youth, the Ligurian accustomed to trouble and the spear-wielding Volsci; this land bore the Decii and men

\textsuperscript{260} Gabba (1994) 121.
\textsuperscript{261} App. B Civ. 1. 46.
\textsuperscript{262} But cf. Serv. Dan.’s reference to Acerrae’s sack by Hannibal (n. 254, above). McKay (1970) 230 discusses the Social War context of Acerrae but does not press the ambiguity of uacuis.
like Marius and great Camillus, the two Scipios harsh in war and you, Caesar, greatest
of all, who now turn back from the hills of Rome the unwarlike Indian, a victor on the
farthest shores of Asia.

I start by noting that evidence for these peoples and their history is severely limited, and what
evidence we do have is mainly from an external (i.e. Roman) point of view. I am interested
here in the characterisation of these peoples in the poem, and how that relates to what is said
about them by Roman sources roughly contemporary with the Georgics: Diodorus, Strabo, Livy.
What we find is a picture of primitive, hardy, and warlike peoples. Needless to say, this can be
seen as a strikingly political view.

The Volsci occupied southern Latium in the early fifth century B.C., as part of a broader
movement of peoples all over the peninsula at this time. They appear repeatedly in historical
sources (primarily in Livy and in the fasti triumphales) for the first half of the fifth century, most
famously under their (renegade Roman) leader Cn. Marcus Coriolanus. So by the time Livy
and Virgil are writing, the Volsci are enemies from Rome’s far-distant past. They appear in the
Georgics carrying a type of short spear, the uerutum. In Livy they are one of three peoples who,
at different points in the narrative of the first decade, are so thoroughly defeated in battle by the
Romans that they are represented as being almost (and in one case, completely) wiped out. These
notices are regarded as historical exaggeration by Ogilvie and Oakley, but, if so, they are
interesting for precisely that reason. As Hopkins notes, Roman historiography is remarkable
in its sanitisation of the uglier, bloodier aspects of warfare, and Livy’s casual notices about the

263 Bourdin (2012) includes discussion of the Volsci, Ligures, Marsi, and Samnites; see especially Dench
on the Marsi, and Salmon (1967) on the Samnites. These should be supplemented with the more recent
historiographical and archaeological perspectives found in Curti, Dench & Patterson (1996), Cornell &
266 Livy, 3. 8. 10 ibi Volscum nomen prope deletum est (“There the Volscian name was almost destroyed”
(with Ogilvie ad loc.)); 9. 25. 9 nullus modus caedi bus fuit deletaque Ausonum gens…” (“There was no limit
to the slaughter and the Ausonian people were destroyed”); 9. 45. 17 nomenque Aequorum prope ad
interinctionem deletum (“The Aequian name was destroyed almost to the point of extermination”, with
Oakley ad loc.)
(near-) extinctions of the Volsci, Ausoni, and Aequi are a remarkable feature of this narrative about Rome’s rise to universal dominion.\textsuperscript{268} In the thirties and twenties B.C. both Livy and Virgil are writing, in different ways, the history of Roman Italy.\textsuperscript{269} The Volsci by this time are no longer a threat to Rome and so can be safely depicted as a warlike people who, in the \textit{Georgics} at least, become part of a grand narrative of Roman history.

The Ligures were an ethnic group of north-western Italy, whose name survives in the modern province of Liguria. We know something of the different Ligurian peoples, and perhaps even the name they called themselves.\textsuperscript{270} Of the history of Roman intervention and imperialism in the area there is limited evidence, chiefly in Livy,\textsuperscript{271} but the concerted Roman efforts to subdue the entire Alpine region as late as the final decades of the first century should be borne in mind.\textsuperscript{272} A clear picture of Rome’s relationship with the Ligures at this time, and of potential Ligurian resistance to Rome, is inaccessible to us, but their depiction in contemporary Roman sources is of interest. In Livy they are “born to maintain Roman military discipline” during long periods without war.\textsuperscript{273} No other military arena, we are told, provided the things necessary to keep Roman soldiers alert and focused: rough terrain, a mobile enemy, a dearth of provisions owing to the poor quality of the land.\textsuperscript{274} The poverty of the Ligures and their land is thus a boon to the Roman state.

Diodorus depicts a people skilled in hunting, quarrying, and seafaring, whose strength and endurance stems from the poor quality of their land and thus from the necessities of survival.

\textsuperscript{268} For imperial conceptions of Roman power in Livy’s work see Livy, \textit{pr.} 7, 1. 16. 7.
\textsuperscript{269} Taking the \textit{Georgics} as complete by 29 after seven years of work and so underway from 36/35 (Donat. \textit{Vit. Verg.} 25-29, followed by Thomas (1988) I: 1), with Oakley’s (I: 109-110) estimation that Livy began writing between 35 and 30 and that the second pentad of his history was published “towards the beginning of the period 30-25.”
\textsuperscript{270} Bourdin (2012) 79-80. Plut. \textit{Vit. Mar.} 19. 4-5 says that the Ligurians called themselves \textit{Ἄμβρωνες}.
\textsuperscript{271} Bourdin (2012) 79-80, with Livy \textit{Per.} 20 (the first campaign against the Ligures in 236) and the triumph of M. Claudius Marcellus in 155 (= Degrassi (1954) 105).
\textsuperscript{272} See pp. 39-40 above.
\textsuperscript{273} Livy 39. 1. 1-2: \textit{dum haec, si modo hoc anno acta sunt, Romae aguntur, consules ambo in Liguribus gerebant bellum. is hostis uelut natus ad continendam inter magnorum interualla bellorum Romanis militarem disciplinam erat; nec alia provincia militem magis ad uirtutem acuebat (“While these things were happening at Rome, if indeed they happened in this year, both consuls were waging war against the Ligures. This enemy was almost born for the purpose of maintaining Roman military discipline during long periods without war, nor did any other territory rouse the soldiers more to valour.”)}
\textsuperscript{274} Livy 39. 1. 5-8.
The harshness of their environment, we are told, has made their women like men, and their men like wild beasts. Strabo’s account depicts the Ligures as pastoralists, traders, and good fighters, known for their bronze shields. This image of a hardy people is echoed in the *Georgics*, where the Ligurian is “accustomed to trouble” (*G*. 2. 168). This can be seen primarily as a reflection of the harshness of their environment, matching the accounts of Diodorus and Strabo. Yet the word *malum* allows for ambiguity, and can evoke, perhaps, the history of Roman aggression in the area. Like the Volsci, the Ligures are pictured in the *Georgics* not as a threat to Rome, but as a constituent part of Roman history. These characterisations can raise questions about the way Roman writers at the end of the first century B.C. imagined the peoples of Italy and their histories. Does depiction of the Volsci and Ligures in primitive (and sometimes animalistic, supine) terms serve to make their subjugation by Rome appear less problematic? Does the *Georgics*’ portrayal of these peoples as proto-Romans achieve, by opposite means, the same end? Or do these lines (*G*. 2. 167-172) in fact hint at the violence of Roman imperialism in the peninsula from the perspective of its victims? The complexity of the poem admits multiple interpretations.

Then there is the half line at *G*. 2. 167: *Marsos pubemque Sabellam*. The Marsi, who inhabited an area around the Fucine lake in the central Apennines, were one of the main belligerent groups in the Social War: according to Diodorus they were, in fact, the first to rebel. And in his description of the Marsi at the vineyard near Acerrae, Appian emphasizes their warlike qualities: they are, like Diodorus’ Ligurians, akin to wild beasts. Dench has examined further stereotypes in Roman literature, of the Marsi as witches and snake-charmers. In contrast to the Volsci and the Ligures, the Marsi were enemies from Rome’s recent past, who had constituted a serious threat. In this the Marsi are like the Samnites, another of the major belligerent groups in the Social War, who may also be evoked in these lines.

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275 Diod. Sic. 5. 39. 6.
276 Strabo 6. 6. 2 (202 C).
277 See *OLD* s. v. *malum*. Serv. ad loc. glosses *malo* with the note “*id est laborii*” (“that, is, to toil”), but the word’s meaning ranges from distress or hardship to misfortune, insult, damage, and evil doing.
279 App. B Civ. 1. 46. 203: Μάρσηοι μὲν δὴ δίκην θηρίων.
Sabellus first appears in extant sources in a fragment of Varro’s Menippean satires, preserved in Servius’ commentary to this line of the Georgics, where he says that, as the Etruscans occupy Etruria, so the Sabelli occupy Samnium.

de Sabellis Varro in age modo sic ait “terra culturae causa attributa olim particulatim hominibus, ut Etruria Tuscis, Samnium Sabellis.”

About Sabelli Varro in age modo says this: “Once land for farming was given to different men: as Etruria was to the Etruscans, so Samnium to the Sabelli.”

Scholars argue that the word is a late-Republican coinage, a new ethnonym used by Roman writers as a collective name for the Oscan-speaking peoples of south-central Italy. Dench suggests that Sabellus was a Roman coinage designed to soften the foreignness of the Samnites and the other Social War belligerents now incorporated into the Roman state, specifically by associating them with the more northerly Sabines. And while the word appears to be used in Livy to denote the Samnites specifically, there is confusion (ancient and modern) between Sabelli, Samnites, and the Sabines. Ancient tradition seems to have held that the Samnites originated from the Sabines, with whom they are related linguistically and ethnographically. This has introduced an ambiguity into the translation of Sabellus, which is often taken to mean “Sabine”, and is translated thus by many older and modern sources.

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283 Philipp at RE 1A. 2 (1920) 1570-1571 regards it as “an invention of antiquarians” (“eine Erfindung der Antiquare”) and a poetic variant of “Samnites”; Dench (1995) 103-107.
285 Livy 8. 1. 7, 10. 19. 20 (within the context of the narrative of the Samnite wars). cf. Plin. HN. 3. 107 (beginning a list of Samnite settlements): Samnitium, quos Sabellos Graeci et Saunitas dixere... (“Among the Samnite territories, who were called Sabelli and by the Greeks Saunitae…”).
286 Varro, Ling. 7. 29, Strabo 5. 4. 12 (250 C). The ethnic *safin, of which only oblique forms are attested, is related to Sabinus, Samnium, and the Oscan safinim, but scholars are divided as to the import of this linguistic connection (Dench 1997: 45).
287 The easily-assumed notion that Sabellus is a diminutive of Sabinus (Pallottino (1991) 154) Salmon (1967) 32 refuted, arguing that the diminutive would be Sabillus, not Sabellus. “Sabine” is the translation of Sabellus given by Page ad G. 2. 168, the dictionaries of Lewis & Short (Lewis & Short (1969), s.v. Sabellus) and Cassell (Simpson (1964), s.v. Sabellus), and by Mandelbaum (1981) and Fitzgerald (1984) in their translations of Aen. 8. 510. Dench (1995) 104 argues that Sabellus can refer to both Sabines and Samnites. This I find unconvincing given the paucity of our evidence (cf. Sonnenschein (1898)), particularly the two examples Dench cites (104 n. 166) where she argues that Sabellus can only mean...
Thus we know precariously little about this word’s history and meaning. In line with the tendency for *Sabellus* to refer to the Samnites, I think that it probably is the Samnites, among others, who are evoked by the phrase *pubemque Sabellam* at G. 2. 167, giving a half line referring to the major belligerent groups of the Social War. But the larger and more important point is that we do not know. We know so little about these Italian peoples, their self-expression and even the names they used for themselves: any identification, as such, can only be provisional. The ambiguity between Sabellian and Sabine in modern usage is, arguably, only a more extreme example of an ancient phenomenon, the subsuming of Italian identities within an all-inclusive “Roman” viewpoint. The problem nevertheless highlights the complexities of political and cultural interaction between Rome and the peoples of the Italian peninsula.

The Samnites, like the Marsi, were enemies from Rome’s recent past, both in the Social War and in the war between Sulla and Marius, when there were three separate massacres of Samnites by Sullan forces: at Sacriportus, at the Villa Publica on the Campus Martius, and at Praeneste. They were also historic enemies of Rome, and feature in Livy’s first decade. The narrative of Livy’s tenth book, for example, deals with the so-called “Third Samnite War”. This narrative includes the Battle of Sentinum (295), during which Rome faced a large and concerted military threat from an alliance of Samnites, Etruscans, Umbrians and Gauls. According to Livy, the Etruscan and Umbrian contingents were absent on the day of the battle, and the Romans had to rely on the *deuotio* of P. Decius Mus to ensure victory. Despite the paucity of sources for this period, it is clear that it was a crucial moment in the subjugation of Italy by Rome. “[T]here can be little doubt,” writes Cornell, “that, in terms of the size of the forces engaged, the ferocity of the fighting and the decisiveness of the result, Sentinum was the greatest...”

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289 A point highlighted by Bourdin (2012) 79-80, on attested individual “Ligurian” peoples, and Cornell (2004) 127, who critiques the generalisation inherent in ancient and modern references to the “Samnites”.


291 Cornell (2004) 121 notes that the schematic division of Rome’s conflict with Samnium into three “Samnite Wars” appears to be a modern convention, not an ancient one.

292 Livy 10. 24. 1 – 31. 7 (Sentinum Campaign), for background see Oakley IV: 268-294.
military engagement that had ever taken place in Italy.” The Samnites, while an enemy from Rome’s very recent past, also become part of Rome’s hardy ancestry in the laudes Italiae. This depiction arguably suppresses the violence of Samnite-Roman history in the 90s and 80s, in line with Dench’s suggestion that Sabellus is a word invented to assimilate the belligerents of the Social War into a less menacing collective identity. Or rather, it could be said that the poem does not specify how the laudes Italiae should be read: for certain readers the violence of the Social War, rather than being erased, may be just beneath the surface.

The Marsi, Ligures, Volsci, and the pubes Sabella appear in the Georgics together with a list of famous Roman heroes: Camillus, the Decii, Marius, the two Scipios, and Octavian. Virgil in Georgics 2 is, like Livy, writing the history of the peninsula and its people. This is, in part, a teleological vision of Roman history, as the peoples of Italy are subsumed within a narrative of Rome’s greatness. The progression is made clear at the end of Book 2:

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hanc olim ueteres uitam coluere Sabini,
hanc Remus et frater; sic fortis Etruria creuit
scilicet et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma,
septemque una sibi muro circumdedit arces. G. 2. 532-535.
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*This is the life the old Sabines once lived, and Remus and his brother; in this way Etruria grew to strength and of course Rome became the most beautiful place on earth, surrounding for itself seven hills within a single wall.*

The line between the celebration of Italy’s diversity and the elision of that diversity within “Roman” history is a fine one. As rerum pulcherrima Roma joined sevens hill within a single wall, so the peoples of Italy are assimilated into a history which culminates in the Roman state. An imperial process that began in Italy reaches its climax as Octavian brings Roman power “to the furthest shores of Asia” (G. 2. 170-172, above). In the Res Gestae Octavian boasted that “all Italy” (tota Italia) swore allegiance to him in 32. What was, in reality, an expedient effort to raise

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troops for the fight against Antony, is portrayed as a moment of quasi-national unity. The oath was voluntary, although scholars are sceptical as to how voluntary it really was. In the Aeneid Octavian, now Augustus, is depicted leading Italians into battle at Actium. But for the reader of the Georgics, the poem’s Italian geography, and especially the laudes Italiae, can evoke the losers and well as the victors of Roman history, and can highlight, in spite of Octavian’s unifying claim, the enormous historical and linguistic diversity of the Italian peninsula.

Conclusion: Virgil’s Map

In this chapter I have tried to argue that geography is a theme of some importance in the Georgics; that, by employing a large range of toponyms and ethnonyms, the poem creates a diverse picture of the orbis terrarum and so brings the world to the reader. This geographical interest has at least three strands. It is intensely literary, summoning up as it does the literary history of the Greek world, from Homer to classical Greece to Ptolemaic Alexandria. Many of the toponyms in the poem appear to evoke a specific literary author or text. It is economic, in that various products and produce from within and without the Mediterranean world are associated with different peoples and places. It is also political. It includes a range of locations evoking the Roman civil wars, and casts the victory over Antony and Cleopatra as a victory over the forces of the “East”. This rhetoric of otherness and difference extends to its depictions of India and Egypt, the first a place of imagined Roman power, but the latter a place very much implicated in contemporary Roman imperialism. The poem’s Italian geography can evoke not just the diverse heritage of the peninsula, but also the violence, and the victims, of Rome’s rise to prominence. Contemporary historical contexts can colour our reading of what otherwise may appear to be simply descriptive passages. The poem’s Egyptian geography, for instance, can be juxtaposed with Octavian’s annexation of the Ptolemaic kingdom. When we read of “the warlike land of Rhesus”, of


295 Specifically because Bononia had to be exempted from taking the oath. See Carter (1982) 108 and Syme (1939) 284.

296 Verg. Aen. 8. 678-679: hinc Augustus agens Italos in proelia Caesar | cum patribus populoque, penatibus et magnis dis... (“On this part [of the shield of Aeneas] is Augustus Caesar, leading Italians into battle with the senators, populace, Penates, and the great gods...”.)
“unsubdued Iberians”, of “empty Acerrae”, of the Ligurian “accustomed to trouble”, of the Egyptians as a “fortunate people” and of “the deserted kingdoms of shepherds”, we might ask ourselves how these descriptions relate to contemporary and historical Roman imperialism.

Above all, it should be remembered that the *Georgics* is an inherently creative document, and each reader will read its geography in their own way. Many of the political and historical contexts discussed above are implicit rather than explicit, and form part of my own personal reading of the poem. This reading is designed to reinsert some much-needed contemporary context into *Georgics* scholarship, a politicisation of the poem I view as one of the main objectives of this thesis. Readers may find it helpful to consider the *Georgics* as a map. Like any map, it is imaginative, a creative visualisation of the physical world. But maps are also inherently political documents, as any history of cartography will demonstrate. Jacob has written of the “centripetal dynamic” of the intellectual culture of Ptolemaic Alexandria, in which information from across the world was gathered and classified in the great Library. The map of Eratosthenes, he argues, “cannot be divorced from the exercise of power. As a symbolic instrument, it superseded the actual limits of Ptolemaic rule and provided it with a universal dimension.” We could speak of the same centripetal dynamic in relation to London and the British empire, on which, proverbially, the sun never set. The *Georgics*, too, displays this centripetal dynamic, depicting Rome as being at the centre of the Mediterranean world in literary, economic, and political terms; it performs an act of orientation, saying to its first readers “this is the world, and this is Rome’s place in it.” The map of the world commissioned by Agrippa and displayed in the Porticus Vipsania performed a similar function, as, arguably, did the golden milestone which Octavian had placed in the centre of Rome in 20. The Roman triumph brought images of the world and its peoples to the city in abject defeat. Geographical knowledge is intimately connected with the politics of empire.

299 Zanker (1988) 143. Other maps referenced in Roman literature include the one of Sardinia set up in the Temple of Mater Matuta in 174 (Livy 41. 28. 10), as well as the map of Italy which Varro describes in the Temple of Tellus (Varro, *Rust.* 1. 2. 1).
Finally it should be noted that Virgil’s geography, and, more broadly, Roman geography, have had an influence in later European history and literature. The hyperbolic threat of the “East” which informs both the Georgics’ and the Aeneid’s portrayal of Actium occupies a prominent position in a long history of orientalising politics. “The struggle between Augustus and Antony”, Quint writes, “pits the forces of the West against those of the East, continuing the pattern of epic confrontation that Virgil found in the Iliad. This pattern would subsequently be repeated in those Renaissance epics that portray an expansionist Europe conquering the peoples and territories of Asia, Africa, and the recently discovered New World.”[300] The British empire inherited this same classical tradition, and it is to that empire that our attention now turns. It is hoped that, amidst the range of receptions to come, certain continuities will be evident in the histories of British and European culture and imperialism.

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Chapter 2

Historical Introduction

In the Introduction I argued for an aesthetic trend in British scholarly reception of the *Georgics*. Chapter 1 sought to highlight, by contrast, what I take to be the highly political nature of the poem. One way of reading Chapters 2 and 3 is as a series of arguments in support of this dual proposition. They show, I hope, that the reception of the *Georgics* is, in a British context, more diverse and more political than the scholarly history of the poem would have one believe. My focus switches now from the poem and its Roman contexts to Britain and the British empire, 1820-1930. Despite this shift of focus, the three chapters are very much envisaged as a unity, and I would ask readers to keep the geography of the *Georgics*, its representations of peoples and places, in mind as they read Chapters 2 and 3. The Conclusion will suggest unifying themes and issues across all three chapters. Chapter 2 is in five parts. After an historical introduction to orientate the reader, a retrospective look at important eighteenth-century receptions investigates the roots of the aesthetic trend. The scholarly history of the poem, 1820-1899, is then examined, in order to show the prevalence of, and to contextualise, this aesthetic trend in British scholarship. Popular receptions, domestic and international, are the subject of the final two sections. A range of source material is drawn upon in order to highlight the relevance of the poem’s primary (i.e. agricultural) subject matter to British readers, the political contexts of the poem’s domestic reception, the ways in which it is used to describe foreign places and peoples, and, finally, the ways in which G. 2. 458-459 are used to imagine the experience of the colonial subject.

In 1864 G. O. Trevelyan’s *The Competition Wallah* was published, a fictional series of letters between two old school friends, one of whom has just taken up a position in the Indian Civil Service. The letters are remarkable for the breadth of their allusions to, and quotations from, the classical literature of Greece and Rome. To give one of the more striking examples, John Russell Colvin, a British officer who died while defending the fort at Agra during the Indian Rebellion of 1857, is compared to Leonidas before the Battle of Thermopylae: “It is good to
know that trade, luxury, and the march of science, have not unnerved our wrists, and dulled our eyes, and turned our blood to water. There is much in common with Leonidas dressing his hair before he went forth to his last fight, and Colvin laughing over his rice and salt while the bullets patted on the wall like hail.”¹ Trevelyan’s book will be discussed further below, but I begin with this moment because it provides a fictional representation of an historical phenomenon. That is, the way a certain section of British society, educated extensively in Classics, used their knowledge of that subject and its authors to contextualise their experiences. Before exploring receptions of the *Georgics*, it is necessary to discuss briefly the historical contexts behind this classical mindset.

The first important point is readership. The place of Classics in British education in this period is remarkable.² The curriculum in the public schools, like the nine schools examined by the Clarendon commission between 1862 and 1864, was almost entirely classical, and consisted in rote memorisation of large chunks of classical authors with a focus on Latin composition.³ Charles Merivale, Dean of Ely, recalled in his last year of school, “learning many thousand lines of Latin poetry by heart. I repeated to my tutor the Eclogues and Georgics, Catullus, Juvenal, and, a fact of which I was always proud, the whole of Lucan, except a few hundred lines….”⁴ Such narrow attention to Classics in schools and universities was the focus of considerable criticism throughout the nineteenth century, launched by a series of articles on Oxford and Cambridge in *The Edinburgh Review* 1808-1810.⁵ Yet the very narrowness of the education was seen by many of its beneficiaries to be the exact point. Instruction in more practical subjects was seen as beneath the station of a gentleman, while a classical education served as an exclusive badge of social distinction. Its beneficiaries, Stray argues, gained “a shared knowledge of classical literature and language which in many cases was the material of a social bond.”⁶

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¹ Trevelyan (1864) 111.
⁴ Merivale (1898) 49.
⁵ Simon (1960) 84-89.
Yet it is important to remember that those with extensive classical education were a minority. Education was segregated by class and by gender. The men who passed through the public schools and the two ancient universities made up a small fraction of the population, and yet wielded vastly disproportionate influence in politics and government. There were continued attempts throughout the century to reform and to extend access to formal education. University College, London (opened 1828), combined the traditional arts subjects – Greek and Latin – with modern arts subjects, medicine, law and science, its non-residential set-up allowing it to be freer from religious influence than Oxford and Cambridge.\(^7\) The foundation of independent academies (from the 1790s), Mechanics’ Institutes (from 1823) and Working Men’s Institutions can be seen as attempts by excluded groups to provide for themselves a more egalitarian and practical education not offered to them by the state.\(^8\) In the 1860s three commissions reported on the state of primary and secondary schooling in the country and recommended a host of changes, but such changes as were implemented reinforced rather than deconstructed the class basis of education in a way that was to have lasting influence in British life.\(^9\) The culture of Greece and Rome was not, it should be said, the exclusive property of the upper classes: recent work has highlighted, to give two examples, the appropriation of Hercules as a symbol of labour on an 1889 Dockers’ Union banner,\(^10\) or the “radical classics” of the writer and poet Robert Brough.\(^11\) But such receptions happened in spite of a discriminatory system of education which ensured access to the Latin language remained exclusive.

Girls were excluded from this system of male education, and often from any formal education at all.\(^12\) That is not to say that girls did not learn Latin, but that it was largely dependent on their respective families’ social position and on their own initiative, occurring outside the

\(^7\) Simon (1960) 124.
\(^9\) They were the Newcastle Commission (1861) on primary schooling, the Clarendon Commission (1864) on the nine most prestigious grammar schools, and the Taunton Commission (1868) on all other secondary schools. For the impact of these commissions on British education see Simon (1960) 313-325 and Shrosbree (1988) 219-221. The Education Act of 1870 made the state responsible for nationwide primary education for the first time, on which see Simon (1960) 365.
\(^10\) For more see James (2015).
\(^11\) For more see Richardson (2015).
\(^12\) Purvis (1991) 12: “…the 1851 Census records that of the estimated total number of 9,146,384 females in the population of England and Wales, only 10.8 per cent attended day school.”
formal institutions of the public school and, until late in the nineteenth century, the university. Women like Charlotte Schreiber (1812-1895), Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) and Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) learnt Latin as girls. Hurst argues that the challenges women writers in the Victorian period faced in learning Greek and Latin made their responses to classical texts distinctive, something occluded by a picture solely based on the male institutions of classical learning. And yet the inequality women of all classes faced in relation to education should not be minimised. Slow progress was made as the century advanced. The campaign for the admission of women to higher education succeeded in establishing women’s colleges first at Cambridge and then Oxford, owing much in the former instance to the efforts of Emily Davies and Arthur Sidgwick. UCL had admitted women to degrees on equal terms with men from 1878, something withheld at Oxford and Cambridge until 1920 and 1948 respectively.

So while it is untrue to say that Latin and Greek were solely confined to an elite male minority, this minority played a disproportionately large role in national and international politics, and monopolised discourse about the *Georgics*. Women remained excluded from positions of power in the homosocial worlds of Westminster, Whitehall, and the imperial civil service. The link, on the other hand, between classically-educated men and the world of politics is striking. This was an era in which Latin (and, less often, Greek) was quoted in the original in newspapers, journals, and the Houses of Parliament, when a Prime Minister could also be author of a three-volume study of Homer, and when three successive Viceroy of India between 1894

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13 Guest & John (1989) 9 (an extract from Schreiber’s diary): “Italian, Latin exercises, my journal and practising till dinner which is at one thirty. Then I read, refer to Moreri etc. for a fuller account of persons characters and things mentioned in my morning’s Russell, read Latin with Mr Martin (I am re-commencing my dear, dear Virgil) and walk or drive in the open carriage till half past five tea time.” For a brief biography of Schreiber see John (2004). Nightingale “was taught the Roman poet, Virgil, by her father at home, and continued to quote him back to him in letters.” (= McDonald (2003) 736). On Woolf’s attendance at Latin classes at the King’s College Ladies’ Department in 1898-1899, see Kenyon Jones & Snaith (2010).
15 For a history of women’s education, and the struggle for access, in the nineteenth century, see Purvis (1991).
16 McWilliams Tullberg (1998), *passim*. Davies was instrumental in the inclusion of female education in the remit of the Tauntone Commission (1868) (see Purvis (1991) 73-74). She had published *The Higher Education of Women* in 1866 (= Davies (1866)).
17 Gladstone (1858). The book’s publication predates Gladstone’s four terms as Prime Minister (1868-74, 1880-85, 1886, 1892-94).
and 1905 were graduates in Classics of Eton College and Balliol College, Oxford. Balliol in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, under the stewardship of Benjamin Jowett and following the institution of competitive examinations for the Indian Civil Service (1855), was particularly successful in producing civil servants, as well as Prime Ministers, Foreign Secretaries, and Secretaries of State for India. It is important to remember, that is, just how closely implicated in politics and government the classical education system of the public school and the two ancient universities was. Also important is the fact that the majority of publications on Virgil at this time are produced by graduates of these two universities, and so discourse about the poet and his poems is a highly centralised and local affair.

The primary readership of Virgil, then, which is to say those with enough Latin to read the *Georgics* in the original, was thus of a specific kind. Translations made the poet available to a wider audience, and Virgil was by no means solely the prerogative of a male elite. Yet that male elite is important because of the extent to which the historical archive of responses to the poem is *their* archive, and so non-representative. Once this is noted, we can see how societal factors influence, in a very real way, what we take the *Georgics* to be.

Land was as political an issue in Britain at this time as it was in late-Republican Rome. The development of capitalistic modes of agriculture and industry in the eighteenth century had profoundly affected British society. Enclosure – whereby vast tracts of land across England and Wales, to which the community had, historically, certain rights of access and use, were privatised and “enclosed” in favour of the landed minority – reached its peak at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For a sense of the social cost of this and other processes, E. P. Thompson’s classic account remains relevant:

> The process of industrialization is necessarily painful. It must involve the erosion of traditional patterns of life. But it was carried through with exceptional violence in Britain.

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20 For an introduction to the enclosures see Kain, Chapman & Oliver (2004) 1-46.
It was unrelieved by any sense of national participation in communal effort, such as is found in countries undergoing a national revolution. Its ideology was that of the masters alone. [...] The experience of immiseration came upon them in a hundred different forms; for the field labourer, the loss of his common rights and the vestiges of village democracy; for the artisan, the loss of his craftsman’s status; for the weaver, the loss of livelihood and of independence; for the child, the loss of work and play in the home; for many groups of workers whose real earnings improved, the loss of security, leisure and the deterioration of the urban environment.21

Britain, furthermore, remained a slave-owning society until the 1830s. The movement for the abolition of slavery succeeded in securing the abolition of the trade in 1807, but it was only in 1833 that slavery itself was outlawed and British-owned slaves, like those working as agricultural labourers on West Indian plantations, were forced into a system of apprenticeship; British slave-owners were awarded 20 million pounds compensation for their loss.22

Land remained the basis of wealth and of political power in Britain. Property qualifications and the absence of a salary in the unreformed Parliament meant the land-owning aristocracy dominated both Houses; many newly-prosperous industrial areas like Manchester and Birmingham were underrepresented, while archaic and in certain cases defunct boroughs continued to return members. It was a pro-reform mass meeting in Manchester in 1819 which sparked the Peterloo Massacre, when cavalry charged the crowd, killing 11 and injuring 400.23 The Reform Act of 1832 effectively enfranchised the middle class, but by insisting on a (reduced) property qualification it excluded the working classes, while demands for universal (male) suffrage continued in the form of the Chartist movement.24 The census of 1851 recorded 34,600 persons who classified themselves as landowners, and it was this aristocracy which continued to

21 Thompson (2013) 486-487.
22 Walvin (1993) 307. The compensation was funded by the taxpayer, and its recipients have been catalogued by the UCL research project Legacies of British Slave-ownership, available online at https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/ (last accessed 11 August 2017).
23 The numbers of casualties and wounded are disputed. O’Gorman (1997) 253 gives the figures quoted; Chase (2007) 12-13 gives 17 killed and 650 wounded.
dominate the country’s political life even amidst loud calls for reform at home and revolution in Europe.\textsuperscript{25} The Reform Act of 1867 enfranchised the urban male working classes, but universal male suffrage for those over 21 would not become law until 1918. The main subject of the \textit{Georgics}, then, was relevant to British life in the nineteenth century, whether through the inherent inequality in landownership and political representation, the impact of free trade and the empire on the domestic economy, or simply for the fact that appreciation of the countryside from any perspective might find a source of inspiration and comparison in the poem.

The other major context of relevance is the British empire, what Darwin defines as a “British ‘world-system’ managed from London”.\textsuperscript{26} Formally, the empire consisted of colonies ruled directly by Britain, the most important of which in economic and military terms was India, as well as so-called “settlement” colonies (primarily Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), known as dominions after 1907. Ireland was part of Britain until 1922. As well as direct political and military influence, London exerted huge economic influence as a supplier of capital across the globe, to the extent that Britain’s economic policy can often be seen as implicated in its foreign policy: the occupation of Egypt in 1882, for instance, can only be fully understood in light of economics and the strategic importance of the Suez Canal.\textsuperscript{27} But even this picture hides the extent of British interventionism. Britain annexed Sierra Leone (1808), the Punjab (1849), Oudh (1856), Basutoland (1868), Fiji (1874), the Transvaal (1877), Burma (1886), Cyprus (1878), and Zululand (1887); fought wars in China (1839-1842), two in Afghanistan (1839-1842, 1878-1880), two in Punjab (1845-1846, 1848-1849), and two in South Africa (1880-1881; 1899-1902).\textsuperscript{28} European powers, including Britain, also fought for colonial control of Africa, at a time when, between 1876 and 1915, “about one-quarter of the global land surface was distributed or

\textsuperscript{25} Orwin & Whetham (1971) xviii.
\textsuperscript{26} Darwin (2009) 2. For introductions to the British empire in nineteenth century see Darwin (2009) 1-20 and Porter (1999a).
\textsuperscript{27} Lynn (1999) 110-114. By the 1870s Britain was a major holder of Egyptian public debt; when Egypt declared bankruptcy in 1876 “a watershed in Egypt’s history witnessed the establishment of a financial administration under European control to organize Egypt’s revenues and debt repayments.” (Lynn (1999) 113). For the British role see Newsinger (2008) and (2013) 92-107.
\textsuperscript{28} This list is indebted to the chronology given in Porter (1999) 712-741.
British imperial power is relevant here in a number of ways. Many of the civil servants who executed British policy abroad were from the classically-educated section of society described above, increasingly so in India after the open competition for the Indian Civil Service was weighted in favour of candidates with Latin and Greek. Such men at times quoted classical authors in imperial contexts, compared the British empire with that of Rome, and generally used their classical education to contextualise their experience. The most famous example is an apocryphal one, when Punch reported that General Sir Charles Napier telegraphed the news of his capture of Sindh (in what is now Pakistan) with a one-word Latin message: *peccavi*, or “I have sinned”. More generally, ancient Rome, in Broughall’s words, “possessed a unique cachet in Victorian culture”, one which could be used to critique, as well as to support, different aspects of the British imperial policy. Classical comparisons, critical or not, often went hand in hand with an emphasis on the otherness and racial inferiority of foreign peoples.

Beyond classical reception, it is important to note that land and agriculture mattered in imperial contexts. Indian agrarian taxes paid for the British army. Men with little or no experience of the societies they had entered drew up reports on native populations, exploited indigenous natural resources, and introduced agricultural reforms designed to anglicise farming and landlord-tenant relations. In the aristocratic world of political preferment, such men could

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31 Comparisons between the British and Roman empires in British sources are plentiful in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: some sustained examples include Seeley (1971), Bryce (1914), and Lucas (1912). For an overview of this theme see Butler (2012) and Vance (2000).
33 Broughall (2015) 25: “Thus, ancient Rome possessed a unique cachet in Victorian culture; authorised by its lengthy Western appropriation, validated by a long domestic Latinate tradition, and made relevant by Britain’s unprecedented contemporary advances as an imperial society.” For Roman comparisons in criticism of British imperial policy and in fears of imperial decline, see Broughall (2015) 125, 245-256.
34 Visible, for instance, in Seeley (1971) and Hobson (1902).
35 Darwin (2009) 10: “The agrarian revenues of the Indian ‘heartland’ paid for a British-officered Indian army and after 1860 for a large British garrison, between a third and a half of Britain’s regular army. Of the peace-time strength of the British and Indian armies – together almost the whole regular land force of the British world-system – the Indian taxpayer paid for nearly two thirds.”
36 See Hall (2002) 36-37 on the 1837 House of Commons Committee on Aboriginals (stemming from public humanitarian concern for aboriginal Australians); Rao & Rao (1992) on the indigo industry in Bengal, and Guha (1996) on the Permanent Settlement of Bengal (1793), an attempt by Company officials to superimpose a European agrarian system onto the existing Bengali one.
be more competent in Virgil or Homer than in economics or agriculture. Gubernatorial mismanagement combined with paternalistic, racist attitudes could yield cataclysmic results. Mike Davis has shown how two major famines in India 1876-1879 and 1896-1902, caused in part by El Niño weather events, and as a result of which millions died, were exacerbated by British policies and actions.\textsuperscript{37}

Critics of Elgin [Viceroy of India, 1894-1899] were uncertain which was more scandalous: how much he had expended on the Diamond Jubilee extravaganza [for Queen Victoria in 1897], or how little he had spent to combat the famine that affected 100 million Indians. When the government’s actual relief expenditures were published a year later, they fell far below the per capita recommendations of the 1880 Famine Commission.\textsuperscript{38}

The readership of the \textit{Georgics} was thus limited by a number of societal factors. While scholars have shown that receptions of classical culture were not restricted to classically-educated men, nor to conservative or pro-imperial positions,\textsuperscript{39} this group was disproportionately influential, both in the production of opinion about the \textit{Georgics}, and in public life both at home and abroad. That the poem is, to a large extent, their poem in this period is one of the reasons why it is necessary to look beyond the aesthetic trend to the highly political nature of receptions of the \textit{Georgics}. Only by doing this can we begin to appreciate the complexities of the poem’s history in a British context.

\textbf{Retrospective: The Eighteenth Century}

In order to trace the roots of the aesthetic trend in British scholarship on the \textit{Georgics} we need to turn briefly to the eighteenth century. This was the era in which the poem had an influence in

\textsuperscript{37} Davis (2001) 28-59; 141-175.
\textsuperscript{38} Davis (2001) 158.
\textsuperscript{39} See in particular Goldhill (2011) 3-6 and \textit{passim}. 
landscape gardening and in public debate about agriculture, and in which literary reception of the poem reached its height, inspiring a whole range of georgic poems, including Philips’ *Cyder* (1708), Somerville’s *The Chase* (1735), Armstrong’s *The Art of Preserving Health* (1744), Smart’s *The Hop-Garden* (1752), Dyer’s *The Fleece* (1757), Grainger’s *The Sugar-Cane* (1764), Mason’s *The English Garden* (1772-82), and Grahame’s *British Georgics* (1809). These receptions tend to be heavily focused on an optimistic reading of the *Georgics*, and to minimise or ignore what are usually perceived to be the darker sections of the poem, particularly the end of Book 1 and the end of Book 3. “By focusing on and perpetuating tags and unexamined notions (life in the country is a golden age), a new genre was produced”, argues Thomas, “visibly based in the *Georgics* (with pastoral blurring), but without access to the complex hermeneutics and meanings of that poem.” It would take other poems, such as Goldsmith’s *The Deserted Village* (1770) and Crabbe’s *The Village* (1783), to portray a darker and less idealized side of country life. Here I explore the roots of the aesthetic trend through three influential receptions: the translation of John Dryden (1631-1700), the work of Joseph Addison (1672-1719), and what was the most popular and well-known georgic poem of the time, James Thomson’s *The Seasons*.

It is in Dryden’s preface to his 1697 translation that the most famous superlative judgement of the *Georgics* is found: “the best poem of the best poet”. But Dryden is also sensitive to the possibilities which Virgil’s style affords the reader. It is “one of Virgil’s chief

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40 For Virgilian influence in landscape gardening see Chambers (1993), who notes (p. 28) that “From Stephen Switzer in 1715 to William Shenstone, writing in the 1750s, *divini gloria ruris* was a central text in the creation of the landscape garden.” For Virgilian influence on Switzer’s concept of the *ferme ornée*, a type of landscape garden with larger woodland and agricultural elements, see Chambers (1993) 187 and Sayre (2002).
41 See De Bruyn (2004).
42 This list reproduces that at Thomas (2001a) 128. On the politics of this tradition see O’Brien (1999).
43 Thomas (2001a) 130.
44 For more on these three figures see their respective entries in the *ODNB*. *The Seasons* was first published in 1730 and was revised continually by the poet until 1746: for a detailed chronology see Sambrook (1981) xxxiv-xxxix. Chalker (1969) 90 notes that “there were often more than eight editions a year until the mid-nineteenth century, and there was a total of considerably more than three hundred separate editions in the hundred years from 1750-1850.”
45 Dryden (1709) I: 63. In quoting this source orthography and spelling have been modernized, except in quotations from the translation itself and where otherwise stated. The translation appeared first in 1697, but I have consulted the 1709 third edition. Note also that the page numbering in Volume 1 of this edition reverts to zero between the end of the introductory material to the *Eclogues* and the translation of the *Eclogues.*
beauties”, he wrote to his patron, the Earl of Chesterfield, “that having said what he thought convenient, he always left somewhat for the imagination of his readers to supply.” While Dryden’s opinion of the poem is often quoted, it is arguably the work of Joseph Addison which was most influential in establishing the *Georgics*’ aesthetic achievement. Addison’s essay on the *Georgics*, first published as an introduction to Dryden’s 1697 translation, argues that the poem is “Virgil’s masterpiece,” “the most complete, elaborate, and finished piece of all antiquity,” which has “all the perfection that can be expected in a poem written by the greatest poet in the flower of his age, when his invention was ready, his judgement settled, and all his faculties in their full vigour and maturity.” All other aspects of the poem are subsumed beneath its aesthetic achievement, the particular challenge in didactic poetry being the marriage of form and content so as to produce something akin to a piece of seamless needlework, whose colours blur imperceptibly together. Moments in the poem which recent scholarship views in more political or darker terms are, for Addison, only an extension of its aesthetics. The passage describing civil war at the end of Book 1 is viewed as an example of how “beautiful and diverting digressions”, ostensibly unrelated to the poem’s main subject, are subtly woven into the narrative and are never gratuitous, while the plague at the end of Book 3 “has all the expressiveness that words can give.”

Addison’s aesthetic reception of the *Georgics* is visible elsewhere. As editor of the *Spectator*, he produced a series of daily articles on aesthetics in the summer of 1712 which quote

46 Dryden (1709) I: 67.
47 Addison (1709) 85.
48 Addison (1709) 91: “[I] shall conclude this poem to be the most complete, elaborate, and finished piece of all antiquity. The *Aeneis* indeed is of a nobler kind, but the *Georgic* is more perfect in its kind.”
49 Addison (1709) 92. In quoting this source I have modernized the orthography and spelling.
50 Addison (1709) 80 argues that didactic precepts require careful exposition, and should be “so finely wrought together in the same piece, that no course seam may discover where they join; as in a curious breed of needlework, one colour falls away by such just degrees, and another rises so insensibly, that we see the variety, without being able to distinguish the total vanishing of the one from the first appearance of the other.”
51 Addison (1709) 83.
52 Addison (1709) 83: “…it is worthwhile to consider how admirably he has turned the course of his narration into its proper channel, and made his husbandman concerned even in what relates to the battle, in those inimitable lines, *Scilicet et tempus ueniet*…”
53 Addison (1709) 89.
Latin poets, and the *Georgics* in particular, on a number of occasions.\(^{54}\) He sets out to inquire about taste and aesthetic appreciation, what it is and how it is acquired.\(^{55}\) It is here, therefore, that the aesthetic trend I propose comes closest to the philosophical tradition of European aesthetics associated with figures like Alexander Baumgarten, Edmund Burke, Theodor Adorno and, in particular, Kant’s *Critique of Pure Judgement*.\(^{56}\) “Delightful scenes, whether in nature, painting, or poetry”, Addison writes, “have a kindly influence on the body, as well as the mind, and not only serve to clear and brighten the imagination, but are able to disperse grief and melancholy, and to set the animal spirits in pleasing and agreeable motion.”\(^{57}\) It is the perfection of Nature and its “scenes…most apt to delight the imagination”\(^{58}\) which attracted Virgil and Horace, while landscape colours Addison’s judgement of both the *Aeneid* and the *Georgics*: the former is “like a well-ordered garden”,\(^{59}\) while the latter is “a collection of the most delightful landscapes that can be made out of fields and woods, herds of cattle, and swarms of bees.”\(^{60}\) Such is Virgil’s unrivalled aesthetic power, Addison argues in his essay, that his descriptions are often more effective than actual contemplation of the things he describes.\(^{61}\)

Addison’s reception is also seminal in its appreciation of the beauties of Italy, an appreciation formed by travelling in Italy and seeing the places described in the *Georgics*. The early eighteenth century was the heyday of the Grand Tour, when British men and women of

\(^{54}\) *Spectator*, nos. 409 and 411-421, collected as “Taste and the Pleasures of the Imagination” at Bond (1970) 172-209. No. 414 (25 June 1712) quotes G. 2. 467-470 (= Bond (1970) 184); no. 415 (26 June 1712) has as its epigraph G. 2. 155 (= Bond (1970) 186).

\(^{55}\) *Spectator* no. 409 (19 June 1712) = Bond (1970) 172: “As this word [i.e. taste] arises very often in conversation, I shall endeavour to give some account of it, and to lay down rules how we may know whether we are possessed of it, and how we may acquire that fine taste of writing, which is so talked of among the polite world.”

\(^{56}\) For a trenchant introduction to this tradition see Eagleton (1990).

\(^{57}\) *Spectator* no. 411 (21 June 1712) = Bond (1970) 177.

\(^{58}\) *Spectator* no. 414 (25 June 1712) = Bond (1970) 184: “…we always find the poet in love with a country life, where Nature appears in the greatest perfection, and furnishes out all those scenes that are most apt to delight the imagination [Addison then quotes Hor. *Epist* 2. 2. 77 and Verg. *G* 2. 467-470].”

\(^{59}\) *Spectator* no. 417 (28 June 1712) = Bond (1970) 195: “…the *Aeneid* is like a well-ordered garden, where it is impossible to find out any part unadorned, or to cast our eyes upon a single spot, that does not produce some beautiful plant or flower.”

\(^{60}\) *Spectator* no. 417 (28 June 1712) = Bond (1970) 196.

\(^{61}\) Addison (1709) 85: “And herein consists Virgil’s masterpiece, who had not only excelled all other poets, but even himself in the language of the *Georgics*; where we receive more strong and lively ideas of things from his words, than we could have done from the objects themselves: and find our imagination more affected by his descriptions, than they would have been by the very sight of what he describes.”
means travelled to Italy to experience the archaeological remains of the Roman empire.\textsuperscript{62} Many of those travelling would have been familiar with the \textit{Georgics}, and, in particular, with its famous praise of Italy in Book 2. Addison himself travelled in Italy between 1701 and 1703, which resulted in his \textit{Remarks on Several Parts of Italy}.\textsuperscript{63} The second edition is prefaced by a light-hearted letter to Lord Halifax, and has as its epigraph three lines from \textit{Georgics} 2 in Latin.\textsuperscript{64} Italy, for Addison, is not just “classic ground”\textsuperscript{65} but “Virgil’s Italy”,\textsuperscript{66} and it is clear that Virgil’s description of the country is, amidst a wide range of classical quotations, a major reference point, both in \textit{Remarks} and in his letters home:

We saw the Lake Benacus in our way, which the Italians now call Lago di Garda: it was so rough with tempests when we passed by it, that it brought into my mind Virgil’s noble description of it.

\textit{Adder lacus tantos, te Lari maxime, teque Fluctibus et fremitu assurgens, Benace, marino.}\textsuperscript{67}

I can’t but envy your being among the Alps where you may see frost and snow in the dog-days. We are here quite burnt up and are at least ten degrees nearer the sun than when you left us. I am very well satisfied twas in August Virgil wrote his O quis me gelidis sub montibus Haemi &c.\textsuperscript{68}

\textsuperscript{62} On British Grand Tourists in this period, and the influence of the classical past on their conceptions, see Sweet (2012), Chard (1999), Ayres (1997) and Black (1992).

\textsuperscript{63} Addison (1718).

\textsuperscript{64} “A Letter from Italy, to the Right Honourable Charles, Lord Halifax. In the Year MDCCI.” = Addison (1718) i-x. The letter is G. 2. 173-175: \textit{salve, magna parens frugum, Saturnia tellus, | magnae uirum: tibi res antiquae laudis et artem | ingredior sanctos ausus recludere fontis…} (“Hail great giver of crops, Saturn’s land, great giver of men: for you I embark on a subject and skill long-renowned, having dared to open up the hallowed springs…”).

\textsuperscript{65} Addison (1718) ii: “Poetic fields encompass me around | And still I seem to tread on classic ground”.

\textsuperscript{66} Addison (1718) iv: “Oh could the Muse my ravish’d Breast inspire | With Warmth like yours, and raise an equal Fire, [Unnumber’d Beauties in my Verse shou’d shine, | And \textit{Virgil’s Italy} shou’d yield to mine!” [emphasis original].

\textsuperscript{67} Addison (1718) 41, quoting G. 2. 159-160 with \textit{adde} for Mynor’s \textit{anne} in line 159: “Add to this its great lakes: you, Larus, greatest of all, and you, Benacus, swelling with waves and the sound of the sea.”

\textsuperscript{68} Letter from Rome to Edward Wortley in Geneva, dated 7 August 1701 (= Graham (1941) 29), partially quoting, and apparently slightly misremembering, G. 2. 488: \textit{o qui me gelidis consalibus Haemi | sistat...} (“O if only there were someone who would place me in the icy enclosed valleys of Haemus...”).
From at least the time of Addison, the *Georgics* is, for British readers, closely associated with Italy. This forms an important strand to the aesthetic trend under discussion, and will be returned to below.

As I stated in the introduction, I have no issue with this tradition of aesthetic interpretation per se. The artistry of Virgil’s poetry has always been one of its chief attractions to readers, and Addison’s reception of the poet remains eloquent. But in order to reassert a balance in this history of the *Georgics*, it is necessary to look at the politics of this aesthetic trend, and the ways in which it relates to broader historical and social contexts.

The first point is to emphasize that reception of the *Georgics* in eighteenth-century Britain tends to be dominated by receptions of Book 2, and in particular its praise of country life. Owing to the social bias in British education, those most acquainted with the poem were often those men who were members of the landed elite. The potential attraction of the poem’s descriptions of nature to this readership is emphasized by the social structures of the time:

> Britain, then, was governed by a landed elite of aristocracy and gentry, both of them robust and wealthy, neither in decline nor in serious difficulty as a social group […] Their awareness of themselves as ‘the landed interest’ together with the mystique of landed property did much to fuse them together. The eighteenth century was awash with literature, painting, architecture and, not least, landscape gardening which idealized its landed elite.69

In the first decades of the eighteenth century, Great Britain, as it had become on political union with Scotland in 1707, was still a predominantly agricultural and pre-industrial society; by the century’s end imperial expansion and industrial development were rapidly gathering pace.70 Land-ownership formed the basis of political power, and landowners retained primacy in the political world.71

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70 See O’Gorman (1997) 1-28 and 96-124 for an introduction to the period.
71 O’Gorman (1997) 13, 16.
The poem’s descriptions of country life in this period are seen to espouse the ideal of rural retirement during or after a political career; the country is seen as an escape from the toils and troubles of the city. Such receptions echo the interpretation of G. 2. 458-460 that Thibodeau has put forward, in which he argues that the lines can, in a Roman context, be read as urging landowners to spend time in their neglected country properties.72 Addressing his patron the Earl of Chesterfield, Dryden advocates the rural retirement of the gentleman-philosopher:

You, my Lord, enjoy your quiet in a garden, where you not only have the leisure of thinking, but the pleasure to think of nothing which can discompose your mind. A good conscience is a port which is land-locked on every side, and where no winds can possibly invade, no tempests can arise. There a man may stand upon the shore, and not only see his own image, but that of his maker, cleverly reflected from the undisturbed and silent waters. Reason was intended for a blessing, and such it is to men of honour and integrity; who desire no more, than what they are able to give themselves; like the happy Old Coricyan, whom my author describes in his fourth Georgic; whose fruits and salads on which he lived contented, were all of his own growth, and his own plantation. Virgil seems to think that the blessings of a country life are not complete, without an improvement of knowledge by contemplation and reading.

O fortunatos nimium, bona si sua norint
agricolas!73

This equating of rural happiness with intellectual leisure is, as Røstvig has shown, one of the major ways in which the second Georgic is read in the eighteenth century.74 But by appropriating the lines in the poem beginning o fortunatos (G. 2. 458-459) and applying them to gentlemen in

72 Thibodeau (2011) 108.
73 Dryden (1709) I: 74-75. The quotation is G. 2. 458-459: “O happy farmers, too happy, should they know their wealth!”
74 Røstvig (1962) I: 45: “The strong intellectual note struck by Virgil is unique; there is nothing in Horace to match Virgil’s interest in the causes of things. As the seventeenth century wore on and merged with the eighteenth, the growing interest in science was to lead to increasing emphasis on this intellectual aspect of Virgil’s praise of the happy life.” This scientific interest in Virgil is of course heavily indebted to Lucretius.
rural retirement, this reception neatly elides the ambiguity of *agricola*, which can refer to farmers generally, and not merely to landowners. “Such only can enjoy the country”, the introduction continues, “who are capable of thinking when they are there, and have left their passions behind them in the town.”

Thomson’s adaption of the *o fortunatos* lines in *The Seasons* follows this ideal of rural retirement:

> “OH knew he but his Happiness, of Men
> The happiest he! who far from public Rage,
> Deep in the Vale, with a *choice Few* retir’d,
> Drinks the pure Pleasures of the *RURAL LIFE.*”

“Autumn”, 1235-1238.

Such an ideal of blissful gentlemanly retirement to the country was often a pretence, as Samuel Johnson recognized. This is a countryside without the realities of agricultural life, and the farmer is envied not for his hard work but for his carefree existence. What is clear is that the elite political class in Britain found in the *Georgics* a vision of rural life suited to their identity and their self-expression as landowners.

The aestheticization of landscape found in Addison’s reception of the *Georgics* can be also be more broadly contextualised. For Addison taste is partly innate, and partly acquired by education and by society, by “the writings of the most polite authors” and “conversation with men of a polite genius”. “A man of polite education”, we are told, “is let into a great many pleasures that the vulgar are not capable of receiving.”

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75. Dryden (1709) I: 75. Dryden adds G. 2. 467 in Latin immediately following.
76. References to *The Seasons* are given by section and line number according to the edition of Sambrook (1981), whose text I use here.
77. *The Rambler* no. 135, 2 July 1751 (= Bate & Strauss (1969) 352): “Such examples of solitude very few of those who are now hastening from the town, have any pretensions to plead in their own justification, since they cannot pretend either weariness of labour, or desire of knowledge. They purpose nothing more than to quit one scene of idleness for another, and after having trifled in publick, to sleep in secrecy.”
of Virgil’s poetry, and frames the *Georgics* as “a collection of the most delightful landscapes”, we need to be aware that Addison’s concept of taste is socially exclusive: the appreciation of beauty is largely the preserve of a certain kind of educated gentleman. This aestheticized appreciation of landscape can disguise the patent inequalities which land ownership enforced in contemporary Britain.

“The most obvious point” argues Meiksins Wood, “is that the wealth of English agriculture in the period of agrarian capitalism created a landscape pleasing to the eye. In less prosperous peasant economies, rural poverty is an immediately visible feature of the scenery. In agrarian capitalism, the impoverished farm or squalid village has withdrawn to the margins of the rural scene or disappeared all together…leaving behind only the invisible figure of the agricultural wage-labourer, while wealth displays itself in broad green acres, woodlands, country parks and landscape gardens.” Portrayals of plantations also served to render invisible the human cruelty of slavery. Edward Long, whose *History of Jamaica* (1774) includes graphic discussions of the physiognomy and behaviour of black slaves, nevertheless described the island and its slaves in pastoral terms. “Before the discovery of America”, he writes, “the romantic idea of a poet alone could expatiate on some utopian island, blessed with perennial verdure and unfading spring. In Jamaica we find the idea realized…” The question for readers of Virgil is, how similar to Long’s aestheticization of a slave-based system of agriculture – “perennial verdure and unfading spring” – is the *Georgics*’ image of Italy?: *hic uer adsiduum atque alienis mensibus aestas* (G. 2. 149).

Thus the aesthetic trend in *Georgics* scholarship conceals much about the political realities of land in eighteenth-century Britain, realities which I argue need to be acknowledged

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80 *Spectator* no. 417 (28 June 1712) = Bond (1970) 195: “Among those of the learned languages who excel in this talent [i.e. for enlarging a reader’s imagination and inspiring creativity], the most perfect in their several kinds, are Homer, Virgil, and Ovid. The first strikes the imagination wonderfully with what is great, the second with what is beautiful, and the last with what is strange.”


83 Long (1774) I: 373. Bohls (1999) 190 comments: “Turning slaves into happy reapers and canes into treasure, Long struggles to assimilate the grueling proto-industrial routine of the colonial plantation to the Utopian idyll that had long been prominent in discourse about the Americas.” Long was classically educated, and his *History* includes Latin quotations from Cicero and Horace, though not Virgil.

84 “Here there is constant spring, and summer out of season.”
in any history of the poem and its reception. Dryden’s translation, for instance, reinforces the image of country life as the preserve of gentlemen and not as the locus of political power and social inequality. Two passages are quoted here, corresponding to G. 2. 458-460 and G. 2. 513-515:

Oh happy, if he knew his happy State!
The Swain, who, free from Business and Debate;
Receives his easie Food from Nature’s Hand,
And just Returns of cultivated Land!85

The Peasant, innocent of all these Ills,
With crooked Ploughs the fertile Fallows tills;
And the round Year with daily Labour fills.
And hence the Country Markets are supply’d:
Enough remains for household Charge beside;
His Wife, and tender Children to sustain,
And gratefully to feed his dumb deserving Train.86

In the first passage Dryden expands three lines of Virgil (G. 2. 458-460) to four, and translates the phrase procul discordibus armis, “far from clashing weapons”, as “free from Business and Debate”. In the second example, three lines of Virgil (G. 2. 513-515) become seven as Dryden significantly expands the original, and adds the phrase, not in the Latin, “innocent of all these ills”, referring to the ambitions of city life described in the immediately preceding lines.87 Both of these examples can be seen as reinforcing a perception of rural life as carefree and apolitical. While that tone is present to some extent in the original Latin, Dryden’s version emphasizes it in a marked way. It should be borne in mind that this is an era when the majority of the population

85 Dryden (1709) I: 142-143 = lines 639-642 of the translation of Book 2.
86 Dryden (1709) I: 146 = lines 738-744 of the translation of Book 2.
87 i.e. Verg. G. 2. 493-512.
of Britain were excluded from the franchise and from Parliament, and as such their political influence was severely limited.\(^{88}\)

The last point to be made in this eighteenth-century retrospective is that the *Georgics* was appropriated in expressions of national pride and patriotism closely linked to the expansion of the British empire. For Thomson, Britain’s countryside and climate are the source of its political power, something which readers may equate with Virgil’s *laudes Italiae*, which, as we have seen, emphasizes the climate of Italy as the basis for Roman political superiority. The following lines begin a passage in *The Seasons* heavily indebted to Virgil’s *laudes Italiae*:

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HEAVENS! what a goodly Prospect spreads around,
Of Hills, and Dales, and Woods, and Lawns, and Spires,
And glittering Towns, and gilded Streams, till all
The stretching Landskip into Smoke decays!
Happy BRITANNIA! where the QUEEN OF ARTS,
Inspiring Vigour, LIBERTY abroad
Walks, unconfin’d, even to thy farthest Cotts,
And scatters Plenty with unsparing Hand.
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“Summer”, 1438-1445.

Addison’s *Letter from Italy* takes a different approach. For Addison, Britain’s political power serves as compensation for the beauties of Italy and the Italian climate which Britain lacks.

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On Foreign Mountains may the Sun refine
The Grape’s soft juice, and mellow it to Wine,
With Citron Groves adorn a distant Soil,
And the fat Olive swell with Floods of Oil:
We envy not the warmer Clime that lies
In ten Degrees of more indulgent Skies,
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\(^{88}\) O’Gorman (1997) 107: “The Property Qualifications Act of 1711 obliged county MPs to possess real estate worth at least £600 per annum, borough MPs £300.”
Nor at the Coarseness of our Heav’n repine,
Tho’ o’er our Heads the frozen Pleiads shine:
‘Tis Liberty that Crowns Britannia’s Isle,
And makes her barren Rocks and her bleak Mountains smile.⁸⁹

In different ways, then, both Thomson and Addison demonstrate how the Georgics’
association with Italy, prevalent throughout the history of the poem’s reception in Britain, has a
political aspect. Readers identify with the patriotism of the laudes Italiae and adapt it to a British
context. This is emphasized by the way in which Dryden introduces, on six occasions, possessive
pronouns not present in the Latin text into his translation of the laudes Italiae. Italy becomes “our
land”:

Our Land is from the Land of Tygers freed,
Nor nourishes the Lyon’s angry Seed;
[…]
Next add our Cities of Illustrious Name,
Their costly Labour and stupend’ous Frame:
Our Forts on steepy Hills, that far below
See wanton Streams, in winding Valleys flow.
Our twofold Seas, that washing either side,
A rich Recruit of Foreign Stores provide.⁹⁰

Patriotic reception of the Georgics also appears in one of the several testimonials which
accompany the third edition of Dryden’s translation (the edition I have used). The testimonial of
George Granville (1666-1735), a politician and an acquaintance of Dryden, uses Britain’s pre-
eminence in the world as a metaphor for the pre-eminence of Dryden’s translation. Note the way
in which Britain’s growing imperial and mercantile relationship with the rest of the world is

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⁸⁹ Addison (1718) viii.
⁹⁰ Dryden (1709) I: 127 = lines 207-208 and 213-218 of the translation of Book 2, corresponding to Verg. G. 2. 151-152 and G. 2. 155-159 respectively. Two further “ours” are introduced in the following lines, “Our spacious Lakes” (= G. 2. 159) and “Our quarries deep in Earth” (= G. 2. 165).
expressed in terms which recall *Georgics* I, particularly the reference to silks from Asia (cf. *G.* 1. 121). Dryden exports his Muse “to lands remote”, something predicated on the imagined global range of British imperialism, and a reversal of the cultural translation identified in Chapter 1, whereby Virgil’s Muse is transported from Mt. Helicon to the banks of the Mincius (*G.* 3. 10-11).


As *Britain*, in rich Soil abounding wide,
Furnish’d for Use, for Luxury, and Pride,
Yet spreads her wanton Sails on ev’ry Shore,
For Foreign Wealth, insatiate still of more;
To her own Wool, the Silks of *Asia* joins.
And to her plenteous Harvests, *Indian* mines:
So *Dryden*, not contented with the Fame
Of his own Works, tho’ an immortal Name,
To Lands remote he sends his learned Muse,
The noblest Seeds of Foreign Wit to chuse.
Feasting our Sense so many various Ways,
Say, Is’t thy Bounty, or thy Thirst of Praise?
That by comparing others, all might see,
Who most excell’d, are yet excell’d by thee.91

The political contexts of patriotic reception of the *Georgics* can also be seen in the geography of *The Seasons*. Like the *Georgics*, Thomson’s poem describes the world for the reader, but in a way which is overtly political. Thomson’s poem mentions Russia, the Atlantic, Arabia, St. Kilda in the Outer Hebrides, India, the Niger, the Ganges, the Rhine, Cairo, the Orinoco, *Gallia* (for France), Mecca, Guinea, Ethiopia, Thule, *Sennar* (representing a kingdom

91 G. Granville, “To Mr. Dryden on his Translations”, = Dryden (1709) I: 108. Orthography and spelling original.
in the upper Blue Nile valley), and names Columbus and Montezuma. The temperate climate of Europe is contrasted with the torrid climate of South America, and so a racial binary is constructed between white Europeans and non-white indigenous peoples. In his description of the peoples living by the Orinoco river in South America, Thomson describes “the Native” living in trees above the river and comments:

Ill-fated Race! the softening Arts of Peace,
Whate’er the humanizing Muses teach;
The godlike Wisdom of the temper’d Breast;
Progressive Truth, the patient Force of Thought;
Investigation calm, whose silent Powers
Command the World; the LIGHT that leads to HEAVEN;
Kind equal Rule, the Government of Laws,
And all-protecting FREEDOM, which alone
Sustains the Name and Dignity of Man:
These are not theirs. The Parent-Sun himself
Seems o’er this World of Slaves to tyrannize…

“Summer”, 875-885.

The indigenous people are thus defined as lacking every cultivation of European society, cut off from the cultural and political refinement which the poem effusively celebrates. This is a “world of slaves”. Here, I suggest, we can see cultural imperialism at work: peoples are represented in literature as lacking any “civilisation” whatsoever, whether artistic, religious, or political. Such a picture can be construed as an apologia for European imperialism, which for centuries had such a nefarious influence in Latin America, by portraying it as a necessary, or at least beneficial intervention.93

92 This list is illustrative rather than exhaustive. I abbreviate the three seasons as Spr., Su., and Au. and reference by line number: Spr. 114 (Russia); Spr. 140 (the Atlantic); Spr. 501 (Arabia); Spr. 575 (“Kilda”); Spr. 758 and Su. 825-31 (India); Su. 717 (the Niger); Su. 718 (the Ganges); Au. 849 (The Rhine); Su. 977 and 1056 (Cairo); Su. 834 (the Orinoco); Su. 430 (Gallia); Su. 979 (Mecca); Su. 1020 (Guinea); Su. 1055 (Ethiopia); Su. 1168 (Thule); Su. 750 (Sennar); Su. 832 (Columbus); Su. 742 (Montezuma).

93 On the long and violent history of European (and later U.S.) imperialism in Latin America, see Galeano (2009).
The progressive image of British imperialism found in Thomson is echoed in one of the most well-known eighteenth-century receptions of the *Georgics*. Again, it is the geography of the poem, its descriptions of the world, which feature. In 1792 William Pitt the Younger quoted from Book 1 at the end of an all-night debate on the abolition of slavery in the Commons. As dawn sunlight was coming through the windows of the chamber, Pitt used Virgil’s description of dawn on different sides of the world to illustrate his metaphors of light and darkness, casting Africa as a dark continent coming at last into the light of European civilisation. In doing so he reproduces the binary worldview of Thomson’s poem:

Then may we hope that even Africa, though last of all the quarters of the globe, shall enjoy at length, in the evening of her days, those blessings which have descended so plentifully upon us in a much earlier period of the world. Then also will Europe, participating in her improvement and prosperity, receive an ample recompense for the tardy kindness (if kindness it can be called), of no longer hindering that continent from extricating herself out of the darkness which, to other more fortunate regions, has been so much more speedily dispelled –

- Nos primus equis oriens affavit anhelis;
- Illic sera rubens accendit lumina Vesper.\(^4\)

Despite the historic achievement of the abolition movement in Britain, it should be noted that Britain’s (and Europe’s) interest in Africa was never so selfless as Pitt here suggests, something the subsequent history of imperialism in Africa makes clear.

Thus the eighteenth century is of particular importance when discussing the aesthetic trend in scholarly writing on (and, in this context, literary reception of) the *Georgics*. Dryden’s

\(^{94}\) *Cobbett* vol. 29 (1817) col. 1157. The debate took place 2 April 1792, ending at half past six the following morning. The lines quoted are Verg. *G*. 1. 250-251, but the text omits two syllables in line 250, which should read *noscua ubi primus*. The lines end Virgil’s description of the celestial sphere. Page (1898: 211-212) gives helpful analysis of what is a difficult passage, and cf. Mynors ad *G*. 1. 233. The lines describe the movement of the sun through the celestial sphere: “When the dawn has first breathed on us [i.e. in the northern temperate zone of the earth] with its panting horses, there [i.e. in the equivalent southern zone] bright Evening has lit its lingering lights.”
superlative statement is still quoted, but it is Addison’s varied reception of the poem which is most important in framing the *Georgics* as an aesthetic masterpiece. This conception has had, as will be shown, a lasting influence on British receptions of the *Georgics*. But further investigation, in line with the aims of this study as outlined in the introduction, reveals the political contexts behind this aesthetic trend: the role of land ownership as a source of political power and political exclusion, the consequent social contexts behind the aestheticization of landscape, the exclusivity both of classical education and the associated notion of taste, and the ways in which the poem’s descriptions of Italy and the world are used as a vehicle both for patriotism and for constructing an apologia for British imperialism. All of which can make us reconsider the extremely political nature of Virgil’s text in a Roman context, and the cumulative biases of reception which have suppressed the political contexts of the poem in favour of aesthetic celebration.

**Scholars’ Virgil I: The Aesthetic Trend and its Contexts**

Examination of British scholarship on the *Georgics* in the period 1820-1899 shows that the poem was continually lauded in aesthetic terms. Professional classical scholarship in the nineteenth century chiefly meant textual criticism, the work of establishing reliable texts of ancient authors; published work interpreting or discussing these texts often came from the pens of amateur scholars. It is important to remember, also, that the scale of publishing was on a much smaller scale than today, and that the authors of scholarly works on Virgil came from a relatively homogenous group, which is to say, primarily, graduates of Oxford and Cambridge. 95 This aesthetic trend should not, therefore, be mistaken for a complete history of the poem. Nevertheless, the scholarship of men like Conington, Sellar, and Page is important because it forms part of a larger aesthetically-inclined reception stretching from Addison until the present day. The *Georgics* is presented as an aesthetic masterpiece, a polished and technically-outstanding artefact, written by a peaceable poet, and lacking the political resonances which the

95 For more on this scholarly picture, see Turner (1993) 286. In the last quarter of the century discursive scholarship on, and translation of, the *Georgics* begin to appear with more regularity. Translations include those of Rhoades (1881), King (1882), Burt (1883), Pead (1886) (1886a), Evans (1887), and Mackail (1889). William Sellar’s book-length study on the poet, according to Turner (1993: 308) the first book-length study of Virgil in English, first appeared in 1877 and thus is an important source of contemporary opinion on the *Georgics*. I quote from the 1897 third edition throughout.
Aeneid had for a contemporary British audience. The broader agrarian and imperial contexts of the poem, examined in Chapter 1, are largely obscured by this aesthetic trend, and therein lies the problem.

One of the most prevalent themes in scholarship on the Georgics in nineteenth-century Britain is the poem’s perfection, which is to say its beauty and its technical (i.e. metrical) achievement. Merivale calls it “in point of style the most perfect piece, perhaps, of Roman literature”. Wilkins cites the “exquisite literary finish” which makes it more attractive to schoolboys than the Aeneid; Jerram calls the poem “the most perfect and artistic production of Virgil’s genius”; Mackail “the most splendid literary production of the Empire.” Sellar argues that the poem “exhibits the highest perfection of which Latin verse is capable.” T. E. Page, writing in 1898, states “there is nothing in the Aeneid – or indeed in Latin poetry – which surpasses the artistic perfection of the Georgics.” Later in his introduction he elaborates:

The characteristic of the Georgics is indeed their consummate art. They cannot, of course, from the nature of their subject exhibit the dramatic power of the fourth Aeneid or the imaginative grandeur of the sixth, but the artistic perfection of their workmanship is of the highest order.

The poem, then, is renowned for its craft and its perfection in the sense of its finished, polished state. Sellar focuses, like Addison before him, on the poet’s achievement in aestheticizing his didactic material. “The secret of Virgil’s power”, he writes, “lies in the insight and long-practised meditation through which he abstracts the single element of beauty from

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96 For overviews of Virgilian reception in the Victorian period see Vasunia (2009a) and Turner (1993), both of which focus on the Aeneid.
97 Merivale (1850-1882) IV: 576. On Merivale, Chaplain to the House of Commons (1863-1869) and Dean of Ely (from 1869), see Rigg (2004).
98 Wilkins (1874) v.
99 Jerram (1892) I: 3.
100 Mackail (1895) 95.
101 Sellar (1897) 278. On Sellar, Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford (1848-1852) and Professor of Latin at Edinburgh (1863-1890), see Lang (2004).
102 Page (1898) iii. On Page, Sixth-Form Master at Charterhouse School (1873-1910), see Rudd (2004).
103 Page (1898) xxiii.
common sights and from the ordinary operations of industry.”

Myers, like some twentieth-century scholarship examined in the Introduction, uses a musical comparison to emphasize the aesthetic aspect of Virgil’s style. Virgil “had discovered the hidden music which can give to every shade of feeling its distinction, its permanence, and its charm; that his thoughts seem to come to us on the wings of melodies prepared for them from the foundation of the world.” The perfection of the Geogics in a literal sense – its finish or its polish – means that, in its own way, its surpasses the Aeneid, a poem which famously “lacks the final touches of the master’s hand.” The similarity here with Addison’s conception, discussed above, of a masterpiece which successfully aestheticizes its didactic subject matter and which can be favourably compared to the Aeneid, is clear.

Virgil’s reputation among Victorian intellectuals suffered in comparison with Homer and due to a preference for Greek over Roman literature. “The most powerful classical literary force in the nineteenth century”, argues Turner, “was the appreciation of Homer and of Greek literature in general.” Virgil’s reputation, had, since at least the seventeenth century in Britain, also waxed and waned according to the political climate of the day, closely linked to prevailing opinions of Octavian. Such intellectual opinion should not be taken to suggest, however, that the study of Virgil went into abeyance. The poet remained a school text and in the second half of the century his reputation was rehabilitated, with the Aeneid now cast as a political and imperial model for contemporary British life.

The defensive tone of Geogics scholarship at this time is to be seen partly within this broader context of the defence of Roman literature against a superior contemporary estimation

104 Sellar (1897) 231. cf. Addison (1709) 88: “He [sc. Virgil] delivers the meanest of his precepts with a kind of grandeur; he breaks the clods and tosses the dung about with an air of gracefulness.”
105 Myers (1908) 115-116. This essay on Virgil was first published in 1883.
106 Jerram (1892) I: 3.
107 cf. Addison (1709) 91: “The Aeneis indeed is of a nobler kind, but the Georgic is more perfect in its kind.”
109 See Vasunia (2009a) 85.
of Greek literature: the aesthetic trend can be seen as one way in which Virgil could be defended against his critics.\footnote{Turner (1993) 297: “Roman literature in general remained on the aesthetic defensive for the entire nineteenth century. The difficulties Roman literature as literature confronted in the wake of the Greek revival and romantic aesthetics became clear in the most impressive effort to defend it.”} Myers dismisses German criticisms of Virgil by emphasizing a distinction between history and art. By placing Virgil’s poetry in the latter category, and by making history and art mutually exclusive, historical interpretation of the poem is rendered inferior to artistic appreciation:

The set which the German criticism of this century has made against Virgil is perfectly explicable, and in one sense a perfectly justifiable thing. It is one among many results which have flowed from the application of the historical faculty, pure and simple, to the judgement of art.\footnote{Myers (1908) 107. For this rebuttal of German criticism of Virgil, see also Papillon (1882) xxii-xxiii and Sellar (1897) 60. For more on early nineteenth-century disparagement of the poet, British as well as German, see Vasunia (2009a) 98-100, 109-110 and Turner (1993) 292-296.}

The article on Virgil in the seventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannia*, quoted by Turner,\footnote{Turner (1993) 293-294.} is clear about the imitative nature of Virgil’s poetry, and claims that the poet was “deficient in the highest attribute of genius, in the power of creating and bodying forth original conceptions”.\footnote{“Virgil”, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 7th edition (1842), vol. 21 p. 655.} Nevertheless, Virgil makes up for this deficiency by, among other things, his pre-eminence among Roman poets in his powers of description, his appreciation of beauty, and his versification.\footnote{“Virgil”, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 7th edition, p. 655.} Despite the critical consensus which placed Virgil below Homer in the nineteenth century, that is, the status of the *Georgics* remained high. The *Britannica* article just quoted, for instance, while acknowledging the poem’s imitative character,\footnote{“Virgil”, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 7th edition, p. 657.} also cites “the wonderful union which this masterwork presents of didactic precept, varied and splendid description, touching pathos and sensibility, episodes at once appropriate and striking…displaying all the resources of the richest poetical treasury.”\footnote{“Virgil”, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 7th edition, p. 657.} “The sweetness and
easy flow of versification by which the Eclogues are distinguished”, it continues, “gave but faint indication of the matchless power, variety, and magnificence of the Georgics.”

Virgil’s aesthetic achievement is not disputed here. Rather, by examining some further contexts of the aesthetic trend, we can see how it serves to obscure the politics of the Georgics. The first of such contexts is the biographical emphasis prevalent in Virgilian scholarship at this time. Biographical information is gathered from the poems and from the ancient lives of the poet, which contributes to a rustic and apolitical picture of Virgil. I do not suggest that this biographical reading is not valid, but that it reflects, as all writing does, authorial bias. A good indication of the prevalence of biography is given by Mackail, writing in 1895:

His own early years had been spent in the pastures of the Mincio, among his father’s cornfields and coppices and hives; and his newer residence, by the seashore near Naples in the winter, and in summer at his villa in the lovely hill-country of Campania, surrounded him with all that was most beautiful in the most beautiful of lands. His delicate health made it easier for him to give his work the slow and arduous elaboration that makes the Georgics in mere technical finish the most perfect work of Latin, or perhaps of any literature.

Note the way in which this biographical reading aestheticizes the landscape of Italy – “the most beautiful of lands” – and in so doing obscures the political Italian contexts which were discussed in Chapter 1. Italy is imagined as a unity, a fact which perhaps reflects the mid nineteenth-century context of the Italian Risorgimento, but which is certainly anachronistic when applied to the Italian peninsula in the late first century B.C.

Scholars see Virgil primarily as the poet of the Eclogues and Georgics, and not of the Aeneid. Conington remarked on the tendency for Virgil to be regarded as “the poet of rural life,

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119 For text and translation of the major late-antique and medieval uitae Vergilianae see Ziolkowski & Putnam (2008) 179-403. The most important of these is that of the fourth-century grammarian Aelius Donatus, believed to be based on a lost second-century life of the poet by Suetonius. Stok (2014) provides background to this biographical tradition.
120 Mackail (1895) 95.
who is to be estimated not by the ambitious task which imperial vanity thrust upon his manhood, but by the more simple and genial works to which he turned of himself in the freshness of youth.”

This is clear in the preface to one of John Keble’s lectures as Professor of Poetry, first published in 1844. “He is to be ranked”, Keble wrote, “among the poets who delight in country life, not in action. It is clear that he wrote the Aeneid somewhat against the grain: for, first, he is quite uninterested in the character of Aeneas himself: next he gladly catches at every opportunity of digressing into the quiet charms of Nature: finally, he makes it clear that he thoroughly detested war and warlike affairs.”

This image of a poet averse to conflict reappears in Sellar’s study, when he writes that “the recoil from the cruel and violent passions of the time in which his early manhood was cast draws forth his tender compassion for all human suffering, and creates in his imagination the ideal of a life of peace…”

The violence of the Georgics, whether in its depictions of nature, its imperial hyperbole, or its martial image of agriculture – not to mention the violence of the civil conflict so central to the context of its composition – is obscured by this picture of a pacific poet and poem.

The biographical reading of Victorian scholars thus supports the aesthetic trend, by imagining the poet as primarily a lover of Nature (a Nature which is idealised and largely conflict free), and by depoliticizing the figure of the poet. What politics there is in Virgil’s poetry is transferred to the Aeneid, leaving the Eclogues and Georgics, by comparison, apolitical. Virgil the poet is a grateful supporter of Maecenas and Octavian, possessed by none of the ambivalence about his role which is a feature of scholarship and literature in the later twentieth century.

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123 Sellar (1897) 9.
124 Note also the story at Donat. Vit. Verg. 22 (for text see Brugnoli & Stok (1997)) about the poet’s meticulous working-method when writing the Georgics – composing in the morning and revising for the rest of the day like a she-bear licking her cubs – which can support a view of the poem as a finished, polished work.
125 I refer here to the scholarly debate’s about Virgil’s relationship to Octavian discussed in the Introduction. Important also is Hermann Broch’s 1945 novel Der Tod des Vergil, for which see Broch (2000).
Georgics itself is filled with a “spirit of patriotism,” as part of Octavian’s agricultural policy for the regeneration of the Italian countryside in the aftermath of civil war. And while scholars are hesitant about the tone in which Octavian is referred to at G. 1. 24-42, their reception of Virgil is, to use the language of more modern scholarship, pro-Augustan. “Men naturally turned to Octavian”, writes Jerram, “as a visible object of reverence, as a sort of incarnation of that divine providence on which the destinies of the empire depended.” Merivale cites the “gratitude for himself, and hope for his country, with which he [Virgil] seized the popular sentiment in favour of the Western Triumvir [Octavian], in his contest with the pirate Sextus and the renegade Antonius.” “His ardour in the cause of law, order, and tradition”, Merivale continues, “assumed the character of a religious sentiment, and he conceived himself devoted to a great moral mission.”

The poem’s aestheticization of Italy is another important factor to be borne in mind, and can be seen as an extension of the biographical tendency just discussed. Sellar’s Chapter 7 is entitled “The Georgics as the Representative Poem of Italy”, in which the poem is called “the finest work of Italian art”, “a genuine work of Italian art and inspiration”, its details “characteristic of the Italian mind.” Again, this conception perhaps reflects more the nineteenth-century contexts of Italian unification and appreciation for the art and culture of the Italian Renaissance, than the historical contexts surrounding the poem’s composition. One of the most consistent features

126 Jerram (1892) I: 14: “The spirit of patriotism is indeed conspicuous throughout the Georgics […] with the re-establishment of peace men felt that a new era was dawning, and it was a marked feature of the policy of Augustus and his minister Maecenas to promote the revival of that form of industry [i.e. agriculture], for which Italy under the republic had been so long renowned.”
127 There is no evidence for an agricultural policy on the part of Octavian (see Horsfall (1995) 69), and this picture appears to drawn from the poem itself (e.g. G. 1. 505-508, 2. 35-41, 3. 41).
128 “…we feel that Virgil has exceeded reasonable limits when he indulges in such imaginations as Tethys buying Augustus as a son-in-law with the dowry of all her waves” (Jerram (1892) I: 17). “The frigid mythology with which the first Georgic opens is absolutely bad” (Myers (1908) 153).
130 Merivale (1850-1882) IV: 574.
131 Merivale (1850-1882) IV: 574.
132 Sellar (1897) 276.
133 Sellar (1897) 261.
134 Sellar (1897) 263.
135 See Broughall (2015) 149, although it is hard to say whether this cultural climate had a direct influence on classical scholars: “At home, early-to-mid Victorian society also conveyed an elevated interest in contemporary Italian culture that derived in large part from the Romantic Movement’s recent, influential
of the reception of the *Georgics* in Britain is strong appreciation of its depiction of Italy, something bolstered by the experience of Italian travel which many readers of the poem enjoyed. I have discussed Addison’s reception in this regard, and will examine further receptions below.

The Italian peninsula in the late first-century B.C. was by no means a unified political entity, and British scholars’ retrospective vision of a picturesque “Italy” ignores the civil and imperial conflict which marks the history of the peninsula in Roman times. The important point is that the “idea of Italy” to which scholars respond is often aestheticized and thus depoliticized. Jerram quotes an unnamed contemporary author who portrays Italy as a timeless land of rural happiness. “In the country of Virgil, in the land of the *Georgics*, there is the poetry of agriculture still. The reaper with his hook, the ploughman with his oxen, the girl who gleans amongst the trailing vines, the men that sing to get a blessing on the grape, all have a certain grace and dignity of the old classic ways left with them.” With the *Georgics*, wrote Myers, “the land of Italy had for the first time been impressively presented as a living and organic whole. And the idea of Italy’s lovely primacy among all other countries was destined to subsist and grow.”

The aesthetic appreciation of Italy, and of the *Georgics*’ Italian themes, is contrasted with other places mentioned in the poem. Behind scholars’ strong identification with Italy is an implicit contrast with the “East”, and scholarship thus reproduces, rather than critiques, the contrast found in the *laudes Italiae* itself. Merivale writes that Virgil’s praise of Italy was designed to dissuade Roman statesmen from retiring abroad, from “quitting the stern duties of their fatherland for the pleasant indulgences of the East.” Sellar puts the contrast more strongly. Discussing Book 3, he writes that “the contrasted pictures of the illimitable pastures of Libya and veneration of Italy. Significantly, for instance, Italian became – arguably, after French and alongside German – one of the most popular second languages for Victorians to learn. Meanwhile, other elements of Italian culture gained particular popularity, such as its Renaissance art and literature – particularly the works of Dante –, while the operas of Rossini and Verdi also enjoyed a contemporary vogue. This attraction was also exemplified by the popularity of the ‘Anglo-Italian’ architectural style, whose most famous example was Victoria and Albert’s residence, Osborne House (1845-51).”

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136 Sellar (1897) 185.
137 Jerram (1892) I: 15.
138 Myers (1908) 151-152.
139 Merivale (1850-1882) IV: 578.
of the wintry wastes of Scythia enable us to realise more exquisitely the charm of that fresh Italian pastoral scene immediately preceding.” The laudes Italiae, meanwhile, “the great episode on the beauties and riches of Italy”, “is introduced in immediate contrast to the account of the prodigal luxuriance of Nature in the forests and jungles of the East.”

It is not made explicit in the scholarship I have examined, but one can perhaps see an implicit comparison between Britain and Italy, as is evident, for instance, in the eighteenth-century reception of James Thomson. Britain is a land of natural beauty and political power, in contrast to a stereotypical picture of the over-abundance and political immaturity of the East. Britain’s role in the world, and in India in particular, is an important context for nineteenth-century scholarship. In the preface to his Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography, originally published 1852-1857, William Smith remarks on how the extent of modern travel has improved knowledge of ancient geography, and that “there are few countries of the ancient world which have not been described by our own countrymen”. Conington, in his note to G. 2. 122 – the line about the great height of Indian trees – is able to quote the eyewitness account of Mr. Macleane concerning the jungles of the Malabar coast. I argue, therefore, that the reception of Italy in Georgics’ scholarship at this time can be seen as one of the many ways in which the Roman and British empires were compared. In other words, that there is an imagined continuity between Italy as the centre of Roman power, and Britain as the centre of the British empire. Both places are celebrated for their natural beauty and their political prowess. The patriotism of the laudes Italiae becomes a potential model for British patriotism in the nineteenth century, as it had been in the testimonials to Dryden’s translation and in Thomson’s The Seasons, discussed above.

140 Sellar (1897) 236.
141 Sellar (1897) 236.
142 Sellar (1897) 236.
146 For the kind of implicit comparison I am arguing for here, compare the conclusion of Vasunia (2009a) 113: “Few British readers explicitly identified the Virgilian imperium as the empire of their own time, but the authors whom we have considered here illustrate how their conceptions of empire foreshadowed in Virgil’s verse could be rendered consistent with an understanding of the British Empire.” 113.
There are also Victorian political and social contexts to be borne in mind. As was the case in the receptions of Addison in eighteenth century, Virgil is a standard-bearer for taste. Comparing two poets, Conington states that “In Virgil [in comparison with Lucretius], the imagination may or may not be awakened, but the taste is almost invariably satisfied.” Sellar goes further in assessing Virgil’s place in literary history. “The history of the progress of taste”, he writes, might largely be illustrated by reference to the place the works of Virgil have held, in the teaching of youth and among the refined pleasures of manhood, between the age of Dante and the early part of the present century.” Sellar’s reference to “the refined pleasures of manhood” should remind us of the social bias in classical education in Britain at this time, which meant that the acquisition of good taste was a strictly circumscribed opportunity. A passage from the introduction to Keightley’s 1846 work highlights, meanwhile, the link between literary appreciation of the Eclogues and Georgics and the life of a gentleman:

I am not without hope that young men, from reading and understanding the rural poetry of Virgil, and learning something of the agriculture of the ancients, may have their curiosity excited about that of the present day, and thus be led to acquire a taste for rural life and husbandry; and that afterwards, as landlords and private gentlemen, or as professional men, they may take a lively interest in our British agriculture, and seek to promote the welfare and to elevate the character of those engaged with it.

As for Addison, then, reading Virgil is, for Keightley, Conington, and Sellar, an education in taste, and taste is the mark of a gentleman. Given the association between classical education and political influence in this period, as well as the social exclusivity of that education (that is, the ability to read Virgil in the first place), to which much of the population had little

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148 Sellar (1897) 59. See also Sellar (1897) 68: “It would be no exaggeration to say that the poems of Virgil, and especially the Aeneid, have contributed more than any other works of art in modern times, not only to stamp the impression of ancient Rome on the imagination, but to educate the sensibility to generous emotion as well as to literary beauty.”
149 Keightley (1846) vi.
chance of access, taste is necessarily an exclusionary concept by which to define Virgil’s status as a classic.

If the Aeneid was appropriated in the late-Victorian period as being representative of what Sellar calls “the idea of Rome”, the Georgics was, by contrast, seen as a relatively apolitical work, the work of a pacific poet seeking to portray the beauties of the countryside in general, and of Italy in particular. This conception of the poem obscures the political contexts dealt with in Chapter 1 – the extremely political nature of land and labour in Italy, and the depiction of lands and peoples implicated in the history of Roman imperialism – as well as certain social and political contexts of nineteenth-century British Classics. Victorian scholarship, that is, bequeaths a largely benign image of the poem. The level of ambivalence and pessimism which scholars like Putnam, Ross, and Thomas would later read in it are not found here. The depiction of Italy in Book 2 is not an ironic depiction of a golden age, but rather a charming and vivid depiction of “the old Italian land and people”. The plague is not a moment of existential crisis, but is, rather, “less in accordance with modern than which ancient taste, which seemed rather to enjoy the gruesome and portentous.” The lines describing the mourning ox (G. 3. 517-524) are praised by Page for their “unequalled pathos…the marvellous simplicity of pictorial effect.”

Sellar, however, and in contrast to the general trend in nineteenth-century scholarship, is aware of the poem’s politics, and makes the geographical contexts of Roman power explicit. He notes that land was “the great source” of Roman prosperity, and that the Georgics “are inspired by that impulse which first started the Latin race on its career of conquest, and which continued to animate the struggle with the reluctant forces of Nature, as it had animated the struggle with the other races of Italy for the possession of the soil.”

150 Sellar (1897) 185.  
152 Sellar (1897) 80.  
153 Page (1898) xxv.  
154 Page (1898) xxviii.  
155 Sellar (1897) 268.  
156 Sellar (1897) 268.
history of the Italian peninsula, Sellar is also cognisant of a broader Mediterranean context, and the economic geography discussed in Chapter 1.

By references to the varied products of other lands we are reminded of the active commercial intercourse between Rome and the East [...] We see how the success of the Roman arms had made the products of the whole world – the ‘saffron dyes of Tmolus’, the ‘ivory of India’, the ‘spices of Arabia’, the ‘iron of the Chalybians,’ the ‘medicinal drugs of Pontus,’ the ‘brood mares of Epirus’ – part of the possessions of Rome. We are reminded too of the fact that many Roman and Italians were settled as colonists in the provinces of the Empire, and that Virgil had them also in view in the instruction which he imparts.¹⁵⁷

Sellar’s awareness of the poem’s imperial politics, however, is the exception, rather than the rule, in British scholarly receptions of the Georigcs at this time. Throughout the twentieth century the aesthetic achievement of the poem continued to be highlighted, often at the expense of historical examination of its political and imperial contexts. This aesthetic trend has roots, as we have seen, in eighteenth-century receptions, particularly those of Joseph Addison. It thus serves to highlight the way scholarship can maintain continuities of thought over a long period of time. For nineteenth-century scholars the Virgil of the Georigcs is primarily, to use Tennyson’s phrase, a “Landscape-lover, lord of language.”¹⁵⁸ But, as argued in the Introduction, the history of a poem’s scholarship is only one way, if an influential way, in which the history of a poem can be written. The history of relative judgements about Greek versus Latin literature, or about Homer versus Virgil, is a narrow frame through which to view Virgilian reception. Popular receptions of the poem show how the agricultural subject matter of the poem held appeal at this time, and also how the Georigcs was appropriated in strikingly political contexts. It is to such popular receptions that I now turn.

¹⁵⁷ Sellar (1897) 266.
¹⁵⁸ From the 1882 poem “To Virgil”, for which see Ricks (1987) III: 99.
Popular Reception I: The *Georgics* at Home

The *Georgics* had a modest presence in the newspapers and periodicals of nineteenth-century Britain. Quotations from the poem, mostly in Latin but also in English translation, appear in a variety of contexts, sometimes as single lines taken out of context, but also by writers who deliberately seek to invoke the poem and its themes in service of their argument. This was the age of periodicals, leading vehicles for literary and social criticism throughout the century, and often explicitly aligned with a political position. As well as newspapers like *The Times* and *The Manchester Guardian*, there were many local and regional titles in circulation, short compendia of advertisements, editorial matter, and reports from correspondents. Quotations from the poem drawn from such sources provide evidence for what we can tentatively call popular reception of the *Georgics*, provided that the social and educational factors which limited access to Latin literature are borne in mind. Many of the sources quoted here are anonymous, but it is nevertheless apparent that the most common profile represented is the man, educated in Classics, and now in a public career, who uses the poem to reflect an experience or to argue a point. This type of source material is therefore inherently limited. It does not tell us the exact opinions of readers about the poem, and it represents, not all those who read the poem, but those whose remarks on it have been preserved in the archive.

In spite of such reservations, these sources allow for examination of a particular historical moment, when the agricultural concerns of the *Georgics* and those of its British readers were often in concert, and when those readers used the poem to reflect on the dynamics of past and present, city and country, home and abroad. In the middle and late nineteenth century land still formed the basis of the wealth of the British aristocracy, and agriculture still played a more central role in British society – the success or failure of the harvest, for instance – than it does today. By examining this particular type of source material, it is hoped that a picture of the poem will emerge which is not confined to scholarly opinion about the poem’s beauties, nor to narrow judgements about Virgil’s relationship to Homer. Rather, in this section I hope to show that the

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159 For background on, and an index to, Victorian periodicals, see Houghton et al. (1966-1989).

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poem was, in this period, a living poem for some of its readers, readers who were less concerned with the nuances of intertextuality and literary history than with the poem’s actual subject matter and how it related, even if in ostensibly superficial ways, to their lives: the harvest and horses, bees and the weather. The agricultural subject matter of the poem, that is, was not just a surface but a source of interest in itself. This reception also reflects, in two instances to be discussed, the politics which lies behind appreciation of the poem in this British context.

Quotations from the *Georgics* in newspapers and periodicals reflect the idiosyncrasies of the media in which they appear. An 1875 article in *The Times*, reprinted from *The Pall Mall Gazette*, notes the establishment of a fund for horse-breeding in Britain and Ireland, and inquires as to whether there is such a thing as “a good colour for a horse”. The first point of authority invoked is Virgil’s *Georgics*, and the writer is aware that the identification of some of the colours remains uncertain:

The ancients, no doubt, attached considerable importance to the colour of a horse, as is only too well known to every schoolboy whose education has been carried as far as the third book of Virgil’s “Georgics” and has taught him the following general rule [quotes *G*. 3. 81-83], though the information is not worth so much as if would be if critics, commentators and others could be quite certain what colours are intended.

An 1894 article in *The Birmingham Daily Post* entitled “The Moon and the Weather” informs readers of the “saws and superstitions referring to her supposed influence.” “The state of the weather during the first quarter”, we are told, “is said to be an indication of the meteorological

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160 “The Colour of Horses”, *The Times*, 12 May 1875, p. 7. Second and subsequent references to each article quoted in Chapters 2 and 3 are abbreviated slightly for convenience. Full bibliographic information for all newspaper and periodical articles quoted is provided in the Bibliography.

161 *G*. 3. 81-83: honesti | spadices glaucique, color deterrimus albis | et giluo... (“The best horses are chestnut-coloured or blue-eyed, the worst are white or dun.”) The colours identified by three words here – spadix, glaucus, and giluus – remain uncertain, and so the translations offered are highly provisional. For more of these words and scholarly suggestions as to their colours, see Mynors ad *G*. 3. 81-82 and 3. 82-83.

162 “The Colour of Horses”, *The Times*.

conditions of the remaining three quarters. This belief is, at any rate, as old as Virgil.”¹⁶⁴ The article then quotes four lines from Dryden’s translation of Book 1:

But four nights old, for that’s the surest sign,
With sharpened horns, if glorious then she shine,
Next day, nor only that, but all the moon,
Till her revolving race be wholly run,
Are void of tempests both by land and sea.¹⁶⁵

An 1881 article from a Guernsey newspaper, meanwhile, also includes the *Georgics*. A discussion of bees in ancient and modern poetry takes in Wordsworth, Roberts Burns, and, among others, Virgil. The author informs the reader of the well-known metaphor, and goes on to mark a difference between ancient and modern depictions:

In the greatest of all didactic poems, the fourth Georgic of Virgil, though the making of honey is the subject, yet the main interest is centred on the bee as a member of an organised state. […]

From Virgil to Wordsworth is an abrupt transition, but it is not till we come to nineteenth-century poetry that we find the bee studied and described not for the honey and moral lessons its yields, but as a thing of beauty in itself.¹⁶⁶

These three articles, then, highlight the ways in which the subject matter of the *Georgics* appeared in contemporary print media. The writers are aware of certain points of interpretation, whether the lack of clarity as to the colours of horses, or the metaphor of bees-as-citizens. The ways in which the poem is invoked differ: quoted in Latin, in English, and mentioned within a more general discussion. All three highlight the ways in which the subject matter of the poem was relevant, even in minor ways, to the concerns of nineteenth-century British readers.

¹⁶⁵ Lines 581-585 of Dryden’s translation of *Georgics* 1 (Dryden (1709) I: 144), corresponding to G. 1. 432-435: *sin ortu quarto (namque is certissimus auctor) | pura neque obtunsis per caelum cornibus ibit, | totus et ille dies et qui nascentur ab illo | exactum ad mensem pluaia ventisque carebunt….*
The *Georgics* is invoked in more sustained ways in relation to rural life. An article in 1865 considers the farmer who participates in the local hunt, in a piece which develops into a praise of the countryside. The rhetorical binary of rural and urban life from the end of *Georgics* 2 is reproduced in a contemporary English context: “O fortunati sua si bona norint farmers of England! Who in town is the farmer’s equal?” The farmer is praised as “the most indispensable adjunct to the field” for his knowledge and efficient use of horses. The appropriation of G. 2. 458-459 reappears in a way which is conspicuous throughout British receptions of the *Georgics*, as an optimistic tag:

A farmer’s horse is never lame, never unfit to go, never throws out curbs, never breaks down before or behind. Like his master he is never showy. He does not paw and prance, and arch his neck, and bid the world admire his beauties; but like his master, he is useful; and when he is wanted, he can always do his work. O fortunatus nimium Agricola, who has one horse, and that a good one, in the middle of a hunting country.

A similarly optimistic picture of rural life is given by an article in the *New Sporting Magazine* from 1851. A piece on the forthcoming hunting season quotes G. 1. 121-123 to emphasise the successful effort in bringing in the harvest. The piece opens with the quotation, in Latin, and then quotes from the *Aeneid* to highlight an imagined alternative situation:

Never has the harvest been secured under circumstances more fortuitous, throughout the United Kingdom, than the past. The farmer’s cares and toils, inspired by hope, have been happily realised. Productive – could I but likewise add profitable – crops, with a beautiful season to gather them, have rewarded his labours; the weather, with few exceptions, could not have been more favourable: thus his expenses in housing the grain have been moderate – a bountiful dispensation of Providence, which must be gratefully

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167 “The Hunting Farmer”, *The Sherborne Mercury*, 7 March 1865, p. 2, including an adaption of G. 2. 458-459: *o fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint, | agricolas!* (“O happy farmers, too happy, should they know their wealth!”).
168 “The Hunting Farmer”, *The Sherborne Mercury*.
169 “The Hunting Farmer”, *The Sherborne Mercury*. 

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acknowledged by all classes. How different would the condition of the agriculturalists have been if the following remark of Virgil’s had been applicable! [quotes Aen. 2. 305-307].

In these two articles, that is, mid-century accounts of hunting and harvest invoke the *Georgics* to depict a positive image of rural life, and in so doing demonstrate the relevance of the poem to contemporary concerns.

The *Georgics* is also appropriated as a means of illustrating the impact of modernity on the countryside, as part of a larger discourse of past and present. An 1857 article from *The Morning Chronicle*, reprinted in a Yeovil newspaper, argues for the continued importance of agriculture to the British economy, which is to say the importance of the land-owning class, what is called the “agricultural interest”. But the challenges of modernity are initially evoked in Virgilian terms:

> Agriculture is no longer that poetic and imaginative science in praise of which the Georgics were written to reconcile the veterans to the plough. It is by the gift – not of the fauns and dryads, and Cea and Neptune, and the cypressed Silvanus – but of Yankee mowing machines, subsoil ploughing, alkalis, and guano, that –

> ‘Chaoniam pingui glandem mutavit arista

> Poculaque inventis Acheoloia miscuit uvis.’

Here two lines from the highly-literary introduction to *Georgics* 1 are used to describe a primeval image of agriculture in contrast to the technology of contemporary practice. The idealized

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170 “The Forthcoming Hunting Season”, *New Sporting Magazine*, October 1851, p. 261. The lines quoted are G. 1. 121-123 *pater ipse colendi | haud facilem esse uiam uoluit, primusque per artem | mouit agros, curis acuens mortalium corda…* (“Jupiter himself did not wish the path of cultivation to be easy, and he it was who first stirred the fields by cunning, sharpening human hearts with cares…”) and Aen. 2. 305-307: *…rapidus montano flumine torrens | sternit agros, sternit sata laeta boumque labores | praecipitisque trahit siluas* (“…a swift torrent from a mountain stream flattens the fields, flattens the fertile crops and the cattle’s efforts, drags the woods headlong…”).
171 “Conservatism and Agricultural Prosperity Identical”, *The Sherborne Mercury*, 4 August 1857, p. 4. The lines quoted are G. 1. 8-9: “[The earth] exchanged the Chaonian acorn for plump corn, and mixed cups of water from the river Achelous with newly-discovered grapes [i.e. in order to make wine].” The reference to *Cea* at G. 1. 14 is to the island of Ceos, not to a god.
agricultural past imagined here is not based on personal recollection or on any historical picture of British agriculture, but on the “poetic and imaginative science” of a classical Latin poem.

Two further articles show this contrast between past and present. An 1874 article on “Harvest Scenes and Operations” in the Exeter & Plymouth Gazette gives a brief history of harvest customs. As is often the case in such articles, the Bible and ancient Greece and Rome serve as the initial points of interest. The piece notes the description from Georgics 1 of pre-harvest rituals, and then proceeds to draw a direct comparison between Roman and British custom:

The Romans, according to Virgil (Georgics, Book I.) were accustomed to precede harvest operations with the festival of the Ambarvalia, and the poet says: – “Let not any-one put the sickle to the ripe corn till, in honour of Ceres, having his temples bound with wreathed oak, he dance in measure uncouth and sing hymns.” We reverse the custom of the Romans and have our Harvest Festivals and Thanksgiving Services at the termination, instead of the commencement, of the ingathering. But alike in all places, and in all times, the field of operations where reaping is being conducted has always been a pleasant and most interesting spot to invite human footsteps, well calculated to open the mind to serene and happy contemplations.  

What is apparent again is the familiarity of the Georgics, the ease with which it is related to contemporary British life. The fact that the Latin poem echoes the writer’s own experience becomes evidence for the universality – “alike in all places, and in all times” – of one of the most important events in an agricultural society, the successful harvest. This picture of timelessness is contrasted with the pressures of modernity. “We need not travel far back to the times of the Romans”, the writer notes, “for changed customs in regard to harvest practices, as nothing short of a revolution in regard to them has taken place in England during a single generation.”

173 “Harvest Scenes and Operations”, The Exeter and Plymouth Gazette, 14 August 1874, p. 6. The lines quoted are a translation of G. 1. 347-350: neque ante | falcem maturis quisquam supponat aristas | quam Cereri torta redimitus tempora quercu | det motus incompositos et carmina dicat. For Servius’ and Macrobius’ relating of these (and the immediately preceding) lines to the Ambarvalia – something not made explicit in the text – see Mynors ad G. 1. 338 and 345.
advent of what the article calls the “Reaping Machine” has replaced the groups of men with sickles formerly conspicuous during the harvest. This reception of the *Georgics* thus serves to buttress a sense of permanence associated with the harvest and its customs, in the face of rapid technological change.

Similar concerns animate an 1887 article in *The Newcastle Courant*. A correspondent records his encounter during the harvest with “an old man of more than three score and ten, whose regular habits are a standing reproof to the laxity of the present generation.” The writer inquires as to when the rain had begun, and the old man’s distrust of his clock is contrasted with his personal sense of time. When the writer mentions the clock on the local church tower, the man complains of its inaccuracy, despite the fact that someone is hired to keep it on time. The old man, we are told by contrast, “had never worn a watch, and had always hit the time to a minute all his life.” Thus the article arguably invokes a contrast between the pre-industrial time-keeping and work routine of the old man, with the regularity of the clock and the work-discipline imposed by nineteenth-century capitalism. The writer then uses the *Georgics* to summon up this idealised picture of the old man’s self-reliance and of the pre-industrial countryside:

> My old friend is one qui laudat tempora peracta, and with whom it is always pleasant to foregather in the early morning of these bright autumn days, because of the spirit of industry that is in him, and because of his cheery looks and pleasant voice. I never see him without thinking of that old man in Virgil’s *Georgics*, who dwelt beneath the tower of Oebalia, who had always the first pot-herbs of the season on his table and the first new cheese in the market.

175 “Harvesting”, *The Newcastle Courant*, 26 August 1887, p. 3.
176 “Harvesting”, *The Newcastle Courant*.
177 The impact of industrial capitalism on attitudes to time and work in Britain in this period is the subject of Thompson (1967), to which this point is indebted.
178 “Harvesting”, *The Newcastle Courant*. The Latin phrase, which can be translated as “[one] who praises times past”, is perhaps the writer’s own elaboration of an Horatian phrase, *laudator temporis acti* (Hor. * Ars P.* 173) and, if so, further evidence of a classical education. The passage (G. 4. 125-148) does not mention cheese, and is thus slightly misremembered.
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Corycius senex of Georgics 4 is transported to the north of England in the nineteenth century, and the picture of self-sustaining frugality is used to idealise the recent past and to criticize contemporary life. The old man reminisces about wages and prices in his youth, great loaves baked by his mother every Friday: “He durst say they would turn up their noses at such things now; but it was his humble opinion that there were [sic] far more happiness and contentment among men in country places when he was young…”179

The subject matter of the Georgics was thus relevant in a small way to the concerns of its British readers at this time. In contrast to the academic history of the poem, which tends (understandably) to focus on matters of language and literary history, readers identified strongly with the poem’s agricultural subject matter and related it to their own experiences. This is most evident in relation to the cattle plague of 1865.

The description of plague which ends the third book of the Georgics (G. 3. 440-566) is in many ways the key section of the poem. Taking inspiration from Lucretius’ treatment of the Athenian plague recorded by Thucydides,180 Virgil changes focus from human to animal, allowing for a continuation of the anthropomorphic treatment of animal life which has dominated the book up to this point. The plague is the poem’s great moment of existential crisis, when all the hard work of the farmer, and all the teaching of the didactic poet, are undone and reduced to nothing; when the sunny vistas of the second book and the pastoral world of the Eclogues are corrupted by death and disease.181 The plague tends to receive far less attention in nineteenth-century scholarship than the second book. Virgil, following Lucretius,182 holds life and death in constant tension throughout the four books of the poem, as readers have long noted. Arguably, however, it was not until the work of Putnam and Ross in the 1970s and 1980s that the centrality of the plague to the poem’s vision was reflected in its critical reception.183

180 Lucr. 6. 1138-1286; Thuc. 2. 47-52.
181 On the plague’s corruption of the pastoral world see Thomas ad G. 3. 464-467: “V. creates a strong pastoral image, but it is pastoral gone wrong: sheep staying in the shade, listlessly nibbling the grass, lagging behind, falling forward while grazing, and returning late at night.”
182 See Gale (1994) 208-228 on the symmetry of the creative force of nature at the beginning of Lucretius’ poem and the destructive force of the plague at its end.
183 Putnam (1979) 142, 231; Ross (1987) 149.
Importation of foreign cattle had commenced in Britain in 1846, and in May 1865 an infected cargo of cattle from the Baltic port of Reval landed at Hull, where its contents were dispersed to Manchester and London. Slaughter was considered the only effective action in cases of diseased cattle, and initially farmers were left to report cases themselves and received no compensation for lost livestock. By February the following year the Cattle Diseases Prevention Bill received the royal assent, and its impositions – government inspectors to establish cases of infection, compensation for the farmer amounting half the value of the animal, restrictions on the movement and importation of cattle – were immediately effective. Brassley estimates a total of close to 420,000 cattle had been infected by the time the plague relented towards the end of 1867. Virgil’s plague includes a famous description of two oxen (G. 3. 515-519), presumably the most obvious scene for a reader to associate with a cattle plague, while The Edinburgh Review noted especially the description of the suffering horse.

Newspapers through the autumn and winter of 1865-1866 were filled with the latest updates, advertisements for remedies, and speculation as to the provenance of the disease. Certain contributors to newspapers were immediately struck by the resemblance between the plague affecting Britain in 1865 and the one in Virgil’s Georgics. The Herts Guardian offered its readers a brief note on the cattle plague, citing it as being “as least as old as Virgil”, and also mentioning Lucretius’ plague in De Rerum Natura. A Norfolk doctor, E. Copeland, wrote in to The Norfolk News offering his own “hurriedly done” translation of G. 3. 440-566, which he suggests will be of interest to readers. The most high profile figure who made the connection was Benjamin Disraeli, who in 1865 was a member of the Tory opposition. Addressing his constituents at a dinner of the Buckinghamshire Agricultural Association, Disraeli dwelt on the similarity between

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184 Brassley (2000) 589, to which the historical overview here is much indebted.
186 “Nothing can be more true to our recent melancholy experience than the following lines [i.e. G. 3. 498-509], if we may apply them to the ox,” = “ART VIII 1. Journals of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, from 1839 to 1865…”, The Edinburgh Review (1866) 123: 212.
the cattle plague and the plague in *Georgics* 3. He was a member of the Privy Council, the body charged with the resolution of the crisis, and remarked to his audience:

I thought I had read in the Third Georgic of Virgil—unfortunately a long time ago—an account which in the minutest details touches this question. My idea was that as Her Majesty’s ministers are obliged to remain in London—at least some of them—and some of them at least being men of classical habits and tastes, they had given us a free translation of the Third Georgic by way of a description of the cattle plague and the remedies to be applied. We have the sighs and moans, the tears and groans, the withering of the flesh, and the ultimate corruption—all symptoms exactly the same as have been described. But what is most remarkable is that the remedies are also exactly the same.190

An article in *The Louth and North Lincolnshire Advertiser* noted the report of Disraeli’s speech in *The Pall Mall Gazette*, but traced the similarities more closely, fearing that the disease would spread to sheep and other animals.191 It singles out the description of the sheep (G. 3. 464-469) and notes that the proposed treatment—putting the animal down—is exactly the same solution being proposed in 1865, proving “the humiliating fact that science in some directions has not made any advance for the last 2,000 years.”192 Furthermore, modern medicine remains as impotent as ancient medicine. “Finally”, the article notes, “the doctors were fairly nonplussed (*cessere magistri*). The Chirons and Malumpuses were as utterly unable to suggest or carry out any method of cure as our skilled professors and M.D.’s of the present day have hitherto proved themselves to be.”193

Readers took Virgil’s description as pertaining to an historical plague, something modern

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189 “Mr. Disraeli on Agriculture”, *The Carlisle Journal*, 29 September 1865, p. 10. The speech was widely reported: cf. “Mr. Disraeli, M.P., at Aylesbury”, *The Observer*, 2 September 1865, p. 3.

190 “Mr. Disraeli on Agriculture”, *The Carlisle Journal*.

191 “Antiquity of the Cattle Plague”, *The Louth and North Lincolnshire Advertiser*, 14 October 1865, p. 3.

192 “Antiquity of the Cattle Plague”, *The Louth and North Lincolnshire Advertiser*. G. 3. 468 instructs *continuo culpam ferro compesce*, “immediately put a stop to the infection with a blade”, which Servius (ad loc.) glosses with *occidendo eam*, “by killing it [i.e. the sheep].” See Mynors ad loc. on the ambiguity of whether *culpa* implies the sheep or the disease itself.

193 “Antiquity of the Cattle Plague”, *The Louth and North Lincolnshire Advertiser*. G. 3. 549-550 reads *cessere magistri* | *Phillyrides Chiron Amythaoniusque Melampus*: “the experts have given up, Phillyrides, Chiron and Amythaonian Melampus.” On the literary resonances of these names see Thomas ad loc.
readers and scholars are less quick to do, and in so doing demonstrate that this was very much a living poem for those familiar with it, rather than an obscure object of study. The outbreak brought home the paradox of modernity. With almost two thousand years separating Virgil’s *Georgics* from Britain in 1865, what struck these readers was how little medicine had advanced in this particular area. Although Victorian Britain is synonymous with modernization and with technological and industrial development, this did not apply to veterinary medicine in 1865. Galen’s theory of miasma as the cause of the spread of disease was still widely accepted in the 1860s; in September 1865, at the height of the plague, a special Form of Prayer was ordered for use in every church. So in Britain, as in Virgil’s plague, medicine was of little help (*cessere magistri*), and it should be noted that incineration of afflicted livestock was still standard procedure at the time of the 2001 outbreak of Foot & Mouth Disease in the UK and Ireland, much to the despair of affected farmers. The Cattle Plague was, however, a catalyst for progress. The Cattle Plague Department set up in 1865 became the Veterinary Department in 1870, and thus the outbreak has a particular place in the development of modern veterinary science.

The *Georgics* was related to domestic political contexts in a variety of ways. The *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1872 compares Ministers’ eagerness to escape Parliament at the end of its session to a horse breaking out of its stable. Classically-educated politicians also found uses for the poem. Stafford Northcote (1818-1887) was a long-serving politician, whose classical education gave

198 “Autumn Manoeuvres”, *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 September 1872, p. 9: “It is, indeed, only natural that after being badgered for six months in Parliament Ministers should feel all the exuberant joy at being released which is attributed to the horse in Virgil which breaks out of its stable, and give vent to their delight in all manner of fantastic tricks.” The writer does not identify a particular passage, but the intended passage may be *G.* 3. 193-201 (the galloping colt). Another possibility is *Aen.* 11. 492-497, where Turnus is compared to a *liber equus*.
199 He graduated from Balliol College, Oxford, with a first in classics in 1839, and was successively co-author of the Northcote-Trevelyan Report on civil service reform (1853), a member of the Clarendon Commission (1862-64), Secretary of State for India (1867-68), Chancellor of the Exchequer (1874-1880) and Foreign Secretary (1886-87). For a brief biography see Rubenstein (2009).
him a lifelong interest in classical authors. Northcote suffered a heart attack on 12 January 1887 in 10 Downing St., while waiting to speak to the Prime Minister Lord Salisbury, and died the same day. Many were shocked by the sudden nature of his death, as noted by a review of Andrew Lang’s biography in *The Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette*. Lang writes:

It was a death-scene brief and painless, ‘a sleep and a forgetting.’ He died at peace, but with his mind still busy with national affairs. The notes of the speech which he was never to deliver were found in his pocket, and among the notes a brief classical quotation, *India mittit ebur*; a trace of his old and dear studies. About such a death – a euthanasia to himself, a shock intolerable to his nearest survivors, a sorrow to the whole country – eloquence were impertinent. The day before he had said, about his official work, ‘I shall leave no arrears.’ His work was done, and well done.

The classical quotation, *India mittit ebur*, “India exports ivory”, is from *Georgics* 1, from Virgil’s description of the variety of produce in the world. As Lang probably realises, the short quotation is doubly meaningful, as both a reminiscence of Northcote’s education and his love of classical authors, but also because of his connections with India, as co-author of the Trevelyan-Northcote Report and as Secretary of State for India. For Britain in the nineteenth century, no less than for Rome in the first century B.C., trade was a key aspect of imperial power. It is unclear whether a later speech might have used the Virgilian quotation in relation to British imperial policy in India. What is apparent is the continuity in imperial power. India in the *Georgics* is a remote and exotic land, the source of produce like ivory and ebony, and a place of imagined Roman power. In the nineteenth century India is subject to British colonial rule and to an

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200 Lang (1890) II: 287. “Lord Iddesleigh [Northcote was ennobled as Earl of Iddesleigh in 1885] usually kept in his pocket a small volume of one of the Greek or Roman writers. Like Cicero or Macaulay, he might have said that they were his companions by night, by day, in town and in the country.”

201 Rubenstein (2009).


203 Lang (1890) II: 282. The first quotation – “a sleep and a forgetting” – is taken from Wordsworth’s “Ode on Intimations of Immortality”; the Latin quotation is the first half of *G. 1. 57*.

204 *Verg.* G. 1. 56-59.
fundamentally unequal economic relationship.\textsuperscript{205} The classical culture of contemporary Britain means that it is the \textit{Georgics} which can best encapsulate this complex dynamic. An insouciant note on elephant poaching in the \textit{Pall Mall Gazette} in 1883, for instance, notes that “the price of ivory is rising weekly, and it seems probable that before long Virgil’s verse, ‘India mittit ebur,’ will become a relic of past ages.”\textsuperscript{206}

To conclude this section, I focus on two receptions – those of James Graham and of James Booth – which highlight the politicised nature of the \textit{Georgics} in a contemporary British context. A major economic issue in the first half of the nineteenth century was free trade. A new Corn Law was introduced in 1815, in a bid to protect the price of grain after the end of the Napoleonic wars, during which demand had kept prices high.\textsuperscript{207} This protective legislation inflated rents and wages, disadvantaging tenant farmers and manufacturers respectively, but was perceived as beneficial by many landowners, who used their disproportionate influence in Parliament to maintain the status quo.\textsuperscript{208} Manufacturers argued against this protectionism and were supported by the economic arguments of David Ricardo and by the Anti-Corn Law League, founded in 1838 by Richard Cobden and John Bright. The Corn Law of 1815 was repealed in 1846, paving the way for free trade to become a cornerstone of British policy in the second half of the century. James Graham (1792-1861) was a Cumbrian landowner, who, after time spent at Christ Church, Oxford (he left without taking a degree), served as an MP 1818-1821 and 1826-1861. In the intervening years he retired to his family estate at Netherby in Cumbria and set to work returning it to profitability after a period of decline.\textsuperscript{209} In 1826 he published an influential pamphlet, \textit{Corn and Currency}, which is of interest here.\textsuperscript{210}

In \textit{Corn and Currency}, Graham set out to convince his fellow landowners that blind

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Davis2001} Davis (2001) 287-315 highlights well the iniquity, and the profound human cost, of Britain’s economic imperialism in India and the wider world.
\bibitem{OccasionalNotes} “Occasional Notes”, \textit{The Pall Mall Gazette}, 6 April 1883, p. 2.
\bibitem{Kadish1996I} For an introduction to the politics of the Corn Laws 1815-1846 see Kadish (1996) I: xi-lxv. The law of 1815 banned the importation of foreign corn while the price of a quarter of corn on the domestic market remained below 80s (Kadish (1996) I: xi).
\bibitem{Hilton1977} Hilton (1977) I: “At the time [i.e. 1815] it was bitterly resented by radicals, manufacturers, and the urban poor as a \textit{pacte de famine} between Lord Liverpool’s administration and the landed aristocracy.”
\bibitem{Graham1826} Graham (1826).
\end{thebibliography}
adherence to protectionism was in fact harming rather than advancing their interests.\textsuperscript{211} He argues for a policy of free trade,\textsuperscript{212} but also seeks to educate his readers about the considerable influence of currency fluctuations on the economy. The Corn Laws, as well as other post-war economic measures enacted by the government – such as the return to the convertibility of bank notes (1821)\textsuperscript{213} – contributed to a severe agricultural depression during the period 1819-1823.\textsuperscript{214} What is interesting is that Graham describes the problems of British agriculture in Virgilian terms. One of the epigraphs on the title page of the second edition is \textit{G. 1. 505-507}, quoted without translation.\textsuperscript{215} The use of these particular lines sets up a comparison between \textit{Georgics’} description of post-war agriculture and the post-war agricultural climate of Britain in the decade after the Napoleonic Wars. The sense of landowners’ vulnerability they convey should be seen in the context of the French Revolution and the (counter-)revolutionary politics of Britain in the years 1789-1830: aristocracies across Europe at this time feared revolution, societal upheaval, and loss of position.\textsuperscript{216}

Graham attacks the landowners’ complacency “while their property is melting away, while their station in society is in danger”,\textsuperscript{217} while at the same time reminding them of their great strength, a strength explicitly linked to the land:

[T]he Land Owners remain divided in this crisis of their fate, and form what has been aptly termed, a rope of sand. But, \textit{united}, what might they not affect? The ancient

\textsuperscript{211} Graham (1826) 17: “You [i.e. landowners] have fought for high prices, and concurred in measures which render them impossible. You have retained your monopoly, which must destroy its efficacy. The ground which you endeavour to defend, is no longer tenable; and the points which you have surrendered, ensure your defeat.”

\textsuperscript{212} Graham (1826) 97-98.

\textsuperscript{213} In March 1797 the Bank of England had suspended the convertibility of bank notes with gold (gold would no longer be exchanged for notes presented at banks), in order to stabilise reserves during a period of wartime uncertainty. Meant as a temporary measure, convertibility was not restored until 1821, with severe deflationary effects. For more see Mayhew (2000) 134-137, 150-152.

\textsuperscript{214} Mayhew (2000) 150-151: “Prices fell...companies cut back their output and unemployment rose. Agricultural distress was particularly severe, as the farmers’ income no longer permitted them to pay rents and debts taken on in the heyday of war-time expansion.” See also Hilton (1977) 69 for further background.

\textsuperscript{215} \ldots quoque ubi fas uersum atque nefas, tot bella per orbem, | tam multae scelerum facies: non ullus aratro | dignus honos; squalent abductis arua colonis... (”...seeing that right and wrong are inverted, with so many wars throughout the world, so many faces of evil: no due respect for the plough, and fields lying barren, their farmers removed.”)

\textsuperscript{216} On the (counter-)revolutionary politics of this period see Thompson (2013) 99-195 and \textit{passim}.

\textsuperscript{217} Graham (1826) 6.
nobility, inheriting strong attachment to the soil which their forefathers transmitted as the shield to the family honours, constitutes still an immense majority in the House of Lords, notwithstanding the more recent infusion of less noble blood; in the House of Commons the Landed Proprietors form a phalanx which no minister and no influence could resist, if, true to themselves, they would act in concert, and could be induced to move on one attainable object.  

Graham thus encourages landowners to be proactive in pursuing their own interests. In service of this aim, the opening pages of *Corn and Currency* portray a society of two halves, a manufacturing population and an agricultural population, a division which was in reality a major factor in British politics in the early and middle nineteenth century. Commerce and manufactures, though not without benefit, he writes, “bring their attendant evils.” He paints the agricultural population, meanwhile, in idyllic terms:

> The contrast [to the manufacturing population] of an agricultural population scattered in hamlets, earning daily bread by daily labour, either possessed of a freehold, and thereby linked with the landlord, or holding as tenantry, and immediately dependent on him, requires no exposition; peace and health, and sobriety and order, are the happy fruits of rural labour.

> Hic patiens operum, parvoque assueta juventus,
> Sacra deum, sanctique Patres; extrema per illos
> Justitia excedens terris vestigia fecit.

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218 Graham (1826) 6-7.
219 Simon (1960) 73: “It is from this time [the 1790s] that there begins an open, conscious struggle of capitalist (sometimes supported by worker) against landlord; one that was to be fought up to the achievement of political reform in 1832 and later through to conclusive victory with the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846.”
220 Graham (1826) 7.
221 Graham (1826) 8. The text is *G. 2. 472-474*: “Here is a resilient youth content with a little, the rites of the gods and hallowed fathers; amongst those people Justice took her final steps before she left the earth.” Mynors’ text reads *et for hic and exiguoque for parvoque* in line 472.
When it comes to the condition of tenant-farmers and labourers – the majority of the agricultural population – Graham’s picture is idealized, not realistic. His concern is for the protection of a pious and paternalistic vision of social order (Sacra deum, sanctique Patres) which finds rhetorical support in the Georgics’ image of ancient Italy. Virgil’s passage is itself strongly idealising, but in Graham’s case we can contrast his image of rural happiness with the historical record of agricultural depression in the early 1820s. In seeking to protect the interests of his own class, Graham here minimises the sufferings of tenants and dependents in order to reinforce his argument that landowners are central to the well-being of British society.²²²

One of the major themes in nineteenth-century reception of the Georgics is enthusiastic appreciation of its perceived praise of hard work. Charles Merivale defined the poem as the “glorification of Labour”,²²³ a highly-influential conception which is quoted approvingly by Conington and Sellar.²²⁴ The relevant passage is G. 1. 118-159, but in particular lines 121-124:

\[
\text{pater ipse colendi}
\]

\[
\text{haud facilem esse uiam uoluit, primusque per artem}
\]

\[
\text{mouit agros, curis acuens mortalia corda}
\]

\[
\text{nec torpere graui passus sua regna uete}
\]

\[
\text{rno.}
\]

G. 1. 121-124.

\[
Jupiter himself did not wish the path of cultivation to be easy, and he it was who first stirred the fields by cunning, sharpening human hearts with cares, and unwilling to let his kingdoms languish in excessive torpor.
\]

These lines are quoted in religious, educational, and political contexts, often linked to a Protestant conception of the ethical value of hard work. They appear in the Canterbury Weekly Journal for

²²² Graham includes three more classical quotations in Corn and Currency: Tac. Hist. 3. 55. 11-14 (p. 14), Verg. Aen. 2. 97 (p. 49: prima mali labes) and, in a picture of the land owner forced to leave his farm, Verg. Ecl. 9. 2-4 (p. 83), a further appropriation of Virgil to the land-owning cause.
²²³ Merivale (1850-1882) IV: 577: “To comprehend the moral grandeur of the Georgics, in point of style the most perfect piece, perhaps, of Roman literature, we must regard it as the glorification of Labour.”
²²⁴ Conington & Nettleship (2007) 159 calls Merivale’s remark “scarcely less true than pointed”. Sellar (1897) 211 also quotes Merivale’s remark and writes, “To inculcate the necessity of a constant struggle with the reluctant forces of Nature, and to show how this struggle may be successfully conducted by incessant labour, vigilance, propitiation of the Supreme Will by prayer and piety, thus appears to be the main ethical teaching of the Georgics.”
Palm Sunday 1837,\textsuperscript{225} in the \textit{Dundee, Perth, and Cupar Advertiser} in 1853,\textsuperscript{226} and in the \textit{Tyrone Constitution} in 1859,\textsuperscript{227} in each case extolling the benefits of hard work. When Robert Peel (1788-1850) was installed as Rector of Glasgow University in January 1837, he quoted Edmund Burke’s quotation of Virgil’s lines.\textsuperscript{228} William Gladstone, while Chancellor of the Exchequer, quoted the lines in his speech at the opening of the Wedgewood Institute in Burslem, Staffordshire – the potter’s birthplace – in October 1863.\textsuperscript{229} Such a “progressive interpretation” of this \textit{Georgics} passage was, noted Jenkyns in 1993, “the standard interpretation in earlier generations”,\textsuperscript{230} something borne out by the sources quoted above. Aside from debate about the progressive or pessimist import of \textit{labor...improbus}\textsuperscript{G. 1. 145-146}, however, it should be noted that scholarly debate about this passage has remained largely literary, concerned with matters of intertextuality and the topos of the golden age.\textsuperscript{231} Any praise of labour, while allowing for the complexity of \textit{G. 1. 118-159}, arguably has a political relevance, and it this political relevance in a British context that is of concern here.

James Booth (1806-1878) was born in Leitrim and graduated from Trinity College, Dublin, in 1833, obtaining the College’s Berkeley Medal for Greek a year later.\textsuperscript{232} He was ordained in the Church of England in 1842. He is remembered chiefly for his efforts, as a member of the Royal Society of Arts in the 1840s and 1850s, to promote external, written examinations as a more accessible alternative to the examination system of Oxford and Cambridge.\textsuperscript{233} Booth

\textsuperscript{225}“Industry”, \textit{Canterbury Weekly Journal}, 18 March 1837, p. 190.
\textsuperscript{226}“The Agricultural Societies”, \textit{Dundee, Perth and Cupar Advertiser}, 19 July 1853, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{227}“Scrap Book”, \textit{The Tyrone Constitution}, 10 July 1859, p. 4. This article actually quotes Edmund Burke’s quotation of \textit{G. 1. 121-121}, in which the Christianising reception of the lines is evident. Burke (1986) 278: “Difficulty is a severe instructor, set over us by the supreme ordinance of a parental guardian and legislator, who knows us better than we know ourselves, as he loves us better too. \textit{Pater ipse colendi haud facile esse viam voluit} [Verg. \textit{G. 1. 121-122}].”
\textsuperscript{228}“Do I say that you can command success without difficulty? No: difficulty is the condition of success.” = “Sir Robert Peel at Glasgow”, \textit{The Leeds Intelligencer} (morning edition), 17 January 1837, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{229}“The beautiful object will be dearer than one perfectly bare and bald: not because utility is compromised for the sake of beauty, but because there may be more manual labour, and here must be more thought in the original design. \textit{Pater ipse colendi haud facile esse viam voluit}.” = “Mr. Gladstone in the Potteries”, \textit{The Enniscorthy News}, 31 October 1863, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{230}Jenkyns (1993) 243.
\textsuperscript{231}See for instance Farrell (1991) 185-187, and the commentaries of Mynors, Thomas, and Erren ad \textit{G. 1. 118-159}.
\textsuperscript{232}On James Booth see Foden (1989) and Sutton (2004).
\textsuperscript{233}Foden (1989) 79-110.
was instrumental in the establishment of the Society’s journal in 1852, and headed a Committee on Industrial Instruction, which presented its Report to the Council of the Society in March 1853. A year later he was part of a team which circulated the country’s first proposal for a printed examination, with the first holding of exams following in 1856, the second in 1857.234

Amidst this work Booth addressed, in November 1856, the Lewes Mechanics’ Institute, where he reflected on the Society’s success and impressed upon his audience the value of hard work.235 His message is optimistic. Books of instruction have come down in price (“you may buy Cassell’s Euclid for a shilling”236), and expensive scientific materials are not a pre-requisite for self-education in science. The Society of Arts and their examination project offer the auto-didact, Booth argues, an affordable and accessible means of evaluation and accreditation. The key ingredient for success “is not deep-thinking, but tenacity of purpose”;237 “difficulties overcome habituate the mind to overcome difficulties”.238 He then reinforces his point with a Latin quotation:

We may apply to the Georgics of the mind those noble lines which the Roman poet addressed to the tillers of the soil [quotes G. 1. 121-124 in Latin]. It is a very remarkable and curious fact that there is no acquirement of real value, whether it be a science you want to know, or an art you require to practise, or a language you wish to learn, that does not demand a large expenditure of labour for its acquisition.239

It is clear, then, that for many readers the poem’s emphasis on the necessity of labour was taken to be one of its most timeless messages. Again, however, we should recall the political contexts behind this reception. As the manufacturing industry boomed in the early nineteenth

236 Editorial Article 13, The Bombay Times and Journal of Record.
237 Editorial Article 13, The Bombay Times and Journal of Record.
238 Editorial Article 13, The Bombay Times and Journal of Record.
century, working hours, both for adults and children, remained unregulated, while Utilitarian social philosophy and the impact of Thomas Malthus’ theory of population were major influences in the passing of the new Poor Law in 1834, which effectively criminalised poverty as an indication of moral laxity rather than a symptom of personal misfortune. The Mechanics’ Institutes movement was set up as a vehicle for working class education in the 1820s, and like many such endeavours had to resist paternalistic middle-class interference. As such, Booth’s lecture on the value of hard work, and particularly his quotation of untranslated Latin, may have been in danger of condescending to his audience of working men.

This reception of the *pater ipse colendi* quotation also has an imperial dimension. Booth defines diligence in racial terms, and in doing so he constructs the same binary of white Europeans and non-white others observed in Thomson’s *The Seasons*:

> In the tropical regions such is the productiveness of the soil that a few hours’ light labour provides an ample supply of food for the entire year. And what is the consequence? Man, in those luxuriant countries, in the midst of boundless plenty and exhaustless vegetation, is hopelessly sunk in the depths of ignorance and barbarism. No; man’s nature is improved as his wants are multiplied.

Hard work is thus defined as a specifically European characteristic, at a time when Britain was a major imperial power. This is highlighted by the fact that the speech was re-printed in *The Bombay Times*, and Booth’s arguments were applauded by an editor annoyed at a perceived

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240 Simon (1960) 171: “Despite the passage of five labour laws between 1802 and 1833, adult hours remained entirely unregulated, while the Cotton Factories Act of 1819 was disregarded and children from the age of five or six were worked to the point of exhaustion in the factories and mines, including at night.”

241 Malthus’ *An Essay on the Principle of Population* was first published in 1798 (= Malthus (1973)). On the 1834 Poor Law, which prioritised workhouses over charitable relief, and the influence of Malthus’ ideas, see Digby (1983) and in particular Hollingsworth (1983), who writes (p. 107): “Those who entered the new union workhouses after 1834 were imprinted with the moral stigma of pauperism; their misfortunes were their own responsibility since the better-off had fulfilled their responsibility to them in underlining the necessity for prudence and thrift. The abrasive class character of the new Poor Law was thus rooted in the moral sentiments of Malthus.” Cf. Simon (1960) 128, “[The Poor Law] – the essence of Benthamism in action – was a measure of harsh inhumanity.”

242 Booth’s 1853 Report on Industrial Instruction noted that many of the Institutes had been “converted into places for recreation and amusement” (Foden (1989) 72).


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indolence in Anglo-Indian colonial life. In 1837 Peel also saw mental discipline in explicitly racial terms. In 1902 J. A. Hobson expressed the same opinion when he wrote, “the ease with which human life can be maintained in the tropics breeds indolence and torpor of character. The inhabitants of these countries are not ‘progressive people’.” Booth’s reception thus highlights the political contexts relevant to nineteenth-century readers’ enthusiastic view of the Georgics as the “glorification of Labour”. It is a Christian, Eurocentric conception, with little awareness of the politics of labour in either Roman, British, or British imperial contexts. This can be seen as a further way in which British reception of the Georgics has tended to de-politicize the poem.

In this section I have tried to demonstrate hitherto under-explored ways in which the primary subject matter of the Georgics was relevant to the lives and concerns of its nineteenth-century British readers. As well as the academic and aesthetic poem of scholars, readers documented here also related to its depictions of agricultural life. The strength of this identification with the poem is remarkable given the distancing factors of language, time, and place, yet it can be partly explained by the culture of British classical education. These receptions thus complement and challenge the modern critical trend of viewing the agricultural material of the poem as subsidiary to what has been called “its meaning on a higher, symbolic level”. I have also tried to show how certain receptions relate to contemporary political and social contexts, in line with my broader aim of politicising the Georgics and its reception. It is by turning to the international and imperial contexts of the poem’s reception at this time that a sense can be gained of just how political a text the Georgics became.

Popular Reception II: The Georgics Abroad

Thus far in Chapter 2 I have identified and examined a pervasive aesthetic trend in British scholarly reception of the Georgics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Examination of

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244 Editorial Article 13, *The Bombay Times and Journal of Record*: “With the overland mail bringing us every fortnight tidings of what is going on at home, it is marvellous how slow we are in imitating.”

245 “Sir Robert Peel at Glasgow”, *The Leeds Intelligencer*: “The travellers into the East tell us, that when the ignorant inhabitants of those countries are asked concerning the ruins of stately edifices yet remaining among them...they always answer that they were built by magicians. The untaught mind finds a vast gulf between its own powers and those works of complicated art which it is utterly unable to fathom...”.

246 Hobson (1902) 239.

247 Volk (2002) 120.
popular reception in the period 1820-1899 complicated this picture by demonstrating that the agricultural subject matter of the poem was often as relevant to readers as its aesthetic achievement. The receptions of James Graham and James Booth pointed to the domestic political contexts of land and labour in which the *Georgics* was implicated. I move now from Britain to the British empire, and to the international contexts of the poem’s reception. As I discussed in the Introduction, British readers of the *Georgics* used the poem to reflect on their experience of travel and the wider world as tourists, journalists, and politicians. Such receptions are political in two primary ways. Firstly, the poem is used to aestheticize and to de-politicize foreign peoples and places, in ways which echo the *Georgics*’ own descriptions of the world explored in Chapter 1. Secondly, the image of happy rural people unaware of their own good fortune (G. 2. 458-459) is used to imagine the colonial experience in Australia, Ireland, and India, as part of a condescending and paternalistic imperial rhetoric. If only these people were aware of their luck in being British subjects, the argument runs, then the blessings of their situation would become apparent. I have discussed different interpretations of this passage, as a rhetorical set-piece or, in Thibodeau’s reading, as an encouragement to Roman landowners to make better use of their country estates. The receptions examined below point to a further interpretation, which is to say the potential condescension of these lines in their original Roman context. To what extent does Virgil’s image of happy country people obscure the politics of land and agriculture in the late first century B.C.? Can it be seen to aestheticize or to de-politicize rural life to a problematic degree? As we shall see, in a British context the lines are used to do just that. The *Georgics* is thus implicated, in a small but significant way, in contemporary imperial and colonial discourse.

British imperial power gave nineteenth-century British readers of Virgil access to the world. As in Rome in the first century B.C., geographical knowledge was both a stimulus to, and a result of, empire. “Geography was linked”, Butlin argues, “overtly and covertly with imperial power, through agencies of survey and mapping – means of ‘capturing’ and controlling overseas places – and of cultural superimposition and modification through exploration and exploitation, and ethnological research. To these were added humanitarian objectives, including the abolition
of the slave trade and the improvement of living standards.”

British subjects travelled the world as tourists, reported back their impressions of the world to national newspapers, and, as civil servants, played key roles in the exercise of British power overseas. Mountstuart Grant Duff advocated for the political importance of geography when, in 1878, he argued for geographical education “in the largest sense of the term”:

I most fully believe, for example, that if we knew the commonest facts, geographical and historical, about our own colonies, we should hear far less than we do of colonial discontent and heart-burning...

What is important is that the classical basis of elite education in Britain meant that classical texts and themes were one of the major ways in which certain British travellers processed and reflected upon their experience of the world. Whether in comparisons between Britain and Rome, or the awareness of Alexander the Great’s campaigns in India, or in personal reflection, the classical past is a key reference point in British imperial discourse at this time.

Two locations highlight the first of the two points relevant here: the way the Georgics is used to aestheticize and de-politicize foreign peoples and locations. By examining receptions concerning Italy and Africa, we can see how Italy remains a thoroughly familiar place to readers of the Georgics, while Africa and its peoples remain distinctly foreign.

As it had been throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Italy remained a destination for British tourists whose reading of the Georgics animated their travels. The beauties of the Italian countryside enhance, and are enhanced by, the beauties of Virgil’s poem. Mary Shelley wrote to Maria Gisborne while at Naples in 1819, calling the Georgics “the most beautiful poem I ever read”.

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249 Grant Duff (1878) 202. Grant Duff (1829-1906), politician and author, had been a member of the Clarendon Commission 1862-1864: for a brief biography see Matthew (2008).
250 Grant Duff (1878) 203.
251 Broughall (2015) 129 argues that ancient Rome “provided a crucial colonialist vocabulary for the British imperial project” but also shows (pp. 245-256) how comparisons with Rome could critique or express anxiety about Britain’s imperial power. For further studies in this area see Hagerman (2013), Bradley (2010) and Goff (2005).
almost at the same scene as he did, reading about manners little changed since his days, has made me enjoy his poem more, I think, than I ever did any other.”

In 1838 Thomas Babington Macaulay climbed to the hilltop town of Narni in Umbria, and dwelt in his journal on the “really glorious” scenery, further enhanced by his reading of Virgil:

\[
\text{I thought it far finer than that of Matlock or of the Wye, in something of the same style.}
\]

\[
\text{The pale line of the river which brawled below, though in itself not agreeable was interesting from classical recollections. I thought how happily Virgil had touched the most striking and characteristic feature of the Italian landscape –}
\]

\[
\text{tot congesta manu praeruptis oppida saxis}
\]

\[
\text{fluminaque antiquos subter labentia muros.}
\]

This sense of familiarity with Italy is highlighted by an account of Italian politics in an article from a Dublin newspaper in 1869. The article discusses the latest developments in the movement for Italian unification and reflects that questions about Italy’s future are “for Englishmen…peculiarly attractive”. “Even if we have not all read”, it continues, “the glorious passage in the second ‘Georgic’ where Virgil goes through the capabilities of his country, we all know enough about this “mighty nurse of heroes” to feel more care about her future than we do about that of Bokhara, or even of the Danubian principalities.”

Such receptions point to the way in which aesthetic appreciation of the poem is augmented by readers’ travels in Italy. And yet other receptions show how the opinion of the tourist or the journalist can obscure or condescend to the political realities of Italian life. An 1859 article, reporting on a key phase of the campaign for Italian unification in the weeks after the battle of Solferino (24 June 1859), complained about the politics and people of Italy. Quoting the reports of a French officer, it remarks on

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256 “Italy at Work”, *Dublin University Magazine* (1869) 74: 273.
…the frightful state of misery and disorganisation into which the whole country has been thrown by the war that was to ensure its happiness as well as its independence. The day has gone by when Italy deserved to be hailed as “Magna parens virum.” The day is no more when she can produce

*haec genus acre virum, Marsos pubemque Sabellam
adsuetumque malo Ligurem Volscosque verutos.*

It requires a stronger and more manly race to win and hold their independence.258

Modern Italy is thus seen as incapable of emulating Roman Italy, in a period when movements for national unification in Germany and Italy dominated the European political landscape. William Gladstone, travelling in Sicily in 1838, was struck, in contrast, by how little had changed since Roman times:

Our road today except four carriageable miles between the wretched village of Vita, and the town or *paese* of Salemi, was rude field path or less. We passed over extensive ranges of grassland, which repose the fifth year after bearing wheat for four. On some of these…we did not meet a living soul in our long and slow passage from one extremity to the other, and could scarcely perceive one solitary hut. On others they were ploughing, with a plough ruder than in the days of Virgil: *no aures, no dentalia*, the *temo* not of eight feet projection.259

Gladstone uses his knowledge of the relevant passage in the *Georgics*260 to enforce a particularly strong comparison: the people of Sicily are using equipment not just as primitive, but even more primitive, than that recommended in the poem. The limits of readers’ identification with Italy become apparent: in this case the *Georgics* is used to evoke a sense, not of familiarity, but of

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259 Diary Entry for 18 October 1838, = Foot (1968) 445.

260 I.e. G. 1. 171-172: *huic a stirpe pedes temo protentus in octo, | binae aures, duplici aptantur dentalia dorso* (“For this [elm base of the plough] are prepared a pole extending eight feet from the base, two ears, and [?] double-ridged teeth to hold the share”). On the intricacies and interpretative ambiguities of this passage, see Mynors ad loc.
otherness.

J. P. Mahaffy travelled in southern Italy in 1882 and published an account of his travels in *The Contemporary Review*. More than most of the accounts explored here, Mahaffy is aware of both Roman and contemporary political contexts. He discusses Hannibal’s occupation of the *ager Bruttius* and the effects of the second Punic War on the peoples of southern Italy. He expresses disappointment that tourists tend not to travel beyond Paestum, and rejects claims that southern Italy is particularly dangerous (“Crime is of course to be found in every country”).

Discussing La Sila, he writes that “there are still, and there always were, great natural forests […] This Sila forest is mentioned in Virgil’s “Georgics” as the scene of the great battle of bulls…”. Mahaffy also uses not Virgil but Theocritus to reflect on, and to aestheticize, what he sees, but nevertheless remains aware of the underlying reality:

But these picturesque aspects cannot hide from the traveller the careworn and oppressed look of the peasantry all through Apulia and Calabria – many pale from fever, but far more evidently weakened by want of a proper diet, and lowered in spirits by the hopelessness of their situation.

In descriptions of Italy, whether idealising, condescending, or critical, the *Georgics* is a key point of reference. While it helps to make Italy a thoroughly familiar place, the hardships of contemporary Italian life often fail to live up to readers’ idealising, classical, expectations. Even within a European setting, that is, the political aspect of tourists’ descriptions is apparent.

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261 John Pentland Mahaffy (1839-1919), Professor of Ancient History (1871) at Trinity College, Dublin. For a brief biography see Walker (2004).
262 Mahaffy (1884) 89.
263 Mahaffy (1884) 88.
264 Mahaffy (1884) 89.
265 Mahaffy (1884) 95: “…those curious solitary lads, whose special occupation it is to attain a sort of mental nirvana, sitting by their flocks of sheep and goats. These picturesque animals find pasture from shrubs, when the grass is eaten away or burnt up by the sun, and the tinkle of their bells in the hot midafternoon air has a faint and sleepy rhythm. It is but rarely that the shepherd rouses himself from his silent apathy even to play on a rude pipe, like the Lacon or Comatas of Theocritus.” The two characters mentioned appear in Theoc. *Id.* 5.
266 Mahaffy (1884) 95.
The *Georgics* is also used in descriptions and accounts of life in North Africa and Abyssinia (now Ethiopia). Algeria had been under French colonial occupation since 1830, while Egypt was occupied by Britain from 1882, with the last British troops leaving that country only in 1954. Italy invaded Libya in 1911 and spent twenty years attempting to pacify the country, at great human cost to its inhabitants. Abyssinia retained its independence amidst European colonial aggression in the decades either side of 1900, but was brutally invaded and occupied by Italy in 1935.

In relation to North Africa, the extent to which the Roman empire has shaped the historiography of the area cannot be underestimated. “As for the native inhabitants” argues Laroui, “we sense their presence, working in the fields, paying the *annona*, confined to the Aurès Mountains or driven beyond the *limes*, but we never see them. We should doubtless be grateful that a shadow of their presence endures, but let us not be dazzled by false riches: Roman history is not the history of the Maghrib.” The extent to which this Roman past influenced colonial ideology in North Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is also important, as Mattingly notes:

> Both French and Italians in North Africa presented themselves as the direct and natural inheritors of the Romans and actively sought to ape and emulate the achievements of the earlier imperial regime. The role of indigenous people was relegated to one of being passive receptors of the fruits of civilization or characterized as anarchic barbarians, incapable of proper self-government or socioeconomic advancement without outside (European) intervention.

Here we can see the political contexts behind descriptions of African people as primitive or picturesque, their ways of life ancient and timeless. This rhetoric of primitivism directly supports, that is, the ideology of colonization and imperialism: people who are seen to be apolitical are

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269 On the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, and the extensive use of mustard gas and other chemical weapons by the invaders, see Duggan (2008) 500-505.
270 Laroui (1977) 37.
271 Mattingly (2011) 43.
ideal candidates for beneficent and paternal European rule, for the progress and development implied by the word “civilisation”.

An 1842 review of J. G. Wilkinson’s *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* shows how the *Georgics*’ descriptions were used in contemporary writing on North Africa. In a discussion of the sculptures in the tombs of the pyramids at Giza, it is the *Georgics* which offers the most obvious point of comparison. “With regard to the cultivation of the lands, the sculptures on the tombs represent canals conveying the water of the Nilotic inundation into the fields, and the proprietor of the estate is seen, as described by Virgil, plying in a light painted skiff, or papyrus punt, and superintending the maintenance of the dykes, or other important matters connected with the farm.”272 Two lines in Latin are quoted in support,273 albeit to describe ancient rather than modern Egyptians. In Chapter 1 I argued that the descriptive qualities of these lines should be read in conjunction with a knowledge of the contemporary Roman annexation of Ptolemaic Egypt. The same political awareness is relevant, albeit indirectly, here: Egypt was a key political interest for Britain in the years following 1842, thanks to the construction of the Suez Canal (1859-1869); the country was occupied by Britain from 1882. But it is also clear that, for the reviewer, Egypt is more interesting as a timeless museum than as a modern state: “the history of this people has been preserved while itself has perished.”274 Most strikingly, the review reveals the cultural capital being gained by British interests in Egypt, imagining that if “old Rameses” were brought back to life and placed in the British Museum, “he would think himself at home, and miss little of the domestic comforts which he enjoyed in his Theban villa....”275

The need for awareness of political contexts when reading Virgilian accounts of North

273 G. 4. 288-289: *accoli effuso stagnantem flumine Nilum | et circum pictis uelitut sua rura phaselis*: “[The Egyptians] live by the pools of the flooded Nile, and are carried round their fields in painted boats...”.
275 “Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians By Sir J. G. Wilkinson”, p. 235: “…the Nile, that has flowed for so many ages in its majestic solitude, now carries on his bosom whole fleets laden with the members of the Yacht Club […] and such a rich and abundant harvest of spoils has rewarded their enthusiastic labour, and such treasures have been wafted from the rifled tombs to our own country, that if we could revive a subject of old Rameses or Sesostris, draw him into life from his bituminous shell, and place him in one or two rooms of the British Museum, he would think himself at home, and miss little of the domestic comforts which he enjoyed in his Theban villa....”
Africa becomes clearer still when considering an 1842 review of literature on Algeria. The review speculates as to the long term success of French colonialism in Africa, and offers suggestions as to how the economic potential of the county can most effectively be harnessed by the colonists. Wool is suggested as a product particularly worth cultivating:

This commodity, so precious to Europeans, is that which the Arabs are enabled to produce with the greatest advantage and facility. It is the principal, or rather the only riches of the meridional tribes who inhabit the frontiers of the desert. They preserve the nomadic life of their ancestors: the nature of their soil is adapted for no other product. In this day, as in the time of Virgil, their shepherds with their flocks retire into illimitable and shelterless solitudes: days and nights are passed in pasturage; nor would any thing be changed with them, had not the musket, powder, and ball, superseded the bow, arrows, and quiver.

Here the timeless quality of north African life is emphasized, a life seen as scarcely changed since Roman times. The vastness of “illimitable and shelterless solitudes” is reinforced by a direct quotation, in Latin, of G. 3. 339-345. I argue that such description of the peoples affected by European colonialism, as primitive people in a primitive land, should be seen as part of the ideology of that colonialism. The economic exploitation of North Africa is rendered less problematic by an image of North Africa as a land of nomadic tribes. As readers of Virgil, it can send us back to the Georgics’ description of the African herdsman with renewed curiosity about the connection between imperial power and literary depiction of the areas its affects.

276 “ART I. 1. Algerie. Rapport sur la Situation Economique de nos…”, The Dublin Review (1842) 13, p. 22: “There are no treasures to be drawn from a country without capital, without means of exploitation, where every thing has to be created, harbours, roads, forts, armies, arsenals, public and private establishments, towns, farms etc.” [emphasis original].
278 G. 3. 339-345: Quid tibi pastores Libyae, quid pascua ursu | prosequar et raris habitata mapalia tectis? | saepe diem noctemque et totum ex ordine mensem | pascitur ilque pecus longa in deserta sine ullis | hospitis: tantum campi iacet, omnia secum | armentarius Afer agit, tectumque laremque | armaque Amyclaeumque canem Cressamque pharetrem... (“What should I go on to tell you in verse of the shepherds and pastures of Libya, its settlements occupied by scattered huts? Often day and night the whole month through the herd grazes and travels in great deserts lacking any shelters: so far the plain extends. The African herdsman carries everything with him, his shelter and his hearth, his weapons, his Amyclaean dog and his Cretan quiver.”)
In 1841 William Cornwallis Harris led a two-year mission from British India to the kingdom of Shoa, in the area of what is now Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which resulted in a formal treaty between Shoa and Britain.\textsuperscript{279} It was almost certainly as a member of this mission that Captain Graham, an officer in the Bengal Native Infantry, compiled his “Report on the Agricultural and Land produce of Shoa” for the Asiatic Society of Bengal.\textsuperscript{280} It takes the form of an ethnographical study, which discusses the inhabitants, climate, and landscape of the area, and well as its agriculture. Graham is clear about both Shoa’s extraordinary fertility and the primitive state of its agriculture. “Unburdened by over-population”, he writes, “and possessed of a fertile soil and favourable seasons, in the absence of all luxuries a sufficient abundance is produced for the mere maintenance of life. Yet the science of husbandry is little understood, the implements of culture are few, and of the rudest construction…”\textsuperscript{281}

It is this combination of fertility and primitivism which Graham describes in Virgilian terms. He notes that the local practice of burning land to clear and to fertilize areas for cultivation is ancient, but is no longer considered effective in “modern husbandry”:

This their only attempt to fatten the soil, is mentioned as being in use in the most ancient recorded system of agriculture –

\begin{verbatim}
  saepe etiam sterilis incidere profuit agros
  atque leuem stipulam crepitantibus urere flammis
\end{verbatim}

But the system in modern husbandry has been very nearly exploded as erroneous and inefficacious, except in obstinate bog lands.\textsuperscript{283}

\textsuperscript{279} On the mission see Henze (2000) 127-132. For a brief biography of Cornwallis Harris see Chichester (2006).
\textsuperscript{280} “Report on the Agricultural and Land produce of Shoa. By Captain Graham, Bengal N.I of the Mission to Abyssinia”, \textit{Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal} 13: 253-296 (= Graham (1844)). No first name is given for Graham in the source, but its date and title suggest the 1841-1843 mission, and the list of mission members recorded by Cornwallis Harris (Cornwallis Harris (1844) I: vii) includes “Captain Douglas Graham” as Principal Assistant.
\textsuperscript{281} Graham (1844) 254.
\textsuperscript{282} \textit{G. 1.} 84-85: “Often too it has been beneficial to scorch unproductive fields and to burn the light stalks with crackling flames.”
\textsuperscript{283} Graham (1844) 262.
In bee-keeping, meanwhile, “the same customs prevail in this country which have been generally practised since the days of Virgil; the whimsical one of making a confused clamour to induce the swarm to settle, and that of rubbing the interior of the hive with sweet-scented herbs to induce the bees to remain.” Finally, the abnormal fertility of Shoa is compared to the idyllic picture of Italian agriculture given in the laudes Italiae:

Two harvests are yearly garnered in by the provident husbandman from the fat land, without its utter exhaustion and impoverishment. Whilst the ripe grain is being reaped from one field, the seed is but just deposited in the next adjacent one; the cattle employed in ploughing up the fertile soil in one location, whilst the muzzled oxen are trampling out its lately yielded treasures in the next; and all the various processes of husbandry, from the breaking up of the ground, to the winnowing of the grain, may be witnessed in one small locality simultaneously –

hic urer adsiduum atque alienis mensibus aestas:

bis grauidae pecudes, bis pomis utilis arbos.285

Graham’s report thus uses the Georgics to emphasize the fertility of Shoa – where the climate of G. 2. 149-150 becomes a reality – but also the timelessness of its people and their way of life, who still keep bees and prepare their fields in the ways which Virgil prescribes. Again I suggest that such a picture serves to aestheticize, as well as to de-politicize, the local people and so contributes to the ideology of imperial rule. This imperial context is clear when, for instance, Graham states that “unless some European power interferes for good with a strong hand, a great length of time must inevitably elapse before the habits and prejudices of this uncivilised nation be overcome for its own benefit.”286 The same sentiment was expressed by Cornwallis Harris:

284 Graham (1844) 280. Graham then (p. 280) quotes G. 4. 62-65: ...huc tu iussos asperge saporeis, | trita melisphylla et cerintha ignobile gramen, | tinnitusque cie et Matris quate cymbala circum: | ipsae consident medicatis sedibus... (“Here scatter the prescribed flavours, ground melisphylla and the lowly cerintha plant, and raise a din and shake Cybele’s cymbals round the hive: they will settle of their own accord in their scented home.”)
285 Graham (1844) 279, quoting G. 2. 149-150: “Here there is constant spring, and summer out of season; twice a year the animals produce new young, twice a year the tree has a fresh crop of fruit.”
286 Graham (1844) 255.
“There is, perhaps, no portion of the whole continent to which European civilisation might be applied with better ultimate results.”

While Abyssinia was never subject to official British rule, in 1868 an expedition led by Sir Robert Napier and staffed by the Indian army invaded the country. The official objective was to rescue European missionaries held hostage by Tewodros II; once this had been accomplished and Tewodros had committed suicide, Napier’s force, before departure, took a collection of over 1,000 Ge’ez and Amharic manuscripts, many of which were destined for the British museum. And in the 1930s Abyssinia felt the full force of European imperialism, in the guise of invasion and occupation by fascist Italy. Used in service of depictions of the people of Africa as primitive, ancient, and apolitical, the *Georgics* is thus implicated in the discourse of British and European imperialism. The question for readers of the poem is, then, to what extent the *Georgics*’ own descriptions of the world are implicated in the discourse of Roman imperialism.

I move now to the second aspect of international reception of *Georgics*, examining how G. 2. 458-459 are used to imagine colonial experience in three specific contexts: Australia, Ireland, and India.

In 1886 James Anthony Froude (1818-1894) published *Oceana, or England and Her Colonies*, an account of his visit to Australia and New Zealand the previous year. Froude had graduated from Oxford in 1842, and after a scandal over his novel *The Nemesis of Faith* (1849) had resigned his fellowship at Exeter College, Oxford, and embarked on a career as an historian and literary editor. In 1892, aged 74, he was appointed Regius Professor of History at Oxford. Froude wrote in many different fields, and *Oceana* is one of two pieces of travel literature he published in the early 1880s. The book was a best seller, and was conceived with a definite

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287 Cornwallis Harris (1844) III: 185.
290 For a brief biography of Froude see Pollard (2009); for a detailed study, see Brady (2013).
291 The other being *The English in the West Indies, or the Bow of Ulysses* (1888), on which see Brady (2013) 404-412.
political aim in mind.\textsuperscript{292} It takes its title from a seventeenth-century work of political theory by James Harrington (1611-77), and is concerned with the political future of the British colonies in Australia and New Zealand, whether they will remain within the empire as part of a broad commonwealth (the \textit{Oceana} of the title), or seek to gain independence from Britain. It is this question that Froude tasks himself with investigating in the book.

He adopts the tone of a genial narrator, full of pride that Harrington’s dream of a worldwide British empire has become a reality and, like many of his contemporaries, firmly convinced of the empire’s civilising mission. Rome is a constant reference point throughout the book – Froude takes as his epigraph a line from Ennius\textsuperscript{293} – and it is clear that classical literature is a major interest for Froude himself, who discusses the relative merits of Lucretius, Virgil, Ovid, and Horace, and who never travels on expeditions, we are told, without “a few volumes of pocket classics.”\textsuperscript{294} The time spent at sea gives Froude the opportunity to reflect on modernity:

The sky to the Latin farmer was a dial-plate, on which the stars were pointers; and he read the hour of the night from their position on its face. The constellations were his monthly almanack, and as the sun moved from one into another he learned when to plough and when to sow, when to prune his vines, and clip the wool from his sheep. The planets watched over the birth of his children. The star of the morning, rising as the herald of Aurora, called him to the work of the day. The star of the evening, glimmering pale through the expiring tints of sunset, sent him home to supper and to his ignorant mind these glorious suns of heaven were gods, or the abode of gods. It is all changed now. The Pleiades and Orion and Sirius still pass nightly over our heads in splendid procession, but they are to us no more than bodies in space, important only for purposes of science; we have fixed their longitudes, we can gauge in the spectroscope their chemical composition, we have found a parallax for the Dog-star, and know in how many years

\textsuperscript{292} Brady (2013) 404, 392. The book sold over 100,000 copies within nine months of its publication.
\textsuperscript{293} The epigraph is \textit{moribus antiquis res stat Romana uirisque} (= Skutsch (1985) fr. 156: “The Roman state depends upon its ancient customs and its men”).
\textsuperscript{294} Froude (1886) 21.
the light which flows from it will reach us. But the shepherd and the husbandman no longer look to them to measure their times and seasons, trusting to clocks and to printed authorities, and losing, in the negligence of their celestial guide, as much as, or more than, they have gained. The visible divinities who were once so near to our daily lives are gone forever. 295

Given the reference to the Latin farmer, it is highly probable that Froude has in mind here the *Georgics*, and in particular *Georgics* 1, with its instructions for the farmer’s routine and its discussion of weather-signs and constellations. 296 The modern world has lost its mystery thanks to the advance of science – “It is all changed now” – and this reflection on modernity is a persistent theme of the book. Froude’s trip around the world by steam-ship was, in 1886, pushing the limits of Victorian travel and speed. Virgil was himself interested in science, in the causes of things, Froude writes, but “he abandons the inquiry with a sorrowful sense of inferiority”. 297 “Could he have foreseen the blank vacancy in which science was to land us”, Froude continues, “he would have been better contented with what the gods had bestowed upon him.” 298 Quotation of Virgil gives Froude’s writing the authority of the classical canon, as well as authority among his peers (Latin quotations are untranslated throughout). But, as Brady argues, such quotations also serve as a kind of moral anchor amid the flux of late-Victorian moral struggle, loss of faith, and advancing modernity. 299

Froude quotes the *Georgics* on two further occasions. Describing his lunch by Sydney harbour he uses a detail from Book 1 to aestheticize the colony:

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295 Froude (1886) 24.
296 The sky is prominent throughout *Georgics* 1, but in particular Froude’s language appears to me to suggest G. 1. 1-4 (“when to plough and when to sow…”), and the farmer’s calendar at G. 1. 204-230 (“the constellations were his monthly almanack”).
297 Froude (1886) 25, where he quotes G. 2. 483-484, 486: *sin has ne possim naturae accedere partis | frigidus obstiterit circum praecordia sanguis | […] flumina amem siluasque inglorius.* (“But should the cold blood around my heart prevent me accessing these parts of nature, may I love the woods without renown.”)
298 Froude (1886) 25.
299 Brady (2013) 400.
Here we had luncheon – one of those luncheons which linger on in memory, set in landscapes of lake or river-side or mountain glen; where food becomes poetical, and is no longer vulgar nutriment; and old friends, now ‘gone to the majority,’ show their pleasant faces to us as figures in a dream. Instead of wine we had our grape-basket – great bunches like those which Virgil’s countrymen gathered wild to mix with the waters of Achelous.300

Froude picks up on two lines which recount the invention of wine through the beneficence of Bacchus. Here “food becomes poetical”, as we picture a location full of mystery and novelty. This sort of mythologizing of the colony can be seen in political terms, emphasizing an image of Australia as a primeval land. “In the conquest of this continent”, argue Denoon & Wyndham, “no treaties were made: colonists elaborated a doctrine of terra nullius [no one’s land] which asserted that British settlement extinguished native rights to land.”301 Hand in hand with this pernicious doctrine went racial views of British superiority. In his best-selling 1883 work The Expansion of England, the Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, J. R. Seeley, wrote that “the native Australian race is so low in the ethnological scale that it can never give the least trouble.”302

Oceana received favourable reviews in the British press. The Edinburgh Review discussed at length the book’s implications for imperial policy, while The Observer remarked that “the story of a delightful holiday has never been more delightfully told.”303 But we can begin to see the idealising tendency in Froude’s account by noting the criticisms of Edward Wakefield, a member of the New Zealand House of Representatives. Wakefield attacked Froude for his “almost incredible inaccuracy” about life in the colonies, particularly when he had been lavishly received and hosted by local dignitaries at almost every stop.304 Wakefield is scornful of Froude’s description of South Australia, and of Adelaide in particular. Froude had described it as “a city

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300 Froude (1886) 179.
302 Seeley (1971) 41.
304 Wakefield (1886) 173. Wakefield had little time for Froude’s seaborne classical musings: “If there is a bore on this earth, it is a man who will talk about the details of life on board ship” (= Wakefield (1886) 173).
of a hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants, not one of whom has ever known, or will know, a moment’s anxiety as to the recurring regularity of his three meals a day.”305 This account of a bountiful and thriving colonial city was in reality far from the truth, as there was severe economic depression at the time of Froude’s visit. “The population of Adelaide with all its suburbs,” countered Wakefield, “never exceeded seventy-five thousand, and when Mr. Froude was there great numbers of them were leaving daily, starved out by the failure of the harvest, the drought, and the commercial depression.”306 Quite apart from obscuring the political context of Australia’s indigenous population, that is, Froude also obscures the hardships of life among the colonial population.

This idealising attitude to colonial Australia is twinned with assertive political rhetoric. Reflecting on the possibility of Australia and New Zealand gaining political independence from Britain, Froude foresees the dangers of external invasion and internal strife in the path to nationhood: “it has always been so from the Greek democracies to the Italian republics or the Spanish states in modern South America.”307 He is clear that the best future for the colonies is within the British empire, within the commonwealth of Oceana:

Out of such struggles great men have risen and great nations, and, so far as we know, greatness cannot be purchased at any lower price. For the English colonies there is no such school yet opened, nor while they remain attached to us on the present terms can such a school ever be opened.

Fortunati nimium sua si bona norint.

We must ourselves be a broken power before a stranger can invade Australia or New Zealand. Revolutions and wars are not permitted to them as long as they are British dependencies. They have no foreign policy, no diplomatists, no intercourse with the

305 Froude (1886) 86.
306 Wakefield (1886) 175. On Froude’s misrepresentation The Edinburgh Review remarked, “It is unfortunate that Mr. Froude could not make a longer stay at Adelaide.” (= “ART V: Oceana; or, England and Her Colonies”, p. 411).
307 Froude (1886) 167.
political circles in other parts of the world, to call out their intellect or extend their interests beyond their own shores.\textsuperscript{308}

Froude imagines the colonies of Australia and New Zealand as naïve and helpless subjects ("no foreign policy, no diplomatists…"), as being utterly dependent on Britain for their political institutions and directions. They, like the farmers in \textit{Georgics} 2, are unaware of the advantages of their position; their life is imagined as carefree and apolitical. Virgil’s lines become, in effect, a thinly-veiled threat about the dangers of political autonomy, part of the condescension in Froude’s account which so annoyed Edward Wakefield.

Nineteenth-century Ireland was ruled by Britain, and Irish MPs had sat in Westminster since the Act of Union’s abolition of the Irish Parliament in Dublin in 1801. The Famine of 1845-51 had had a catastrophic effect on the country’s rural, agricultural populations: the number of those killed by starvation and disease is conservatively estimated at 775,000,\textsuperscript{309} while mortality combined with massive emigration led to a decline of over two million in the national population.\textsuperscript{310} In the following decades demands for national independence and for land reform increased, culminating in the 1870s and 1880s with Michael Davitt’s Land League and Charles Stewart Parnell’s leadership of the Irish Parliamentary Party. Tenants fought for what have traditionally been known as the “3 F’s” – fair rent, fixity of tenure, and free sale – demands which were partially granted by Gladstone’s Land Act of 1870. Landlords incurred criticism for unfair rents and absenteeism, but were by no means universally maligned, and were faced with protecting their property and livestock from the agrarian violence which recurred sporadically in this period.\textsuperscript{311} Without entering into a detailed analysis of particular issues, it is nevertheless true to say that land in Ireland in the middle and late nineteenth century was a source of profound political conflict – evictions, boycotts, agrarian violence, mass movements for tenant rights –

\textsuperscript{308} Froude (1886) 167.
\textsuperscript{309} Foster (1989) 324.
\textsuperscript{310} Foster (1989) 323: “Population decline…has been computed at 2,225,000 over 1845-51, through disease, starvation, and emigration…”.
\textsuperscript{311} On agrarian violence in Ireland at this time see Townshend (1983) 1-50. For a detailed history of the period 1801-1870 in Ireland see Vaughan (1989).
conflict at times exacerbated by the actions (or inactions) of British rule from Westminster. Agriculture for some and in some parts of the country was no doubt a generally prosperous and profitable occupation, but for others in other parts it was a matter of bare subsistence. It is this latter aspect which gives these Irish receptions of G. 458-459 their irony, coupled with the failure of the tourist or the politician to appreciate local realities and their relation to colonial rule.

In an Irish context the lines are consistently used to argue that the Irish are either unappreciative of British rule or unaware of the comparatively prosperous state of Irish agriculture. In 1851 an anonymously-published book, *The Saxon in Ireland*, recounted the travels of an Englishman, John Hervey Ashworth, in the West of Ireland during the Famine. His account combines appreciation of the landscapes of Mayo and Galway with accounts of meetings with desolate people. “Strange it is”, he writes of his stop at Leenaun in Co. Mayo, “that, where nature is so lovely, man should be so degraded and so wretched. The maimed, the blind, the naked, the widow and the orphan crowded around me as I alighted from the car…”312 In spite of his direct experience of areas affected by famine, Ashworth nevertheless argues that agriculture is more advantageous in Ireland than in England:

> Upon my English property the taxation, or rather the outgoings, are fearful […] Add to these the many calls upon private charity, the public subscriptions, which a man cannot put aside without odium, the relatively high scale of wages, which nevertheless ought not to be reduced, the continual wear and tear of implements, the long blacksmiths’ bill, and the various prerequisites to servants and labourers, which, allowed in more prosperous days, cannot now be discontinued without murmurs and dissatisfaction. From the great portion of this ruinous pressure Ireland is free, while her labour is fifty percent cheaper, and her soil equally, if not more fertile.

> “O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint,

> *Agricolas!*”313

312 [Ashworth] (1851) 40.
313 [Ashworth] (1851) 217.
In August 1869 a man describing himself as a North Lincolnshire tenant farmer wrote to the *The Times*, expressing his surprise on reading the newspaper’s report on Irish agriculture and at the seemingly benign conditions farmers enjoyed in Tipperary. A week later an editorial in the paper took up the correspondent’s point, and expressed surprise at the apparent contradiction between the conditions for farming in Ireland and the political unrest it occasioned:

Over here a man has to rise early and go to bed late, he has to economize every rood of land to crowd as much flesh on every sort of animal as its frame will bear, if he is even to hold his head above water, not to speak of continuous advances. What would he not give for a chance in a country where fences are gigantic and ditches gulfs, and there is an opportunity of adding some five or six per cent, to the available land on his farm? “*O fortunatos nimium sua si bona norint*”, might, it seems, be said with abundant reason of Irish agriculturalists.

It is in an ironic context that the use of *G. 2. 458-459* in the House of Commons should also be seen. In June 1863, a motion calling for a Select Committee to investigate agricultural depression in Ireland was proposed by Irish MPs, and debated in the House of Commons. Colonel Dunne, MP for Laois (then known as Queen’s County), argued that severe population decline, exacerbated by the Famine, had led to a drop in agricultural production, and thus in exports, while “the only thing which had increased in Ireland,” Dunne challenged the Chancellor of the Exchequer, “was taxation.” W. H. Gregory, MP for Galway, spoke in support of John Francis Maguire, criticising the reaction Irish MPs received when they brought forward grievances:

316 *Hansard*, Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 171, cols. 817-862 (12 June 1863). The motion called for (col. 817) “a Select Committee to inquire into the causes of such depression [in Ireland] and the effect of the taxation which it now bears.”
318 MP successively for Dungarvan 1852-1865 and Cork 1865-1872. Jones (2009) notes that Maguire introduced a tenants’ compensation bill (1858), proposed a select committee on landlord and tenant practice in Ireland (1863) and was appointed its Chairman in 1865.
When the Irish Members represented that state of things, they were told that they were exaggerating, and bringing forward fictitious cases of distress. The hon. Member for Dungarvan (Mr. Maguire) was told that his facts and figures were quite fallacious, and his complaints were dismissed with uncommonly little ceremony. In fact, the Irish people might have been addressed in this way –

“O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint,
Agricolas!”

But they did not know their happiness and were exaggerating the evils of their condition.319

Two weeks later, as the debate continued, Robert Peel (1822-1895)320 spoke against Maguire’s speech advocating a Royal Commission, and he referenced Gregory’s Virgil quotation. Maguire had raised the problem of emigration, and Peel countered:

There can be no doubt there has been a vast diminution of the population by means of emigration, which still continues to a great amount; but I am not one who regards that diminution of the population with unmixed regret. I believe that the persons who leave Ireland for the Colonies, or America, acquire there for themselves a position which they would never have obtained in their own country, owing to its enormous over-population, and have been able, in a period of twelve years to send a vast amount of money to Ireland. For these reasons, I do not think the Government would be acting fairly towards owners and occupiers if they acceded to the Motion of the hon. Member […] The debate the other night conclusively showed, that taking the population per head, the Irish are more leniently treated in regard to taxation than the rest of the Empire. Well might the hon. Member for Galway exclaim –

“O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint,

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320 For biography of Peel (not to be confused with his father Robert Peel (1788-1850)), see Boase (2007).
Agricolas.”

The fact is, that such a discussion might tend to induce a Chancellor of the Exchequer to consider whether he could not do away with exceptional taxation in favour of Ireland, and place the people of both countries on the same footing.321

Peel’s remarks allude to the Famine, and also to the context of the prevailing laissez-faire economic theory of the time. Peel’s father had been Prime Minister 1841-46, and his measures to combat famine in Ireland were pro-active yet insufficient. But Peel’s government lost power after its repeal of the Corn Laws, and John Russell’s administration pursued a policy of minimal state intervention, with disastrous consequences for the Irish population.322 Irish policy was also influenced by stereotypes about the Irish character and Malthusian theory of population control,323 stereotypes which should arguably be seen in the context of a racial element often present in discourse about Ireland and the Irish in the nineteenth century.324 Whereas Gregory appropriated G. 2. 458-459 ironically, Peel uses the lines to downplay perceived injustices, problems, and suffering in Ireland and in Irish agriculture, further demonstrating how the Georgics is implicated in colonial discourse.

One further aspect to this Irish context is the writing of Isaac Butt (1813-1879),325 the Donegal-born politician and barrister who was leader of the Home Rule League from 1873. This organisation sought restoration of the Irish parliament in Dublin, something Daniel O’Connell had failed to achieve in the 1830s and 1840s. Under later leaders Charles Stewart Parnell and John Redmond, Home Rule would continue to be a major issue in British politics until the outbreak of the First World War. Butt was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and graduated in

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322 Foster (1989) 327: “Under the new dispensation, government intervention was to be strictly limited; private initiative must be relied on to provide food wherever possible, with the result that prices soared to levels that the wages paid by public works could not meet.” Irish poor-houses had 215,000 inmates by June 1849 (Foster (1989) 328).
323 Foster (1989) 325: “Within both the government and the Treasury, humanitarian impulses came up against a violent disapproval of subsidized improvement schemes; there was also an attitude, often unconcealed, that Irish fecklessness and lack of economy were bringing a retribution that would work out for the best in the end.”
324 On which see Gibbons (2000).
325 For a brief biography of Butt see Bull (2009).
1835. Throughout his early career as a barrister and Professor of Political Economy at Trinity, Butt’s political views were Conservative and unionist, but the distress he observed in Ireland during the Famine led him to criticize British policy and, in the following decades, make renewed calls for land reform in Ireland.\textsuperscript{326} In 1866 Butt published \textit{Land Tenure in Ireland} and then, a year later and in response to criticisms his arguments had received, \textit{The Irish People and the Irish Land}.\textsuperscript{327} In this latter book, Butt delivers a lengthy (298-page) riposte to three Irish land owners, Lord Lifford, Lord Dufferin, and the Earl of Rosse, who had publicly criticized his arguments. In contrast to those who sought full independence from Britain or who advocated violence in service of national autonomy, Butt remained an advocate of Home Rule for Ireland within the British empire. Nevertheless, he was adamant that wilful neglect of Ireland was to blame for its troubles, that, in his own words, “the perpetual origin of misery and degradation has been the fact that the great mass of the people have been treated as belonging to a conquered race.”\textsuperscript{328}

Butt quotes the \textit{Georgics} three times in \textit{The Irish People and the Irish Land}. He compares the “landlordism” afflicting Ireland to a shape-changing monster, which must be followed through every mutation until it can be grasped in its true form.\textsuperscript{329} His footnote at this point quotes \textit{G. 4. 405-406}\textsuperscript{330} and \textit{411-414},\textsuperscript{331} thus making his allusion to Proteus explicit. In the book’s final pages he quotes from \textit{Book 2} – \textit{immensum spatiis confecimus aequor}\textsuperscript{332} – to signal his conclusion. Butt had translated the \textit{Georgics} while at Trinity in 1834, a prose version with critical

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{326} Butt (1847), (1866), (1867). Cf. Foster (1989) 329 (on the Famine): “The government by and large adhered to the belief that private enterprise should provide the bulk of the food supply; hardly anyone supported the idea that the government \textit{itself} should enter the market except, once again, the indomitable Butt.” [emphasis original].
  \item \textsuperscript{327} Butt (1866), (1867).
  \item \textsuperscript{328} Butt (1867) 91.
  \item \textsuperscript{329} Butt (1867) 118.
  \item \textsuperscript{330} \textit{uerum ubi correptum manibus uinclisque tenebis | tum uariae eludent species atque ora ferarum} (“But when you will have him bound by your hands and chains, then his different forms and faces of wild beasts will deceive you.”) The lines come from a passage describing the magical transformations of Proteus to which, Cyrene tells her son Aristaeus, he will resort to avoid capture.
  \item \textsuperscript{331} \textit{sed quanto ille magis formas se uertet in omnis | tam tu, nate, magis contende tenacia uincla, | donec talis erit mutato corpore quadem | uideris incepto tegeret cum lumina somno} (“But the more he will transform himself into every form, then the more you, child, draw your strong bonds all the more tightly, until, after his transformations, he takes the shape in which you saw him as he first fell asleep.”)
  \item \textsuperscript{332} Butt (1867) 239. \textit{G. 2. 451} reads \textit{Sed nos immensum spatiis confecimus aequor} (“But we have completed a course of great length”). It is the penultimate line of the book, and part of its concluding metaphor of finishing a horse race.
\end{itemize}
notes. The reason for the poem’s prominence in this book is, perhaps, that Butt knew the poem well from his university days, and knew also that, in a book about land reform, the subject of the poem made it an appropriate and desirable reference point. This is borne out by Butt’s third quotation, when he makes it clear that he and his cause will not be silenced or put aside:

But if I do not believe that parliamentary discussion can do much even to aid the advent of justice on the land question to the Irish people, I am quite sure that it is not possible for any number of vehement declarations on the part of the any number of Irish landowners, who have seats in either House of Parliament, to do anything to prevent it. Surely, my Lord, he knows nothing of the elements that are involved in the struggle of a people for the right to live in their own land who can gravely express a hope that a few words from a Prime Minister, in reply to an appeal from an Irish peer, will put an end for the demand for tenant right, or even extinguish my poor *Plea for the Celtic Race*.

“Hi motus animorum atque haec certamina tanta,

Pulveris exigui jactu, compressa quiescent.”

At the climax of his argument, Butt ironically quotes Virgil’s lines about the suppression of a swarm of bees. His quotation is particularly effective because the lines contain no explicit reference to the apian context, and because *motus animorum* is well suited to a popular political movement such as Home Rule. Butt’s quotation of Virgil thus lends weight to an authoritative and pugnacious rejoinder to his critics, implying that his demands will not easily be ignored.

British involvement in South Asia had increased steadily from 1757, when the Battle of Plassey gave the East India Company political primacy in Bengal. Until 1858 the East India Company was the official agent of British power, with a monopoly on British trade to and from South Asia until 1833. Throughout the nineteenth century Britain annexed increasing amounts of territory – Assam in the north-east (1826), Sindh (1843) and Punjab (1849) in the north-west, and Burma

333 Butt (1834).
334 Butt (1867) 288, quoting G. 4. 86-87: “These popular disturbances and these great contests will quieten, once suppressed with a little throw of dust.”
(1852) – although it should be remembered that British rule in South Asia was never total, but reliant on a series of alliances with local rulers as well as on direct Company or Crown rule. The major shock to British imperial confidence in the region was the Rebellion of 1857, precipitated by the mutiny of Indian troops in the British army at Meerut.335 Throughout the summer of 1857 the situation escalated to threaten the centres of British power in north India – Delhi, Agra, and Lucknow. There were atrocities on both sides, but the Rebellion sparked a wave of frenzied, racialized violence on the part of British troops wholly incommensurate with military suppression of rebels and the restoration of order.336 In political terms, the Rebellion precipitated the handover of British rule from the East India Company to the Crown, a process which culminated in the crowning of Queen Victoria as Empress of India in 1876.

Certain sources use the Georgics to reflect on experiences of India. An 1883 report on British efforts to expand bee-keeping in India discussed current methods, and noted with surprise the practice of Kashmiri bee-keepers: “Since Virgil wrote the Fourth Georgic his recommendation has been followed not to have the hives too near the dwelling house, lest the presence of man should disturb the bees’ peace of mind; but the Kashmir peasant builds his hives actually in his house, and with the best possible results.”337 In January 1885 the Leamington Spa Courier reported the speech of the Reverend W. C. Furneaux to the Leamington Institute, entitled “Life in the East”, in which the speaker entertained his audience with anecdotes from his time in India.338 Furneaux illustrates his descriptions of life in Bombay with biblical and classical allusions. Women stand around wells gathering water like Rebecca, while, outside the city,

336 British opinion was particularly horrified by the massacre of 180 women and children on 15-16 July 1857 at Cawnpore (Kanpur), for which see James (1997) 251-253, 282-290. Reprisals carried out by British troops in north India, often sanctioned and instigated by senior officers, included mass hangings, lynchings, the strapping of prisoners to cannons, and the religious defilement of Hindu and Muslim victims before execution. See Newsinger (2013) 84-89.
337 “A New Industry for India”, The Morning Post, 13 September 1883, p. 5, apparently referring to the instructions for locating the hive at G. 4. 8-32, but that it should not be near human habitation is not specifically mentioned in Virgil’s text.
…one might see an old plough, such as Virgil might have looked upon when he described the plough of the bucolics of the “Georgics”. Just such a one might be seen to-day in India, while overhead were [sic] the great line of telegraph wires by which Mr. Gladstone would flash in a few minutes a message from London to the Viceroy, and with equal speed receive another message in return – a wonderful contrast to the old condition of things when it occupied a year-and-a-half to inquire of a friend “How’s your fever?” and to get the answer, “That now it’s all right.” (Laughter).339

Following a pattern we have seen before, Furneaux contrasts the modernity of British civilisation, here represented by telegraphic communication, with the backwardness of Indian agriculture, which seems as ancient as the Georgics. As in Graham’s account of Abyssinia, this can be seen as rhetoric offering an implicit apology for British rule in India. This image of primitivism is combined with racism and allied to a belief in Britain’s civilising mission.340

I return now to The Competition Wallah (1864), G. O. Trevelyan’s best-selling (and, it should be remembered, fictional) collection of letters about life in India for the British civil servant. Henry Broughton, a recent ICS recruit, writes back to his school friend Charles Simkins in England. The letters contain classical quotations and references, comparisons between the empires of Rome and Britain, and translations of Horace’s Odes. As such, they represent in fictional form the peculiarities of the sources I have been investigating, the way in which classically-educated men contextualised their experiences in classical terms. At one point Broughton visits a Government School in Patna and is astonished at how a class of Indian schoolchildren is reciting aloud a passage from Goldsmith’s The Deserted Village:

There was something exquisitely absurd in hearing a parcel of young Bengalees regretting the time when every rood of ground in England maintained its man, and indignantly apostrophising trade’s unfeeling train for usurping the land and dispossessing

339 “Leamington Institute”.
340 Furneaux describes the “native character” as “intelligent and intellectual, but lazy, untruthful, and given to petty thefts” (“Leamington Institute” p. 7). Of his high hopes for the conversion of India to Christianity, Furneaux finishes by saying that “The duty of England in the present day was to sow the seed, and in God’s good time his Kingdom would come.” (“Leamington Institute”).
the swain. And yet, was it truly more incongruous than the notion of English boys in the latter half of the nineteenth century upbraiding the descendants of Romulus with their degeneracy and luxury; calling on them to fling into the nearest sea their gems and gold, the materials of evil; and complaining that few acres are now left for the plough; though, if that implement resembled the one described by Virgil in the first Georgic, it is, perhaps, as well that the field of its operations was limited?341

The passage reveals the politics of education in colonial India. British policy since 1835 had supported only European education, the underlying contention being that European, and specifically English literature, could be for Indian education what Classics was to British education, a moral and enlightening influence.342 But this view was based on a complete dismissal of local knowledges and cultures infamously espoused in T. B. Macaulay’s (who quoted Virgil at Narni) statement that “a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabic [sic].”343 When faced with this policy in action before his eyes, Broughton must reconcile his racial view of Bengalis with their access to the English literary canon. His amazement causes him to reflect on a much more familiar curriculum, that of Roman history, and he rationalises his experience by reflecting, via the plough from Georgics 1, that this classroom scene is no more incongruous than a Roman history lesson in Victorian England. As such the Georgics provides a kind of key to this character’s private negotiation of difference.

In 1859 a series of riots and protests broke out among indigo cultivators in Bengal.345

Indigo was an important and valuable British export, used as the principal source of blue dye in

341 Trevelyan (1864) 58-59.
342 This policy was adopted by resolution of the Governor General William Bentinck, dated 7 March 1835 (= Zastoupil & Moir (1999) 194-196); the comparison with Classics in British education is Macaulay’s (Zastoupil & Moir (1999) 166-167).
343 From Macaulay’s Minute on Indian Education, dated 2 February 1835, = Zastoupil & Moir (1999) 165. This Minute is but the most well-known document in a long-running debate about British educational policy in India, between those wanting to fund and encourage Indian classical education and those who wished to promote English-language education as thoroughly as possible. Bentinck’s resolution of 1835 enshrined the latter position as official policy. For an introduction to this issue, see Zastoupil & Moir (1999) 1-72.
344 Broughton’s racist view of Bengalis is clear at, e.g., Trevelyan (1864) 57, 259.
345 The most comprehensive account of these events and their context is Rao & Rao (1992); see also Bose (1993) 45-51, Bhattacharya (1978), and Kling (1966).
European textiles and uniforms. Production in Bengal was controlled by European planters, who entered into direct commercial relationships with the ryots who cultivated the crop. Various expenses deducted from the price paid to cultivators meant that they relied on a series of advances provided by planters, and debt often accumulated to the point where repayment became impossible and was transferred from one generation to the next. In this way arose “a marketing and production mechanism that efficiently and relentlessly attached unpaid labour to indigo cultivation.”

Under the contract, the peasant was to bear the entire cost of production, be responsible for the loss of the plant, permit factory servants to measure his land before cultivation, and deliver the harvested plant to the factory – all at a rate fixed by the planter. The advance system could be so manipulated that the question of payment might not arise: ‘Of 33,200 indigo raiyats, who cultivated for the Bengal Indigo Company’s concerns in 1858-9, only 2448 were shown by Mr. Larmour to have received any payment.’

This exploitative system and the coercion used to enforce it, coupled with the discrepancy between cultivators’ desire to plant more profitable or useful crops like rice or jute, and the commercial pressures on planters to make use of two short, seasonal windows for indigo growing, led to tensions which contributed to the riots of 1859-1862.

The discussion of these events in The Competition Wallah is criticised in The Calcutta Review, where it is argued that Trevelyan has been too harsh on the planter community and their desire to have breaches of contract over non-production of indigo treated as criminal, rather than civil cases. Of importance here is the fact that this review of The Competition Wallah quotes

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346 In 1859 there were approximately 500 planters managing 143 production facilities, which accounted for half the value of indigo imported into Britain at the time (Kling (1966) 26).
347 Roy (2011) 62. Ryot is the typical contemporary spelling in English sources of raiyat, a word derived from Urdu and Persian meaning a peasant or cultivating tenant.
348 Bose (1993) 48: “Debts were reckoned to pass from father to son […] Unpaid balances mounted over the generations to astronomical figures which no indigo peasant could hope to redeem.”
349 Bose (1993) 48. As Rao & Rao note (1992: 71), the system concealed further unpaid labour, namely the families of ryots who helped cultivate the crop.
Virgil in its dissection of the controversy. Both Trevelyan’s character and the review, it should be noted, admit the unscrupulousness of planter behaviour. The review admits that “the whole root of the difficulty is the insufficiency of price offered for Indigo in comparison with other crops.”

But discussing (and dismissing) the charge that planter policy is to have indigo sown on lands meant for rice, the reviewer denies that this is the case, and states that:

…[T]he ryots will learn with no less surprise than gratification, that in the selection of land for Indigo, the factory servants are scrupulously enjoined to see that rice land is not taken, and that only such portion of their land is to have Indigo sown in it, as would otherwise in the regular rotation of crops have had to be fallow.

O fortunatos nimium sua si bona norint
Agricolas…

only unfortunately the ryots know nothing of this as theory, and are hopelessly ignorant, not to say incredulous, of it as practice.

Here again there is paternalistic language, used of farmers who will be surprised to learn of how simple the situation is, and how benevolent to them is official British policy and practice. In ways similar to the Australian and Irish examples above, lines 458-459 from Georgics 2 are used to assuage allegations of misconduct and neglect. The tensions inherent in the colonial economy of nineteenth-century Bengal, between the profit-driven motives of European planters and the resistance of local cultivators, on whom the industry was reliant, to exploitative and unfair treatment, find ironic expression in the Georgics’ depiction of unknowingly-happy farmers.

In a variety of what I hope are compelling contexts, Virgil’s lines are used to construct the experience of the colonial subject. J. A. Froude uses them to warn against greater colonial autonomy in Australia and New Zealand. In an Irish context they are used by Ashworth, *The Times*, and in the House of Commons, to question the perceived poor state of Irish agriculture and the grievances of Irish MPs. In a Bengali context, the lines again become part of a

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352 “ART VI: The Competition Wallah”, p. 333.
condescending dismissal of local grievances amidst assertions of the benevolence of British rule. And as I have tried to show, the *Georgics* is used more generally to frame experiences of travel, and to describe peoples and places in ways which aestheticize or primitivize, in Italy, Egypt, and Algeria, in Ethiopia, Australia, Ireland, and India. Such description can often be seen to facilitate, rather than to challenge, the rhetoric and the practice of British and European imperialism. If people are simply and happily apolitical, then the perceived “civilising” influence of British rule can be seen, not just as unproblematic, but even as necessary.\(^{354}\) For readers of the *Georgics*, awareness of these highly-political appropriations can, I argue, send us back to the poem with renewed interest in the politics of representation. The poem arguably depicts peoples and places subject to Roman imperialism in similarly problematic terms. The idyllic picture of Italian country life in Book 2 may not be the only side to agriculture in the *Georgics*, but it is the side to which British readers consistently respond. The question then becomes, to what extent can this picture be seen to aestheticize, condescend to, or de-politicize, the Italy of the first century B.C.

\(^{354}\) Seymour’s analysis (Seymour (2012) 35) captures this well: “Liberal imperialism thus constructed the colonial subjects at best as passive victims, needful of tutelage, capable of self-government only after a spell of European supremacy, and at worst as fanatics and murderers, racially degenerate peoples given to tyranny and unnatural practises, fit only for subordination. The imposition of highly exploitative systems on the colonized was seen not only as advantageous to them, but as natural – a logical step en route to civilization.”
Chapter 3

*tot bella per orbem*: Reception 1900-1930

**Historical Introduction**

Chapter 3 follows the same scheme as Chapter 2, attempting to show that an aesthetic trend remains prevalent in scholarly writing on the *Georgics* in the period 1900-1930, and that the history of the poem’s reception is more diverse, and more political, than this trend suggests. The era of the First World War brought both continuity and change. Writers continued to emphasise the *Georgics*’ beauty and perfection, focusing on its so-called “cardinal points”, including the *laudes Italiae* and the end of Book 2. But the war did have an impact, as Virgil’s work came to be perceived as a humane and supportive voice amidst the destruction of the conflict. In the 1920s and during events to mark the bimillenium of Virgil’s birth (1930), many saw contemporary life reflected in the post-war context of the *Georgics*’ composition. Despite this development, however, there was no sustained break with the aesthetic trend, as the politics of the poem, agricultural and imperial, continued to receive scant attention. Readers continue to relate to the poem’s primary, agricultural, subject matter in a range of ways, while tourists, journalists and politicians continue to use the *Georgics* to describe foreign peoples and places. This international description can be seen to aestheticize, and to depoliticize, those peoples and places in a highly political way. The imperial context of the poem’s reception remains most visible, meanwhile, in the use of G. 2. 458-459 to imagine the experience of the colonial subject. I end this Chapter with an investigation of three receptions directly related to the First World War, which show how wartime contexts brought a new relevance to Virgil’s poem.

Before exploring scholarly reception in this period, it is again necessary to sketch some historical contexts. In Chapter 2 I described an elite audience, educated in classics, who were in a position both to produce and to appreciate reception of the *Georgics* in contemporary sources. This audience is still very much in existence in the early twentieth century, despite the fact that the landscape of British education was undergoing significant change. Moves towards centralization
and government control of education culminated in the founding of a dedicated Board of Education in 1899, and the Education Act of 1902. The latter abolished school boards in favour of Local Education Authorities, and proved controversial for allowing rates to be used in support of Church-run schools.\(^1\) The university sector was also expanding considerably, with a total of six new universities receiving charters in the first decade of the century, diversifying significantly the range of higher educational institutions in the country.\(^2\) Oxford and Cambridge maintained their predominance as the premier élite educational institutions.

While Classics faced growing competition from modern History at Oxford, and from Law and modern History at Cambridge, it was not until the turn of the twentieth century that numbers shifted decisively in favour of the newer courses.\(^3\) Classics in pre-war Oxbridge still retained its high status and a kind of institutional pre-eminence, with the *Oxford University Handbook* for 1914 stating that *Literae Humaniores* “is admitted on all hands the premier School in dignity and importance.”\(^4\) In the years following 1914, however, there were significant changes. The war had a profound impact on university life, not least in the number of fellows and students who served and died in the conflict.\(^5\) It also brought renewed criticism of the bias towards Humanities subjects at the expense of Science. In 1919 the Prime Minister’s Committee on Classics brought to a conclusion a forty-year debate on the question of compulsory Greek: the subject was scrapped as a requirement for entry to both Oxford and Cambridge in this year.\(^6\) These changes can be seen as part of a wider decline in the pre-eminence of classical education in Britain – the intensive system which created the body of sources examined in this thesis – a process which has been investigated at length by Christopher Stray.\(^7\)

Classics remained, despite advances, restricted in terms of gender as well as class. The

\(^{2}\) Vernon (2004) 150-160, i.e. the Universities of Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield, and Bristol, all of which had their origins in the nineteenth century.
\(^{3}\) Curthoys (1997) 360.
\(^{4}\) Currie (1994) 111.
\(^{5}\) On the impact of the war at Oxford and Cambridge see Winter (1994) and Brooke (1993) 331-340 respectively.
\(^{6}\) See Stray (1998) 164-166 for the debate on Compulsory Greek.
\(^{7}\) Stray (1998) 269: “The committee’s report and the abolition of Compulsory Greek together mark the end of the fifty-year process in which classics was marginalized in English culture.”
women’s colleges at Oxford and Cambridge, as well as University College, London, and the new metropolitan universities, all served to break down the gender bias in higher education. Women were admitted to degrees at Oxford in 1920, but Cambridge voted down the issue in the same year, and did not allow women equality of access to degrees until 1948.8 Wartime conditions in 1914-1918 brought women a measure of unprecedented equality in employment, but this was largely revoked with the return to peacetime society.9 In 1918 the Representation of the People Act gave women over thirty and of a certain class the right to vote; in 1928 this right was extended to all women over the age of 21. All of which is to say that the interpretative community reading the Georgics in Latin remained unrepresentative of British society as a whole. The aesthetic trend is a product of this social context.

Land remained a political issue in Britain at this time, something which we need to bear in mind when considering the reception of the Georgics, a poem with land as its subject. This can be seen in several different ways. The second South African War, in which Britain had suffered several military disasters, had created anxiety about the state of the nation’s troops, and had brought into question the nutrition and living standards of the population. Many called for increased efficiency – in agriculture, in the army, and in public life – as a means of ensuring preparedness for any future, European, war.10 Arthur White opened his 1901 book Efficiency and Empire with a stark message: “Britain has received a warning to reorganise her Education, her system of Imperial Defence, and the Administration of her public affairs.”11 Economic depression had affected farmers in the twenty years between 1875 and 1895,12 and there were concerns about rural depopulation, urbanization, and about Britain’s reliance on foreign imports in the event of a European war. Relative decline in the importance of agriculture to the nation’s economy,13 along  

8 Howarth (1994) 349.  
10 On efficiency see Searle (1971); on wider theories of decline see Prior (2013).  
11 White (1973) vii.  
13 Orwin & Whetham (1971) 341: “The declining importance of agriculture in the economic life of Britain had been clearly demonstrated in the thirty years before 1900. From contributing about one-sixth of the national output in 1867-9, agriculture supplied less than one-tenth by 1890 and less than one-fifteenth by 1911-13, pushed down by the scale of expansion in the industrial sector and in the distributive trades.”
with the increasing impact of modernity on the countryside, gave rise to political debates and social movements concerned with rural life.\textsuperscript{14} The example of Jesse Collings, who used the \textit{Georgics} to appeal for land reform in this context of national circumspection, is discussed below.

Land also remained the basis of aristocratic wealth, and thus of the patent inequalities, in British society. Although the landed gentry were not the force they once had been, and would suffer a substantial decline in the years after 1918, the Edwardian period was a time of great opulence, what Hobsbawm calls “an orgy of conspicuous waste”, evidenced in part by contemporary statistics on estate duties.\textsuperscript{15} In 1906 the Liberals had won a landslide victory, giving David Lloyd George the freedom, as Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1909, to introduce his “People’s Budget.” In order to finance the recently-introduced Old Age Pension and Dreadnought battleships for Britain’s navy, he introduced seven new taxes, including ones on motors, petrol, and, most controversially, land.\textsuperscript{16} The proposed taxes on land, and the national valuation of land which any such tax would require, caused outrage among the landed political classes, including among those in the House of Lords, which then caused a constitutional crisis by vetoing the Budget. After some progress in valuations by 1914, the war put the scheme on hold, and it was quietly dropped in 1920.

The First World War is the major political event in British life in this period, a disastrous conflict which in the years 1914-1918 caused grief, devastation, and loss for millions. It is vitally important, however, to separate the human tragedy of the war from its political origins and development. The war occupies a central place in British historiography as a locus of national remembrance and identity. And yet there was nothing inevitable about the war’s beginning during the “July crisis” of 1914, when the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo began a series of events which led to European, and thus international, war. The image of European

\textsuperscript{15} Hobsbawm (1969) 166. “Only six per cent of the population left any property worth mentioning at all when they died. Only four per cent left more than £300. But in 1901-2 just under 4,000 estates paid duty on a capital value of £19 million, and 149 of them were proved for £62.5 million. The rich were still rich, for the pound sterling was still very much the pound sterling.” (Hobsbawm (1969) 167). On aristocratic decline see Cannadine (1990).
politicians as “sleepwalkers”, as the title of a recent history characterizes them,\textsuperscript{17} is in danger of obscuring the fact that the war met with the general assent of the business and political classes in Britain, and that the war was, at least in part, the result of a network of competitive European imperialisms.

One of the most interesting aspects of the war’s beginning is the way in which groups who had formerly been opposed to war, or who might have been expected to voice their dissent, acceded to this general mobilisation. I refer here to the Labour Party, the Women’s Social and Political Union, and academics both in Britain and Europe.\textsuperscript{18} It is only when we look at a source like the memoirs of Sylvia Pankhurst, who broke with her mother and sister in her dissent from the war, that we can begin to see an alternative narrative of 1914: anti-war protestors in Trafalgar Square, the rejection of the majority Labour Party view by Ramsay MacDonald and Keir Hardie, the pacifism and activism of Sylvia Pankhurst herself in east London and of Bertrand Russell at Cambridge.\textsuperscript{19} In the case of Herbert Warren, examined below, the \textit{Georgics} is used to endorse enthusiastically a version of the conflict as a battle “between East and West”, rather than to critique the imperialist basis for the war. The mobilisation of academic opinion in favour of the war is thus a specific example of a broader issue relevant to this thesis, namely the way in which the perceived intellectual independence of scholars often belies deeply partisan positions.

The imperialist basis is something I wish to emphasize here. Like the war at the end of \textit{Georgics} I, the First World War was a world war because of its belligerents’ global influence: in 1914 Britain, France, Germany, and Belgium were all colonial powers. Some 1.5 million Indian troops fought for Britain on the Western Front, in Africa, and in Mesopotamia, while over one million African troops fought on both sides of the conflict.\textsuperscript{20} While making extensive use of its colonial resources, both human and material, for the war effort, British policy insisted on the racial inferiority of African and Asian troops. In the second South African War, it was the Government’s reluctance to use Indian troops against a white opponent that had led to British

\textsuperscript{17} Clark (2013). For a recent review of the historiography of the War see Mulligan (2014).
\textsuperscript{20} Morrow (2014) 429-430.
troops being deployed in South Africa. In the First World War, British policy forbade the use of African troops outside Africa, but staffed labour battalions with African and Asian men who served in several theatres of the war.\textsuperscript{21}

During the war Britain occupied Egypt and Iran in order to secure the Suez Canal and Iranian oil reserves respectively, while British and French diplomats plotted the takeover of the lands of the Ottoman empire. The Sykes-Picot agreement of May 1916 gave Mesopotamia (i.e. Iraq) and part of Palestine to Britain.\textsuperscript{22} After the war Britain received “mandates” from the League of Nations in the form of the German colonies of Tanganyika and South-West Africa, while also expanding its territorial control in West Africa.\textsuperscript{23} Thus the war and its geopolitical aftermath cannot be understood without understanding the desire of British diplomats and politicians to maintain and advance Britain’s global influence. Despite talk of imperial decline in the interwar period, the British empire in 1919 had never been larger. The war, that is, was not just a European event, but a global war which impacted on and exploited the colonial empires of the major belligerents. In reading the \textit{Georgics}, no less than the historiography of the First World War, a narrow metropolitan perspective is to be resisted. In the same way that appreciation of the human tragedy of the Roman civil wars, evoked at \textit{G. 1.} 489-514, should not obscure the imperialist basis of Rome’s power, so too the human tragedy of the First World War should not obscure the imperialist basis of the war and its aftermath.

How is imperial power legitimised within the society which exercises it? Partly, I suggest in this thesis, by a rhetoric which casts subjugated people as lacking some aspect of “civilisation”, such as Western political institutions or culture, or as being in some sense foreign or other. Chapter 2 has dealt with examples of this phenomenon, and Chapter 3 will investigate more. It is important, because of this, to stress the racial thinking which was conspicuous in British (and European) imperial discourse in the period under study. In 1901 James Bryce, in his \textit{Studies in History and Jurisprudence}, gave an account of international relations, of a kind conspicuous in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Morrow (2014) 414.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Morrow (2014) 421-422.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Porter (2004) 243.
\end{itemize}
Edwardian discourse. “The great civilized nations have spread themselves out so widely”, he wrote, “as to have brought under their dominion or control nearly all the barbarous or semi-civilized races. Europe – that is to say the five or six races which we call the European branch of mankind – has annexed the rest of the earth, extinguishing some races, absorbing others, ruling over others as subjects, and spreading over their native customs and beliefs a layer of European ideas which will sink deeper and deeper till the old native life dies out.”

In similar terms, men such as Joseph Chamberlain, Cecil Rhodes, and Winston Churchill confidently proclaimed the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race, and the innate qualities of leadership which enabled it to rule the world. This constructed racial identity formed a key part of the self-justifying discourse of empire. Comparisons between the empires of Britain and Rome were common, as evidenced by titles like Charles Lucas’ *Greater Rome and Greater Britain*. Even critics of British imperialism, such as J. A. Hobson, writing in the aftermath of the second South African War, left unquestioned the racial basis for British supremacy in the world. Hobson repeats the long-established justification of imperialism as benevolent paternalism towards those “lower races” unable to govern themselves. And this discourse persisted beyond the First World War. On 23 April 1924, King George V opened the British Empire Exhibition, the architectural centrepiece of which was the newly-completed Wembley Stadium. The exhibition attracted 26 million visitors during its two-year run, displaying the wealth of imperial culture to the metropolis, including “native villages” staffed by colonial subjects. “Framed by the exhibition”, writes Stephen, “the participation and attendance of colonized women and men was meant to advertise the alleged spirit of imperial cooperation stemming from the war while at the same time emphasizing raced and gendered boundaries of difference.”

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24 Bryce (1901) 1.
25 See Huttenback (1976) 15-16 quoting Chamberlain and Rhodes; Churchill’s comments on the use of gas against “uncivilised tribes” in a War Office minute of 1919 are found at Gilbert (1997) 649.
26 Stepan (1982), Rich (1990) and Mitcham (2016) investigate different facets of the relationship between empire and race in Britain at this time.
27 See Lucas (1912), and for a study of such comparisons, Butler (2012).
28 Hobson (1902) 250.
British imperial politics is key to understanding the international receptions of the *Georgics* discussed below.

**Scholars’ Virgil II: The Aesthetic Trend and the First World War**

In the period 1900-1914 the aesthetic trend in *Georgics* scholarship remains very much in evidence. The entry on Virgil published in the eleventh edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1911), for instance, presents the *Georgics* in terms which echo the nineteenth-century receptions examined in the previous Chapter. The focus is firmly on Book 2, and the poem is closely associated with Italy and the Italian landscape. The *Georgics* is “not only the most perfect, but the most native of all the works of the ancient Italian genius”, one which contains “uniformity of chastened excellence in diction and versification.”

Virgil is praised for “that subtle fusion of the music and the meaning of language which touches the deepest and most secret springs of emotion.” Rural life is presented in utopian terms, Virgil’s aim having been “to associate the ideal of a life of rustic labour with the beauties of Italy and the glories of Rome.”

The entry highlights what it calls the poem’s “cardinal points”: while the *laudes Italie* is “the true keynote of the poem”, special praise is reserved for G. 2. 458-542, “the most perfect passage in all Latin poetry.” The aesthetic achievement of the poem is linked to an idealised and conflict-free picture of rural life. Other contemporary studies follow this aesthetic conception of the poem. Glover’s study of Virgil rejects a pessimistic reading of the poem, and calls the *Georgics* “the most Italian and the most poetic work ever done in Latin.” Introducing his own study, T. F. Royds noted that Virgil “is at his best in those idyllic pictures such as the conclusion of the second *Georgic*.”

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32 Glover & Sellar (1911) 115.
33 Glover & Sellar (1911) 113.
34 Glover & Sellar (1911) 114.
35 Glover & Sellar (1911) 114, where it is noted, of G. 2. 458-542, that “the old delight in the labour of the fields blends with the new delight in the beauty of nature, and is associated with that purity of and happiness of family life which was an Italian ideal...”.
37 Royds (1914) xiii-xiv: “Virgil is at his best in those idyllic pictures such as the conclusion of the second *Georgic*, with its denunciation of slaughtering oxen for food (*Georg. ii.* 537; cf. Ovid, *Met. xv.* 72-142).
In the years before the First World War, the aesthetic trend is also visible in the way certain writers treat the poem’s interest in the natural world. Two books dealt specifically with this subject, but so did two writers from outside the world of institutional classical scholarship. Evelyn Martinengo-Cesaresco (1852-1931), a British woman resident in Italy, published The Outdoor Life in Greek and Roman Poets, which emphasised her Italian experiences as the basis for her appreciation of classical literature: “I have walked with Virgil in his fields, and listened with Theocritus to Sicilian folk-songs.” Martinengo-Cesaresco can be seen as part of the broader phenomenon examined in this thesis, of British travellers and tourists whose receptions of the Georgics are influenced by their time in Italy. She calls the Georgics “one of the most faultless of poems”, but regrets the extent to which animal plague dominates Book 3. This aversion to the main “darker” section of poem is something we have met before, and something which highlights the aesthetic trend in contemporary writing.

Archibald Geikie’s 1912 study can be seen in a similar light. Geikie was a Scottish geologist, whose presidency of the Classical Association in 1911 led to the publication of The Love of Nature Among the Romans; one chapter (entitled “Divini Gloria Ruris”) deals with Lucretius, Virgil, and Horace. Echoing the rhetoric of G. 2. 136-139, Geikie argues that appreciation of the charms of nature “was one of the grounds of that national sentiment of patriotism for which the Romans were distinguished among the peoples of antiquity. The more they saw and learnt of other countries, the stronger grew their conviction that none of these was so pleasant a land to dwell in as Italy, for nowhere had Nature so bountifully poured out her riches for the service of man.” More precisely, Geikie repeats the implicit argument of the laudes or the description of the dying ox in the third Georgic (iii. 515-530). […] The fourth Georgic is farthest of all from the truth as science, but perhaps the most beautiful of all.”

See Royds (1914) and Sargeaunt (1920).

Martinengo-Cesaresco (1911) vii.

Martinengo-Cesaresco (1911) 139: “The Georgics is one of the most faultless of poems; but perhaps a reader here and there has privately regretted that so much stress is laid upon the details of these animal plagues. But Virgil was resolved not to soften any of the lines of his picture, not to ‘retouch’ the photograph; it was a matter of conscience with him to be sincere.”

e.g. Page (1898) xxv, on the plague at the end of Georgics 3 being “less in accordance with modern than with ancient taste, which seemed rather to enjoy the gruesome and portentous.”

“The glory of the divine countryside”, a quotation from G. 1. 168.

Geikie (1912) 17.
Italiae that Italy’s fertility and climate are related to its imperial power. To this appreciation of the poem’s Italian context is added a further emphasis on the poem’s aesthetic quality, “…one of the great master-pieces of literature, where in the varying aspects of earth and sea and sky, and the human tasks which husbandry involves, are depicted with the most enthusiastic appreciation and the most consummate art.”

Translations of, and commentaries on, the Georgics begin to appear with regularity in this period. H. W. Garrod’s selections for The Oxford Book of Latin Verse included six long extracts from the poem, including the three “cardinal points” identified by the Encyclopaedia Britannica entry. One contemporary translation is again indicative of the aesthetic trend. H. C. Gardner, President of the Board of Agriculture 1892-1895 and later ennobled as 1st Baron Burghclere, published his translation of the poem in 1904. He calls the Georgics “the most complete of Latin classics” in terms of rhythm and diction, something with which reviewers of his translation agree, citing the poem’s “majestic charm” and “incomparable beauty”. Writing in The Speaker, J. S. Phillimore praised the translation for capturing “the Virgilian ethos, the calculated richness and allusiveness of diction, the delicate all-pervading animism, the sensuousness, the…incomparable bread-and-cream quality of the Georgics.” Scholarship thus continued to put forward a particular vision of the Georgics, a selective and aesthetic interpretation, based on key moments in Book 2 and closely associated with the beauties of Italy.

The problem is not this aesthetic appreciation in itself, but rather what it obscures, namely the politics of the poem’s subject and its representations of rural life and foreign peoples and places.

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44 Geikie (1912) 66.
45 For example: Winbolt (1900), Gardner (1904), Jackson (1908), Way (1912), Shearman (1923), Plaistowe (1927), and Royds (n.d.). Mackail’s 1889 translation of the Eclogues and Georgics was reissued in 1915, and the first Loeb Classical Library translation of the Georgics appeared in 1916 (= Fairclough (1916)).
46 Garrod (1912). His selection excludes drama and epic and seeks to rectify a perceived under-appreciation of didactic, “in some ways the most characteristic product of the Roman genius” (v). He includes eight passages of Lucretius and ten of Manilius. His Georgics selections are: G. 1. 121-159, 1. 424-514, 2. 136-176, 2. 458-540, 3. 1-48, 4. 460-527. For Garrod’s idiosyncratic sketch of Virgil’s life and work see his address to students of English literature at Oxford (=Garrod (1912a)).
47 Gardner (1904) 5: “…the most complete of Latin classics as a supreme model of harmony in rhythm and dignity in diction.”
50 Phillimore (1905) 307.
Before turning to two important post-war receptions, it is necessary, as before, to examine certain contexts behind the aesthetic trend in pre-war scholarship.

As it was in the nineteenth century, Virgilian scholarship is influenced by biographical reading. Virgil becomes a peaceable writer of peaceable poems, appreciative of Nature and averse to conflict, something which further obscures any sense of conflict or politics in the Georgics. For Geikie, the “smiling landscapes” of Virgil’s youth imparted a “special charm to all his poetry”;\(^{51}\) Martinengo-Cesaresco states that appreciation of Nature was, for the poet, “almost an act of worship.”\(^{52}\) Glover conveys this image more explicitly when he argues that Virgil’s “whole nature was on the side of peace. His ideal was a quiet life unruffled by the storms of political disorder, and, still more, unassailed by the fiercer storms of civil war...”.\(^{53}\) As I have argued, this conception of the poet can obscure the radically political nature of the Georgics, not least its Actian politics, its imperial hyperbole, and the controversial nature of its major theme in a post-war context. Furthermore, Glover endorses the view that Virgil wrote the poem at the behest of Maecenas, and that he was a supporter of Augustus, thus further eliding any sense of conflict. “Virgil then found in Augustus”, he writes, “a friend, a saviour of his country, and a heroic character.”\(^{54}\) All of which is to suggest that this picture of a peaceful Nature poet, wholly supportive of Octavian, works in tandem with the aesthetic trend to present a Georgics which is largely, and problematically, conflict-free.

In the pre-war years certain contemporary contexts are also relevant. In Chapter 2 I argued that in both eighteenth- and nineteenth-century reception, the Georgics’ depiction of Italy was used as a vehicle, both implicitly and explicitly, for expressions of British patriotism. In the fifty years before 1914 nationalism was a major political force in Europe, as peoples sought independence from within larger political entities, and states such as Italy and Germany were unified in their modern forms. Competition between nations was an important factor in both the

\(^{51}\) Geikie (1912) 57.
\(^{52}\) Martinengo-Cesaresco (1911) 126: “To rejoice in the good things of Nature, the beautiful earth, the glorious sun, the fruitful fields, was for Virgil almost an act of worship.”
\(^{53}\) Glover (1912) 158.
\(^{54}\) Glover (1912) 163.
rapid intensification of European imperialism in the final decades of the nineteenth century, and in the politics which led to the outbreak of the First World War. It is the nation which features prominently in Glover’s study, first published in 1904. Virgil, he argues, “gave for the first time its literary expression to the triumph of a nation, politically, racially, and geographically one, over the clan and over the city-state.” His focus is on the assimilation of Roman and Italian identities at the end of the Aeneid, but readers of the Georgics can note the way in which the history of Italy in the first-century B.C. is shorn of any sense of conflict, as part of a progressive historical reading which compares the British and Roman empires. While the Georgics is presented as an aesthetic and largely apolitical work, that is, by examining the contexts of its reception we can see the way Glover frames Virgil’s work in contemporary political terms. The continued patriotic aspect of the poem’s reception is made clear in William Warde Fowler’s introduction to Royds’ 1914 study. The Georgics’ description of the natural world is seen as particularly appealing to English readers, further evidence of the familiarity with which readers regard the poem throughout the history of its British reception. “No book of classical antiquity”, Warde Fowler writes, “makes quite such a strong appeal to the Englishman as the Georgics.”

Thus it is clear that there is no radical shift in British scholarly reception of the Georgics in the period 1900-1914. In particular, the aesthetic trend remains in evidence. In the remainder of this section I will argue that the First World War did have a significant impact on reception of the poem, but that, ultimately, there was no decisive challenge to the aesthetic trend in British scholarship.

By 1923, J. W. Mackail had completed a thirty-five-year career with the Board of Education, where, appointed assistant secretary in 1902, he took part in the implementation of the 1902 Education Act and contributed to the debates surrounding compulsory Greek. He had

55 Glover (1912) 106.
56 Glover (1912) 107: “Just as to-day the significance of the British flag is best learned abroad, we may believe that the opening of the world of the East and the new world of Spain and Gaul to Italian commerce helped forward the detrition of old clan distinctions and made Marsian and Apulian conscious that they were both Italian in blood and Roman in fact, if not yet in the letter of the law. The Social War was essentially, like the American Civil War, a war for unity. The day of tribal independence was gone, and the Italian fought for Italy, and for a united Italy, against the Roman, who fought for a divided Italy.”
57 Royds (1914) vii.
been what one biographer calls “the most brilliant undergraduate scholar of his time” at Balliol College, Oxford, and had left a fellowship at Balliol in order to join what was then the Education Department of the Privy Council. Nevertheless, he pursued a scholarly career in tandem with his work in education, publishing translations of the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* (1889) and of the *Aeneid* (1885), as well as the critical survey *Latin Literature* (1895). He was Professor of Poetry at Oxford 1906-1911, and continued to publish works of classical scholarship throughout the 1920s, culminating in his bimillenium commentary on the *Aeneid* (1930). Relevant here is his short study written as part of an American series, *Our Debt to Greece and Rome*, entitled *Virgil and His Meaning to the World of To-day* (1923). The editors in their preface remark that Mackail has presented them with “a study of the significance of Virgil to the twentieth century”, and Mackail throughout the book sees the post-war context of the *Georgics* as analogous to Europe after the First World War.

In his discussion of the *Georgics*, Mackail is clear about its aesthetic achievement. The poem “remains as one of the few examples in art of attained perfection.” To view the poem as a “technical treatise on husbandry”, he argues, is to miss the point: “What they were designed to do, and what they did with triumphant beauty, was to embody in exquisite poetry an ideal, an imaginative vision, that of a life at peace with itself and in harmony with nature.” A few pages later he is still more explicit, stating that “perhaps no poetry has been written which combines in such perfection richness of colour with purity of line, which is so exquisite in its transitions and so suave in its modulations, so smoothly gliding and nobly sustained. All these qualities are reinforced or culminate in episodes, where the current of the poem spreads into large pools of beauty.” What differentiates Mackail’s reception, however, is that the aesthetic and humane qualities of Virgil’s poetry become, in the aftermath of the First World War, fundamentally

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59 Mackail (1923) v [emphasis original].
60 See Ziolkowski (1993) 12-16 for further discussion of the “Roman analogy” in European writing 1918-1939.
61 Mackail (1923) 70.
62 Mackail (1923) 63.
63 Mackail (1923) 69.

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restorative. Virgil is, Mackail argues with a strikingly contemporary analogy, “the poet and prophet of no mere League of Nations, but of a single world-commonwealth, and of the fulfilment of the divine purpose in an ordered and universal peace.”\textsuperscript{64} He continues:

We stand now, as Virgil stood, among the wreckage of a world; he can give light and guidance to us in the foundation of a new world upon its ruins. Mankind is, above all, human; what it above all needs, not in education only but in the whole conduct of life, is humanism; consciousness of its own past, faith in its own future, the sense of truth, beauty, joy. The human value of all great works of art is not only imperishable but unreplaceable. Virgil is one of the greatest of artists; and it is as such that he finally claims the study which he more than repays, the love which that study increases the further it is pursued and the more largely it is communicated.\textsuperscript{65}

The post-war context of Mackail’s reception becomes clear in other parts of the study. Civil war in the first century B.C. had destroyed the “great garden” of Italy, a pointed politicizing of the beauties of Italy lauded throughout British reception of the \textit{Georgics}.\textsuperscript{66} But the cause of such degradation is expressed in explicitly twentieth-century terms: “an unemployed and discontented proletariat, a loose ballast which was a constant danger to the ship of state as it laboured through the waves of political revolution.”\textsuperscript{67} In the years following the Russian revolution, and particularly within a post-war British context, when there were mass demonstrations over demobilisation and unemployment and when the red flag was hoisted over Glasgow Town Hall,\textsuperscript{68} Mackail’s Roman analogy carried an immediate contemporary relevance. This analogy also functions in an international context, as Mackail describes the damage done to the Roman empire by its expansion, by “the fatal lure of the East”, perhaps an implicit

\textsuperscript{64} Mackail (1923) 140. A forerunner of the United Nations, the League of Nations was founded 10 January 1920 to promote international peace and security in the aftermath of the First World War.
\textsuperscript{65} Mackail (1923) 141.
\textsuperscript{66} Mackail (1923) 60.
\textsuperscript{67} Mackail (1923) 60.
\textsuperscript{68} On the conflicts in industrial relations in the period 1919-1921 see Pearce (1993) 71-72.
commentary on the dangers of British imperial expansion. Yet while Mackail is more aware of the Italian social contexts of the first century B.C., the Georgics is still seen as a poem of peace and reconstruction. As I argued in Chapter 1, any conception of the Georgics as endorsing peace must distinguish between the end of civil conflict and the continued belligerence of the Roman state abroad during the final decades of the first century B.C. The implication, furthermore, that Britain in 1923 is also in a phase of peace and reconstruction should be seen within the context of the inherently imperial nature of Britain’s post-war settlement. Mackail’s reading of the Georgics arguably obscures both of these contexts.

Post-war Britain also informs W. E. Heitland’s Agricola (1921). Heitland had been a student of Benjamin Kennedy’s at Shrewsbury, and was a fellow and tutor at St. John’s College Cambridge. “Accustomed as we are nowadays to continual agitations for increase of wages and reduction of working hours,” he writes, “we are in no danger of undervaluing the wage-earner in our social fabric.” The extension of the franchise in 1918 now meant that “power goes by votes; the handworker is now a voter; and the voice of the handworker is loud in the land.” What is remarkable is that, from here, Heitland proceeds to give a picture of the Georgics unlike that in any of the scholarship discussed to this point. While he does allude to the poem’s “finished literary art”, there are no lyrical passages extolling the poet’s love of nature or the poem’s perfection; instead we get an historical analysis of the poem in the light of Roman agriculture. It

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69 Mackail (1923) 18: “The fatal lure of the East began to work. The ghost of Alexander’s empire, which had stretched from the Adriatic to the Indus, from Bactria to the Sudan, kept rising from the grave to vex and dazzle the imagination of the West. The Asiatic policy of Rome, like her Asiatic frontier, was in perpetual fluctuation. In Virgil’s seventeenth year, a great Roman army, led out across the Euphrates on a mad adventure of mixed conquest and plunder, was utterly destroyed by the Parthians in the Mesopotamian desert.”

70 On which see Morrow (2014), esp. p. 430: “In January 1919 the British Empire reached its zenith, with more than a million additional square miles, primarily in former Ottoman domains, as [British Prime Minister] Lloyd George laid claim to dominance in the Middle East. In April 1920 the British and French agreed secretly to monopolise the oil supplies of the Middle East and in July the French took control of Syria and would later rule in Syria and Lebanon. After riots in Egypt and Egyptian demands for complete independence in 1919 and revolt in Iraq in 1920, an over-extended British government granted both limited autonomy in 1922. That same year, Britain assumed the League [of Nations] mandate over Palestine, west of the River Jordan, while Eastern Palestine became Jordan.”

71 For a brief biography of Heitland see Searby (2004).

72 Heitland (1921) 1.

73 Heitland (1921) 1.

74 Heitland (1921) 223. Cf. p. 229, where the poem is called “Virgil’s most finished work.”
is hard to say to what extent the war, or Heitland’s personal views on the conflict, influenced his picture of the *Georgics*. Given the lines quoted above it would seem he found the post-war context relevant to his wider study of Roman agriculture and society. Later in his introduction, he argues that the importance of agriculture “was and is not merely economic. Its moral value, as a nursery of steady citizens and, at need, of hardy soldiers, was and still should be recognized by thoughtful men.”\(^75\) Without overstating the radicalness of Heitland’s views, the originality of his contribution to Virgilian scholarship in Britain is important, being the only major exception to the aesthetic trend I have examined.

This originality stems from the attention given to the historical contexts of Roman agriculture. “The greatest [architectural] works of the ancients”, he writes, “are for the most part silent witnesses to the ruthless employment of forced labour, either that of captives or bought slaves or that of the impressed subjects of an autocrat.”\(^76\) He is one of the few scholars – and I include here scholars of the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries – to devote time to the portrayal of rural labour in the poem; to speculate on the status of the many agricultural workers named, and to question the picture of the happy farmer at the end of Book 2: “…among the advantages [of country life] he [Virgil] does not omit to reckon the freedom from the extravagance and garish display of city life, the freedom to drowse under trees, the enjoyment of rural sights and sounds, in short the freedom to take your ease with no lack of elbow-room (*latis otia fundis*). This hardly portrays the life of the working farmer, to whom throughout the poem he is ever preaching the gospel of toil and watchfulness.”\(^77\)

Heitland identifies, as Spurr would later do,\(^78\) a contemporary Roman readership of the *Georgics* as primarily elite, “a class dependent on slave-labour in every department of their lives”;\(^79\) he references, too, the impact the proscriptions had on such a land owning class, of “large

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\(^75\) Heitland (1921) 3.
\(^76\) Heitland (1921) 1-2.
\(^77\) Heitland (1921) 222. See also 227-241. The Latin quotation is from *G.* 2. 468, “leisure on large estates”.
\(^78\) See Spurr (1986) 174-175.
\(^79\) Heitland (1921) 224.
estates bought cheaply in the time of troubles."\textsuperscript{80} Perhaps his most cogent point in relation to the *Georgics* concerns a famous passage, the fallen ox at G. 3. 515-519:

\begin{quote}
…if civilization owed much to the labours of the ox, and if gratitude was due to man’s patient helper, what about the human slave? Is it not a remarkable thing that the *Georgics* contain not a word of appreciative reference to the myriads of toiling bondsmen whose sweat and sufferings had been exploited by Roman landlords for at least 150 years? Can this silence on the part of a poet who credits an ox with human affection be regarded as a merely accidental omission?\textsuperscript{81}
\end{quote}

Heitland’s questioning of the poem’s aestheticization of labour is an important corrective to the aesthetic trend in British scholarship. The anthropomorphic treatment of animals in Book 3 becomes not just a poetic device but a means of obfuscation. Heitland argues that Virgil suppressed the slave-basis of Roman agriculture because of his desire not to provoke confrontation with Maecenas and Octavian: “it was simpler and safer not to refer to these things.”\textsuperscript{82} By focusing on the material side of Roman history in the context of post-war British society, Heitland offers a picture of the *Georgics* unlike that given in print by any other contemporary British scholar, and so challenges the entire tradition of aesthetic reception. But equally important is the fact that Heitland is a rare exception, in the sources I have examined, to the aesthetic trend.

I conclude this section with an examination of sources relating to Virgil’s bimillennium (1930). Events to mark two thousand years since Virgil’s birth took place in a number of countries around the world, but were particularly prominent in Italy, then governed by the fascist regime of Benito Mussolini.\textsuperscript{83} Events in Britain, by contrast, appear to have been limited to a series of scholarly lectures, publications, and school-talks. Three special lectures to mark the event were held at the British Academy in October, while specially-commissioned publications included Mackail’s *Aeneid* (1930) and a new edition of R. D. Blackmore’s translation, introduced by R. S. Conway

\textsuperscript{80} Heitland (1921) 223.
\textsuperscript{81} Heitland (1921) 229.
\textsuperscript{82} Heitland (1921) 237.
\textsuperscript{83} For more on international bimillenium events see Ziolkowski (1993) 17-26.
and with woodcuts by Edward Carrick. The publications surrounding the event are interesting in that they give a snapshot of Virgilian reception at a particular moment, mid-way between the two World Wars and with the worst years of the Depression still ahead. We can see a particular emphasis, in relation to the *Georgics*, on peace and reconstruction, as writers looked back to the context of the Roman civil wars and saw in Virgil’s post-war poem much that was relevant to British life in 1930.

*The Scotsman* referred to the *Georgics*’ “effortless ease of diction”, its “abounding and enrapturing music”. Mackail in his lecture called Virgil a “master-mind in virtue of having achieved the utmost beauty, melody, and significance of which human words seem to be capable”, and quoted Dryden’s “incisive and magnificent judgement” with approval: “the best poem of the best poet”. C. J. Ellingham’s article on the *Georgics*, however, is indicative of the way the aesthetic qualities of the poem have become, as for Mackail, newly-relevant to post-war life. “Virgil has shared with us a poet’s vision”, he writes, “and shown the delights of agricultural life, and the price at which they are bought. But to him it is more than delightful. It has a moral value apart from the moral value of every delight. It is the only hope of sanity and safety for an empire war-wearied and hysterical.” In an article published on the day of the bimillenium, the *Manchester Guardian* put the parallel succinctly: “Vergil lived, like ourselves, in a time when the world was taut [sic] in a desperate struggle to get on a new set of rails.” The article goes on to identify agriculture, “the pattern of the changeless round of the year”, as the key to societal – and imperial – stability. “The base of all empires and all Governments is that there is a time to sow and a time to reap, linked in a rhythm as majestic and as inflexible as Vergil’s own hexameter.” For Professor Richmond, speaking to the Edinburgh Branch of the *Classical...*

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84 The three lectures were given by R. S. Conway, G. S. Gordon, and J. W. Mackail. They were reported as “The Virgilian Year: Professor Conway’s Lecture”, *The Times*: 15 October 1930, p. 17, “The Virgilian Year: English Poets’ Debt”, *The Times*, 16 October 1930, p. 16, and “The Virgilian Year: Dr. Mackail on a ‘Master-mind’”, *The Times*, 18 October 1930, p. 14. See also Mackail (1930) and Blackmore (1931).
87 Ellingham (1931) 42-43.
Association, the *Georgics* was “full of melancholy and disappointment”, and yet demonstrated, in the aftermath of the war, “the progress of the world towards peace.”\(^91\) “Nowhere does Virgil speak more truly with the voice of his race”, observed another article, “than when he looks beyond the wars, which were the accidents of Rome’s existence, to her real life’s work of keeping the world’s peace.”\(^92\)

The *Georgics* remain a model for British patriotism, in a further association of Italy and Britain. “If the Roman temper that had met us in almost everything that Virgil wrote had sometimes seemed to us an English thing”, G. S. Gordon declared at the British Academy, “if to the eye of fancy our English fields, woods, and waters appeared at times to be coloured with more than northern grace, we owed this largely to our national worship of the Virgilian muse and to the tradition which so long made Virgil the companion of the English poet and gentleman.”\(^93\)

Addressing schoolboys in Kent, Arthur Quiller-Couch advised that “Virgil’s patriotism sprang from the soil, as theirs should be rooted in Kent. Virgil came from a farm on the fertile Lombard plain which was the garden of Italy, as Kent was the garden of England.”\(^94\) But Quiller-Couch also introduced a note of circumspection not found in nineteenth-century scholars’ reception: “Homer was full of the joy of living and battle and travel […] But it was Virgil who understood that Nineveh, Babylon, Egypt, Persia had fallen, and understood even while celebrating the rise of Rome that to man’s glory, as to his labour, there must be an end.”\(^95\)

Here we can observe a general pattern. The *Georgics* offers, to those acquainted with it, an irresistible parallel to contemporary British society. This parallel is a broad one, and there is little textual detail from the poem. Such views contrast sharply with the Victorian receptions of Sellar and others in the direct comparisons that are drawn with contemporary British life. While the aesthetic trend is still in evidence, it is now tempered by the sombre realities of post-war life; in this context the beauties of Virgil’s poetry become a humanistic beacon in dark times. And

\(^{91}\) “Virgil’s Lessons”, *The Scotsman*, 15 November 1930, p. 16.
\(^{92}\) “Virgil: His Place in Poetry”, *The Scotsman*, 10 May 1930, p. 12.
\(^{93}\) “The Virgilian Year: English Poets’ Debt”, *The Times*, 16 October 1930, p. 16.
\(^{94}\) “The Virgilian Year: Virgil the Patriot”, *The Times*, 16 October 1930, p. 16.
\(^{95}\) “The Virgilian Year: Virgil the Patriot”, *The Times*, 16 October 1930, p. 16.
yet, as I argued in relation to Mackail’s 1923 study, the strong focus on the *Georgics* as a poem of peace obscures the politics both of Rome in the late first century B.C., and of the British empire in the 1920s.

Despite the new-found relevance of the *Georgics*, and of Virgil’s poetry more generally, to post-war British life, the aesthetic trend in British scholarship remained prominent and largely unchallenged. Heitland’s treatment remains a striking exception to this general rule, but only an exception. The poem continued to be lauded in aesthetic terms, associated with the beauties of Italy and of the natural world. The imperial contexts of the poem, its depiction of foreign peoples and places, its hyperbolic Actian politics, are not mentioned or discussed. The politics of land and labour are suppressed beneath a utopian picture of rural life. The darker sections of the poem, particularly the plague, receive scant mention, while two parts of Book 2, lines 136-176 and 458-542, are continually highlighted. More important is the fact that this aesthetic reception, as I have tried to show, has dominated British scholarly reception of the *Georgics* from Dryden to, arguably, the modern day. Within a few decades of 1930, the work of scholars in the 1960s and 1970s, not just in Britain, retained an emphasis on the poem’s aesthetics at the expense of its politics. As I argued in the Introduction, aesthetic interpretation has remained a dominant mode of interpretation. In an effort to reassert a balance between aesthetic and political criticism, I turn now, as in Chapter 2, to popular reception both domestic and international, in the hope of showcasing a more diverse history of the poem.

**Popular Reception III: The *Georgics* at Home**

The following two sections undertake further examination of popular reception of the *Georgics*, in a bid to offer a contrasting history to scholarly reception and the aesthetic trend. As in the period 1820-1899, the poem’s agricultural subject matter remains a source of interest to readers, and is related to their contemporary concerns in a number of different ways. It is referenced or quoted, in English or Latin, as a source of lore about the natural or animal worlds, in pieces about the impact of modern life, and in discussions of particular vocabulary. The strength of classical culture in Britain, based on a system of elite classical education, means that the *Georgics*
remained a surprisingly common point of reference. As in Chapter 2, this examination shows that
the primary subject matter of the poem, often seen as a surface beneath which lie deeper themes,
was in this period a source of interest for readers in itself. The larger point is that the tendency
for scholarship to overlook the *Georgics*’ primary subject matter allows for the problematic
nature of that subject matter, and the political contexts of land and power, to be overlooked in
favour of a de-politicised conception of the poem as an aesthetic masterpiece.

I have also argued that reception of the *Georgics* in domestic contexts is linked to the
politics of land in Britain. Chapter 2 examined the receptions of James Graham and James Booth;
how the optimistic picture of country life at the end of *Georgics* 2 informed Graham’s vision of
a patriarchal and prosperous society, and how Booth used G. 1. 121-124 to extoll the value of
hard work. I sought to place these receptions within the larger context of Britain’s contemporary
industrial and agrarian history, in which, from the enclosures to the Poor Law of 1834, the
traditional rights of certain sections of society came under attack and were diminished. Here I
take up one aspect of this story, namely the allotment movement of the later nineteenth century,
in which Jesse Collings MP had notable legislative success. In particular, it is Collings’ 1906
work advocating a much broader plan for land reform, and the sudden impetus which the First
World War gave to allotments in Britain, which show the relevance of the *Georgics*, in a small
way, to the concerns of some of its British readers.

Different receptions show different levels of engagement with the text. As in the nineteenth
century, articles on bees and bee-keeping often reference Virgil in a cursory way. The *Aberdeen
Daily Journal* reported in 1904 on a lecture given by Mr. D. M. Macdonald to the Bee-Keepers
Association in Banff, Aberdeenshire, in which the speaker began his presentation with reference
to the “silver-tongued Virgil”.96 Articles on bee-keeping in the *Falkirk Herald* in 1910, and in
the *Western Gazette* in 1928, both give similar, cursory mentions to the poet’s treatment of bees
in *Georgics* 4.97 Two articles looked to the *Georgics* for advice about the weather. A 1919 article,
again in the *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, discusses weather prophecies and the credence afforded to them. The primary source of comparison is the classical world: Theophrastus and *Georgics* 1. 351-466, “perhaps the most remarkable piece of weather lore in the classics…in which the poet comments upon many phases of meteorology, showing that philosophers, both ancient and modern, had a greater respect and reverence for weather than the ordinary individual of the present day.”

While this article uses the weather section of *Georgics* 1 to make a general point about modern ignorance of weather signs, another makes a more specific point. The Perseid meteor shower, visible annually between mid-July and mid-August, prompts a piece informing readers about the tendency for thunderstorms to coincide with the peak phase of this astronomical event. The article quotes Dryden’s translation of G. 1. 365-367, part of the Aratean section of the poem describing signs of impending bad weather, and then notes that “this is quite possibly what will happen over the weekend, when a watch should be kept for these comparatively slow-moving messengers from space, and also their accompanying thunder disturbances, with possibly high winds.”

\[\textit{saepe etiam stellas uento impendente uidebis} \\
\textit{praecipitis caelo labi, noctisque per umbram} \\
\textit{flammarum longos a tergo albescere tractus.} \quad \text{G. 1. 365-367.} \]

\textit{And oft, before tempestuous winds arise,}  
\textit{The seeming stars fall headlong from the skies,}  
\textit{And, shooting through the darkness, gild the night}  
\textit{With sweeping glories and long trails of light.} \textsuperscript{100}

\textsuperscript{98} “Weather; And Weather Prophecies in the World of Letters”, *The Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 22 December 1919, p. 3.  
\textsuperscript{100} Lines 1. 501-504 of Dryden’s translation (Dryden (1709) I: 112).
The poem’s authority is also invoked in relation to the breeding of Cheviots, sheep named for the Cheviot Hills on the English-Scottish border. Having referred to black tongues in Cheviots in a previous article, the writer later found a reference in Virgil and shared it with his readers, quoting G. 3. 387-389 in English.

illum autem, quamuis aries sit candidus ipse,
nigra subest udo tantum cui lingua palato,
reice, ne maculis infuscet uellera pullis
nascentum…

Reject him, though the ram himself be white,
Under whose ousy palate lies concealed
A black or spotted tongue; for with black spot
He’ll stain the fleeces of his future race.101

Yet in a local context the poem’s advice, that sheep with black tongues should be cut from the flock, did not ring true, as the judges at a local agriculture show “gave first position to a gimmer with a black tongue.”102 The didactic advice of the Georgics could thus still be of relevance in early twentieth-century Britain.

Such advice could, however, be used more rhetorically. A 1933 editorial in The Times responds to a contributor’s anger over unchecked bracken growth in the countryside (“Huge areas of our most attractive country are being laid waste”103) with a tongue-in-cheek defence. Bracken is “a handsome fern…and makes (as Virgil tells) good bedding for sheep in winter.”104 Behind the rhetorical deployment of Virgil in a not-entirely-serious context is a precise reference to G. 3. 295-299.

101 “Agricultural Notes”, The Southern Reporter, 28 January 1915, p. 3. I print the translation given there, but have not been able to identify its author. “Ousy” is not listed in the OED. Wilkinson (1969: 257) quotes veterinary research arguing for “the correlation between a pigmented tongue and pigmented fleece.”
102 “Agricultural Notes”, p. 3. “Gimmer” is a word for a ewe between the first and second shearing (OED 3 s.v. “gimmer”).
103 Tindall Atkinson (1933).
104 “Against Bracken”, The Times, 2 October 1933, p. 15.
Incipiens stabulis edico in mollibus herbam

carpere ouis, dum mox frondosa reductur aestas,
et multa duram stipula filicumque maniplis
sternere subter humum, glacies ne frigida laedat
molle pecus scabiemque ferat turpisque podagras.  G. 3. 295-299.

To begin I declare that sheep should eat grass in their soft stalls, until the leafy summer
soon returns, and spread lots of straw and bundles of bracken on the hard ground
underneath them, so that the cold ice doesn’t harm the gentle flock and bring with it scab
and foul rot.

The strength of classical culture in contemporary English journalism is evidenced by further
demonstration of learning: “Extermination [of bracken] has always been difficult. To Horace the
filix that grew literally or metaphorically in the neglected soil was urenda; but before it can be
burned it must be either cut down or rooted up. In the Georgics it is misliked by the ploughman,
hateful to the curved share.”105

The ways in which readers’ experience can shape the meaning of a text are evident in
two further contexts. Two pieces in this period make a connection relating to G. 2. 389, which
describes a ritual of Italian farmers:

et te, Bacche, uocant per carmina laeta, tibique

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105 “Against Bracken”, p. 15. The quotation refers to Hor. Serm. 1. 3. 37: neglectis urenda filix innascitur agris (“Bracken that grows in unattended fields should be burnt”) and Verg. G. 2. 189, part of a passage
describing the locations best suited for vine growing: at quae pinguis humus dulcique uligine laeta, | quique frequens herbis et fertilis abere campus, | qualam saepe caua montis conualle solemus | despicere (hac summis liquantur ripibus annes | felicemque trahunt limum), quique editus Austro | et filicem curcis
inusam pascit aratris: | hic tibi praeualidas olim multoque fluentis | sufficiet Baccho uitis... (“But land
that is rich and fertile with water sweet to the taste, or a field full of grass and rich soil, the kind that often
we are accustomed to look down on in a hollowed-out mountain valley (rivers flow down from high cliffs
to it, and bring the fertile silt), or land that faces south and nourishes the bracken hated by curved ploughs:
here it will suffice for you to plant powerful vines oozing with lots of wine...”).
And you, Bacchus, they call on through their happy songs, and for you they hang soft masks [?] from the tall pine.

It is unclear exactly what is meant by oscilla, a confusion already apparent to Servius.¹⁰⁶ A 1901 article, however, sees in the line the origins of the Christmas Tree, usually associated in a British context with Prince Albert and Queen Victoria. Noting this royal connection, it states that the Christmas Tree “was probably first imported into Germany with the conquering legions of Drusus, and is alluded to by Virgil in the ‘Georgics’”.¹⁰⁷ In 1939 the Western Daily Press made the same point: “The popularity of the spruce appears to date back to Roman times, for Virgil mentions the tree in his “Georgics”, and it is asserted that the Romans introduced it into Germany, where it has always been associated with Christmas customs.”¹⁰⁸ It is unclear whether a particular scholarly source had first made this supposition, as neither Conington nor Page make the connection. Nevertheless the Christmas Tree is a striking example of the contingencies of reception: readers found meaning in a puzzling image by relating it to contemporary experience.

In September 1915, Thomas Okey, a London basket-maker, autodidact, and later Professor of Italian at Cambridge University, wrote to The Athenæum concerning the new edition of Mackail’s Eclogues and Georgics of Virgil.

nunc facilis rubea texatur fiscina uriga  \hspace{2cm} G. 1. 266

“Now let the basket be lightly woven of briar rods…”¹⁰⁹

He queried Mackail’s translation of rubea virga as “briar rod[s]” and cited other translations giving both “briar” and “bramble”.¹¹⁰ To Okey, presumably drawing on his personal expertise, it was incredible that thorny briar and bramble rods should be used to make the basket described.

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¹⁰⁶ The confusion over oscilla is an ancient one: apparently a small mask (TLL 9. 1102. 13-60) but also something which swings (TLL 9. 1102. 61-1103. 19). Serv. ad G. 2. 389 notes three different explanations, including that oscilla refer to masks used as part of an Athenian expiatory ritual in honour of Erigone (Hyg. Fab. 130); Serv. Dan. ad loc. says that they refer to masks hung in honour of Bacchus. However there is no clear evidence as to their form or purpose in relation to this line of the Georgics (See Mynors, ad loc.).

¹⁰⁷ “The Christmas Tree”, Cheltenham Chronicle and Gloucestershire Graphic, 10 August 1901, p. 11.

¹⁰⁸ “The Spruce Evergreen Fir”, Western Daily Press and Bristol Mirror, 7 January 1939, p. 11.

¹⁰⁹ Mackail (1915) 48-49.

¹¹⁰ Okey (1915): “Conington translates ‘baskets of the pliant bramble twig’; Dr. Way, ‘briar or rush’; Dr. Bryce (‘Bohn’s Library’), ‘bramble twigs.’”
Instead he suggests that the red osier (Salix rubea) is meant, “which from time immemorial has been, and still is, used by basketmakers all over Europe, and was largely cultivated by Roman agriculturalists for basket-making and binding purposes.”\textsuperscript{111} In 1917 R. L. Dunbabin, Professor of Classics at the University of Tasmania, offered an alternative explanation in The Classical Quarterly.\textsuperscript{112} Agreeing with Okey that “briar” was an incorrect translation, he argued that bramble properly meant the blackberry-bush, and that it is blackberry-runners to which rubus refers. His argument is, like Okey’s, based on personal experience. “Many a Tasmanian farmer would regard Pliny’s denunciation of it [i.e. rubus] as ‘pessima atque exsecranda res’ as alone sufficient to identify it.”\textsuperscript{113} In this case, as in the case of the Christmas Tree, readers’ own experiences provide interpretative support where the text of the Georgics is ambiguous or confusing, thus demonstrating how readers’ reception could be constitutive of meaning.

As in the material examined in Chapter 2, the Georgics is also used in discourse about modernity and the relative merits of past and present. A 1919 article in the Berwickshire News discussed the harvest practices that were dying out across Northumberland. “The old traditions and the familiar omens of the harvest field”, the author noted, “are out of place in this age of scientific farming and mechanical appliances.”\textsuperscript{114} In particular, the old customs resembled the practice of farmers in Georgics 1:

It is interesting to note the striking resemblance between the ancient and now almost obsolete modern way of celebration. The ancients celebrated the gathering-in of the harvest by offerings to Ceres, the goddess of husbandry. Her image had the body of a woman but the head was that of a horse. Virgil, when describing the rites of their harvest celebration speaks of a scene that was quite familiar to our Northumbrian villages at the time when our local poet [William Mitford] lived, and took part in the rustic celebrations:

“Let every swain adore her power divine,

\textsuperscript{111} Okey (1915).
\textsuperscript{112} For a brief biography of Dunbabin (1869-1949), a graduate of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, see Waters (1981).
\textsuperscript{113} Dunbabin (1917) 137, quoting Plin. H.N. 17. 96, “a terrible and detestable thing.”
\textsuperscript{114} “Northumberland Harvest Customs”, The Berwickshire News, 11 November 1919, p. 5.
And milk and honey mix with sparkling wine;
Let all the choir of clowns attend this show,
In long procession, shouting as they go.
On Ceres let them call, and Ceres praise,
With uncouth music and with country lays.”

As in the 1874 article from the *Exeter & Plymouth Gazette*, quoted in Chapter 2, the poem’s description of harvest ritual becomes a means of eulogising rural customs that have become endangered by modernity. The place of the *Georgics* within contemporary British classical and educational culture means that it is a Latin poem which best exemplifies, for the author, this dynamic.

The “age of scientific farming” lamented by the Berwickshire journalist could also make the *Georgics* seem strikingly contemporary. In the second decade of the twentieth century two Germans, Fritz Haber and Carl Bosch, invented the process for synthesizing ammonia which bears their names. The significance of this development in agricultural terms was that it allowed for the mass production of artificial fertilizer. The *Georgics* does prescribe the sowing of legumes to fertilize fallow land, resulting in what is now known as nitrogen fixation. One reader was particularly struck, however, by its instructions in relation to treating seeds:

```latex
semina uidi equidem multos medicare serentis
et nitro prius et nigra perfundere amurca,
grandior ut fetus siliquis fallacibus esset…
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*G. 1. 193-195.*

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115 “Northumberland Harvest Customs”, p. 5. The lines quoted are 1. 471-476 and 1. 481-482 of Dryden’s translation (Dryden (1709) I: 110-111), corresponding to Verg. *G. 1. 343-346, 350. G. 1. 343-350* reads: *cuncta tibi Cereor em pubes agrestis adoret: | cui tu lacte fauos et miti dilue Baccho, | terque nouas circum felix eat hostia fruges, | omnis quam chorus et socii comitentur ouantes | et Cereor em clamore uocent in tecta; neque ante | falcem maturis quisquam supponat aristas | quam Cereri torta redimitus tempora querca | det motus incompositos et carmina dicit.* Pausanias describes (Paus. 8. 42. 1-4) a wooden, horse-headed, statue of Demeter at Phigalia in Arcadia, which appears to be what is referred to here.

116 See *G. 1. 71-76* with Mynors’ note to line 74: “The value of legumes in enriching the soil was well known to the Ancients…they could not know that this is due to the presence of nodules upon the roots containing bacteria which can fix the nitrogen in the atmosphere, and so make it available to the crop as food.”
I, for my part, have seen many farmers, as they sow, treat the seeds first with soda, and soak them in black olive-lees, so that the crop may grow larger within the deceptive pods...

A letter to *The Times* in 1909 noted how the *Georgics*’ instructions for treating seeds with naturally-occurring sodium compounds like soda, potash or saltpetre (*nitro*, v. 194) chimed with modern research into seed inoculation. “It may interest some of your readers”, the correspondent noted, quoting the above lines in Latin, “to be reminded of the blind gropings of ancient unscientific Italian farmers in the direction of nitrifying bacteria applied to leguminous plants, even though the resemblance be more verbal than chemical.”117 G. B. Knox, writing in *The Fortnightly Review* in December 1915, emphasised the *Georgics*’ modernity in this area. In spite of the manifest falsity of the poem’s description of bugonia, Knox, quoting the same lines, admits that “from time to time even in the old books on husbandry one sees evidence of practices that are startling when considered in connection with modern-day knowledge. Thus while Virgil is pre-Lucretian in his views on the spontaneous generation of bees, he is ultra-modern when he describes how seed might be steeped in sodium nitrate or in oil with a good prospect of increasing the yield of the crop.”118

Examination of a range of material from contemporary newspapers and periodicals thus shows the diversity with which the subject matter of the *Georgics* suggested itself to certain readers. The poem’s advice could be directly invoked or used rhetorically. Its subject matter could be used to idealize the recent agricultural past or could become “ultra-modern” in the light of contemporary research. Readers’ own experience could even supply meaning in the interpretation of difficult passages – the “soft masks” hung on pine trees by Italian farmers, or the material assigned for the weaving of baskets. A history of the poem in Britain needs to be cognizant, I suggest, of the poem’s history beyond the academic world of scholarship and of its relevance, however modest, to aspects of British agricultural life. Before moving to examine the

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118 Knox (1915) 1152.
poem’s reception in international contexts, it remains to discuss certain ways in which the poem became relevant to more political aspects of British life, namely land reform and wartime food production.

One person who voiced anxieties about land and agriculture was the Liberal Unionist MP Jesse Collings. Collings had had notable successes in the 1880s in expanding and securing the access of working people to allotments across Britain, guiding two Bills into law.\(^{119}\) In 1906 he published *Land Reform*, which went further in advocating for a system whereby tenants could receive loans for the purchase of their holdings. This time, however, his attempts to get the required legislation passed were unsuccessful.\(^{120}\) *Land Reform* is in part a history of rural England, covering the history of the peasant revolts and the enclosures, and in part a political pamphlet calling for changes to rural education and the law. Collings is keenly aware of the historical contexts of land in Britain, arguing that any assessment of land tenure in England must recall “the historic processes by which it was created – processes by which the yeoman farmer was reduced to the position of a dependent tenant, and the peasant proprietor to that of a landless man.”\(^{121}\) The radicalness of this idea is underlined by Readman, who notes that Collings’ “basic aim was to transform the British land system, which since the enclosure movement…had been squarely based on the tripartite structure of landlord, tenant farmer and labourer. Instead of this, or alongside it if it could not be completely replaced, he sought to institute a system based on occupying ownership: tenant would become yeoman, wage labourer would become peasant proprietor, ‘landlordism’ would disappear…”\(^{122}\)

*Land Reform* is premised on fears about national health and self-sufficiency of a kind conspicuous in Edwardian discourse: the prosperity of agriculture is, for Collings, inextricably linked to the prosperity of the nation. But more than this, self-sufficiency in agricultural production is an urgent necessity in case of war. “We are every year becoming more dependent

\(^{119}\) These were the Allotments Extension Act (1882) and the Allotments Act (1887), on which see Foley (2014) 125-126. On Collings’ political career see Readman (2008).

\(^{120}\) Readman (2008) 296.

\(^{121}\) Collings (1906) xv.

\(^{122}\) Readman (2008) 296.
for our daily bread on foreign imports”, Collings writes, “the stoppage of which, from any cause, even for a few months, would cause a famine in the land.”

“In the case of a war with a great Power or combination of Powers (themselves self-feeding) it would not be difficult…for our opponents…to place this country in a perilous position.” As we shall see in the discussion of First World War reception which concludes this Chapter, such fears came to pass in 1916-1917, as Britain’s food supply was put under unprecedented pressure by the war. Relevant here, however, is the way Collings concludes his appeal for land reform in Virgilian terms. In ways similar to James Graham, Collings uses the idyllic picture of agriculture at the end of *Georgics* 2, in particular G. 2. 532-535, to suggest that British agricultural life is under threat, and to offer a vision for its rehabilitation.

He begins by comparing British agriculture to that of ancient Greece and Rome, in a way similar to the articles, examined here, which relate the Ceres passage from *Georgics* 1 to the harvest festivals of nineteenth-century Britain: “The ancients regarded that industry as the basis of civilization. They had their goddesses of agriculture, to whom temples were built and splendid offerings made. Our harvest festivals, feasts, and other rural festivals, so real even up to recent times, were also offerings of gratitude for the fruits of the earth on which human life and welfare depend.”

The “Pastorals and Georgics of Virgil”, he writes, take first place among ancient works on agriculture, though written two thousand years ago they are “still fresh and living today.” What is more, “they are wonderfully applicable to the agricultural industry of the present time. The advice given to cultivators has never been bettered.” As in other instances examined here, the *Georgics* is seen as evocative of a vanishing rural past, “so real even up to recent times”, and as a still-relevant guide to agricultural life.

Collings then proceeds to quote at length, in English, several passages from the *Georgics*, and ends by linking the idealised image of agriculture portrayed in *Georgics* 2 with

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123 Collings (1906) xiii-xiv.
124 Collings (1906) xv.
125 Collings (1906) 394.
126 Collings (1906) 395.
127 Collings (1906) 395.
128 Collings (1906) 396. These are G. 2. 212-213, 184-188, 458-460, 513-518, and 529-531.
his hopes for national self-sufficiency and prosperity. The most commonly-quoted part of the poem in British reception, the second half of Book 2, is put by Collings to political use in his calls for land reform. Virgil’s “beautiful language”¹²⁹ is used in service of the same rhetorical effect employed by James Graham in 1826:

…the leading ideas through these charming pages [of the Georgics] are that agriculture is a divine calling, and that on it and on nothing else the strength and glory of nations depend:

“This life of yore the ancient Sabines led,
This Remus and his brother. So in strength
Etruria grew. So Rome herself became
The beauty and the glory of the world.”¹³⁰

Thus, for Collings, the Georgics is the perfect means of concluding his call for land reform as a means to national prosperity. The comparison between Rome and the British empire, something which we have argued is present throughout British reception of the Georgics, is again implicit: by following Collings’ advice, Britain can retain (or recover) its status as “the beauty and the glory of the world.” He invokes an authority he can expect a certain audience, that is, the audience of politicians necessary to the success of his Bill, to understand and appreciate. Rhetorical appropriation of the poem’s vision of rural prosperity is put to political use, in an effort to counter what Collings sees as the social inequality engendered by industrial modernity: “There is not another civlised country in Europe in which the contrast between penury and wealth is so marked as it is in England.”¹³¹

Lastly in this section, it remains to examine the ways in which the pressure put on British agriculture and food production during the First World War brought Virgil’s agricultural advice

¹²⁹ Collings (1906) 396.
¹³⁰ Collings (1906) 396, quoting G. 2. 532-535: hanc olim ueteres uitam coluere Sabini. | hanc Remus et frater, sic foris Etruria creuit | scilicet et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma, | seetemque una sibi muro circumdedit arces.
¹³¹ Collings (1906) 410.
to the minds of certain readers. In particular, the allotments which Collings had championed gained sudden importance. The powers given to the government by the 1914 Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) allowed it to appropriate land for use as allotments, which then led to a public campaign to encourage their use.\textsuperscript{132} An Allotment and Smallholdings Department was set up to help plot holders, and by the end of the war there were 400 affiliated allotment societies with a membership of 60,000, the number of allotments having tripled in eighteen months from half a million to 1.5 million.\textsuperscript{133} With the effort to produce food during wartime now encompassing rural and urban communities and individuals, the \textit{Georgics} came to be of relevance for some of its readers.

In May 1917, the \textit{North Devon Journal} published a column giving expert advice to allotment gardeners for the summer ahead. Amidst the range of tasks prescribed – sowing, watering, monitoring growth – the column turns to Virgil for inspiration. “An old saying of 2,000 years ago from Virgil’s \textit{Georgics} I., 121, ‘Pater ipse colendi haud facilem esse viam voluit” (God so ordained that there should be no short cuts in gardening) is still true. When the crops are in soil, watering, weeding and watching will be the chief work of the season.”\textsuperscript{134} The writer’s idiosyncratic translation neatly shows how adaptable to different contexts a quotation from the poem could be, this particular reception combining awareness of the lines’ original, agricultural context, with the emphasis on hard work conspicuous in their British reception. The writer’s familiarity with the \textit{Georgics} can perhaps be further gleaned from the military language used a few lines later: “The hoe must be the weapon continually in use, warring destruction on all weeds.”\textsuperscript{135} This military metaphor fits the wartime context of Britain in 1917, but it is also reminiscent of the martial language used to describe agriculture in the \textit{Georgics}.\textsuperscript{136}

\textsuperscript{132} Foley (2014) 147.
\textsuperscript{133} Foley (2014) 147, 159.
\textsuperscript{135} “The Allotment Garden: Seasonable Notes of an Expert”, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{136} Discussed by Gale (1998) 116-118. Of several examples, see in particular G. 1. 160-161: \textit{Dicendum et quae sint duris agrestibus arma, quis sine nec potuere seri nec surgere messes...} (“The weapons of tough farmers should also be mentioned, without which it is impossible for crops to be sown or to grow”) and G. 2. 369-370: \textit{tum denique dura | exerce imperia et ramos compesce fluentis...} (“Then at last carry out your harsh commands and check the overgrown [vine-] shoots.”)
In the same month the *Gloucestershire Chronicle* reported a speech given by Ms. F. M. Priday concerning local measures, planned by the Agricultural Sub-Committee of the County Council, to encourage cheese production in the area. She was introduced by Col. W. F. N. Noel, Chair of the Gloucestershire Chamber of Agriculture, who began by offering some historical remarks. “Virgil, the poet of agriculture for all time”, he told the audience, “does not tell us how to make cheese, but he implies in the fourth Georgic that the Roman farmer made cheese from the morning milk, and took the evening milk to market the next day.”

The passage in question is *G. 3. 400-403*:

> quod surgente die mulseretur horisque diurnis,
> nocte premunt; quod iam tenebris et sole cadente, sub lucem: exportant calathis (aditus oppida pastor), aut parco sale contingunt hiemiique reponunt.\(^{138}\)

*The milk they’ve milked at dawn and during the day they press at night; that which they’ve milked in the evenings and at dusk, at dawn: they send the cheese out in baskets (the shepherd heads to towns), or else they sprinkle a little salt on it and store it away for the winter.*

While Noel does not employ the *Georgics*’ instructions directly, the poem’s image of bustling rural production is used to inspire similar local support of a wartime initiative. As Noel does not quote the actual lines, however, the effect is partly reliant on readers’ awareness of the passage described.

An article of March 1918, again from the *North Devon Journal*, relates the *Georgics* to wartime production more explicitly. “Certainly, to borrow some words from Mr. Micawber”, the author notes, “universal applicability distinguishes many precepts contained in the Georgics.

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\(^{137}\) “Cheese”, *Gloucester Chronicle*, 5 May 1917, p. 2.

\(^{138}\) The inclusion of a colon in line 402 of Mynors’ text implies that both the daytime and evening milk’s cheese is sent out. But a colon is not printed by Hirtzel (1900) or Conte (Ottaviano & Conte (2013)), which implies either that only the evening milk’s cheese, or else the unpressed evening milk, is sent. Col. Noel follows this latter interpretation.
Look, for instance, at the lines that enforce the need of studying local conditions of weather and soil.” The passage in question is from *Georgics* 1, the lines just before the description of foreign produce examined in Chapter 1:

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ac prius ignotum ferro quam scindimus aequor,
uentos et uarium cueli praediscere morem
cura sit ac patrios cultusque habitusque locorum,
et quid quaeque ferat regio et quid quaeque recuset.
hic segetes, illic ueniunt felicius uuae,
arborei fetus alibi atque iniussa uirescunt
gramina. nonne uides, croceos ut Tmolus odores
India mittit ebur…
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*G*. 1. 50-57.

*But before we cleave the untested plain with the plough, we should take care to learn beforehand the winds and the changeable habit of the sky, native methods of cultivation and the character of different places, and what each land produces and each land refuses to produce. In one place crops grow better, in another, grapes, in another place plantations of trees and unbidden grass thrives. Don’t you see how Tmolus exports fragrant saffron, India ivory…*

The particular issue at hand is apple-growing in Devonshire, and how the potential of the area in this regard has not, it is argued, been sufficiently exploited. The reader is informed of an old study which noted the suitability of the local soil and climate for apples, and a report demonstrating that “a very palatable jelly” could be made from cider apples, without the need for added sugar. “The Food Production Department is”, we are told, “at least anxious that the greatest possible amount of food should be extracted from North Devon orchards”. The article concludes by invoking Virgil’s lines for support:

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140 “A Plea for Apples”, p. 7.
That brings me back to Virgil’s advice referred to above. Local conditions are the things of paramount importance. Local conditions, which may be classed as permanent, make the apple producing capacity of North Devon great. Local conditions, which may be classed as transient, cripple that capacity [...] The country wanted potatoes. It got them. The country will want apples. North Devon can help it get them.\textsuperscript{141}

The war thus brought Virgil’s agricultural advice to the minds of certain readers, but for some such advice was of limited applicability. A letter to \textit{The Times} in early 1917 took issue with the opinion of Cecil Harmsworth, who had written to suggest that boys from the upper forms of public schools should be exempted from class and deployed to help on farms.\textsuperscript{142} Lionel James wrote in reply from the School House, Monmouth, that enough work could be done by boys in their free time and in the time allotted for games, without interfering directly with their school work: “it is not at our discretion to substitute the spade for the pen, or practical farming for the Georgics, however desirable we may think it to do so.”\textsuperscript{143}

I do not wish to impose a false distinction between scholarly and non-scholarly reading of the \textit{Georgics}. Nor can the material examined here be said to comprise a complete, or even wholly representative, history of the poem. Nevertheless, in aspiring to McElduff’s view that the history of the book should be “a history of all readers, not just a select few”,\textsuperscript{144} it is important to look beyond scholarly discourse on the \textit{Georgics}. That discourse, I have argued, is predominantly concerned with the poem’s aesthetic achievement, while modern scholarship has tended to focus on the poem’s deeper themes, its “meaning on a higher, symbolic level.”\textsuperscript{145} In contrast to both these positions, popular reception of the \textit{Georgics} shows that the primary subject matter of the poem, its instructions and its descriptions of the natural world, remained relevant for British readers. That is not to say that the poem was used directly in farm management, but rather that it said things about the harvest or the weather, for instance, to which readers could relate their own

\textsuperscript{141} “A Plea for Apples”, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{142} Harmsworth (1916).
\textsuperscript{143} James (1917).
\textsuperscript{144} McElduff (2006) 191.
\textsuperscript{145} Volk (2002) 120.
experience. In moments of adversity like the cattle plague of 1865 or the First World War, renewed attention to agricultural life in its broadest sense brought renewed relevance to the poem. In the cases of James Graham, James Booth, and Jesse Collings, we can observe how receptions of the poem intersect with the social history of British life, and with the politics of land in an increasingly industrialised and urban society.

The didacticism of the *Georgics* has always been a matter of debate, going back to Seneca’s claim about Virgil’s motives. Yet examination of the poem’s popular reception shows that it has been read for both practical instruction and aesthetic enjoyment, that poetry does not admit such neat distinctions, and that readers will continue to find in the *Georgics* aspects of their own experience with the natural world. A further impact of the aesthetic trend has been the depoliticization of the *Georgics*, and it is in a bid to redress that imbalance that I turn once more to the history of the poem’s international reception.

**Popular Reception IV: The *Georgics* Abroad**

In Chapter 2 I discussed how the *Georgics* was implicated in the cultural politics of the British empire. Tourists, journalists, soldiers, academics and politicians quoted the poem in their descriptions of foreign peoples and places. This descriptive material can be seen to have functioned in two separate but interrelated ways. Firstly, the *Georgics* was used to aestheticize peoples and places in ways which served to depoliticize those described, to portray their ways of life as simple, carefree, and timeless. Nothing has changed, the argument goes, since Virgil’s day. More than representing what I have called the myopic condescension of the tourist – the inability of travellers to see the larger political contexts behind the situations in which they find themselves – this depoliticization can, at times, be seen as part of an apologetic imperialist rhetoric. People whose ways of life are deemed primitive are considered either to lack, or to be in need of, the benefits of European “civilisation”. In its strongest form, we have seen how two

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146 Sen. *Ep.* 86. 15: *…Vergilius noster, qui non quid verissime sed quid decentissime diceretur aspexit, nec agricolas docere voluit sed legentes delectare.* (“…Our Virgil, who cared not for what is said most truthfully but for what is said most gracefully, and who did not wish to instruct farmers but to delight readers.”)
lines from the poem, G. 2. 458-459, were consistently used to construct the experience of the colonial subject, unaware of the blessings of British rule. Chapter 3 continues to investigate these twin aspects of the poem’s reception – aestheticization and depoliticization – in a number of international contexts, in the hope of strengthening my case for the inherently political nature of the *Georgics*’ British reception.

Throughout this thesis the primacy of Italy in receptions of the *Georgics* has been consistently observed. Tourists reflect on their Italian experiences with reference to the poem, while the *laudes Italiae* section of Book 2 is appropriated as a vehicle for patriotic expression. This Italian aspect is also present in the period 1900-1930. In 1921 the *Aberdeen Daily Journal* printed a piece entitled “Italy After the War.” The self-declared motive of the correspondent is to establish the condition of the country after the First World War, “to see how far the war wounds had healed, and whether the aftermath of revolutionary unrest were as grave a matter as the newspapers made out.”

Italy, like many European countries, went through a sustained period of political unrest following the war, and violence was a feature of political life in the period. The piece discusses bread prices and the foreign exchange rate, train travel and fascist rioting. Despite this unsettled post-war climate, however, the correspondent’s interest in social and political problems is only cursory: “a sojourn in Italy is still as delightful as ever.” Indeed, little seems to have changed:

> Certainly, as viewed from the train after the descent from the Alps, things were to all outward appearances the same as they have always been. In the fields the same white oxen were meditatively drawing the same old-fashioned ploughs of Virgil’s day; the same farm hands were busy with the spade and the great two-pronged hoe; the same deep runnels, older than the Georgics, had been dug to baffle the blinding heat to come; the same festoonery of vines hung between the trees of the orchards.

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147 “Italy After the War”, *The Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 13 May 1921, p. 4.
149 “Italy After the War”, p. 4.
150 “Italy After the War”, p. 4.
The tendency observed in Chapter 2 for the *Georgics* to be used in evoking a sense of timeless rural life is present again here. Things are “the same as they have always been” and, as for Reverend Furneaux in Bombay or William Gladstone in Sicily, it is the plough which most succinctly captures this reality. This Italy is one protected against the challenges of modernity and the ravages of the war by its timeless agriculture, as contemporary political problems are minimised in favour of a literary evocation of the country’s charm.

In 1935 an article in *The Times* offered a similar picture of the Italian countryside. The piece informs the reader about the annual vintage in Tuscany, and about the mezzadria system, a share-cropping system whereby landowners provide capital and land in return for half the tenant’s crop. Here too, the first point of reference for Italian agriculture is Virgil’s *Georgics*:

Late October is the time in Tuscan farms when the wine is made, and to an Englishman brought up on the classics who has not seen it before it is an exhilarating experience. Every scene, every action sends the hexameters of the Georgics racing through his head.  

This quotation neatly recalls the social and educational bias on which this study of the *Georgics*’ reception in based: it is “an Englishman brought up on the classics” who can most fully appreciate the poem in an Italian context.

After describing the processes of the vintage, the communal treading of the grapes and the shared operation of the winepress, the writer muses on the men working:

The men, small and sinewy, in their threadbare clothes, look fine. Hard-working and content with a little, they have the great courtesy and the distinctive facility of expression that come of an old and deep-rooted civilization –

Hanc olim veteres vitam coluere Sabini,

Hanc Remus et frater, sic fortis Etruria crevit…

necdum etiam audierant inflari classica, necdum

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The writer’s attempt at amateur ethnography occasions another Virgilian reference, this time a direct quotation. It is unclear whether or not the subjects of the piece have themselves been consulted as to their being “content with a little”. Here again we see the complacency of the tourist, assuming a carefree and conflict-free life for people who are assumed to be happy and prosperous. This impression of condescension is reinforced by the article’s closing lines, which refer obliquely to the sanctions imposed on Italy by the League of Nations in the aftermath of Italy’s invasion of Abyssinia in October 1935. As the writer leaves the pressing room, his “American-educated host” turns to him and says, “I guess those guys have had sanctions all their lives.” In both of these Italian sources, then, Italy is a timeless land of Virgilian agriculture, whose present problems, whether the impact of war or of sanctions, pale in comparison to an aestheticized, classical, vision.

William Millar (1864-1945) was a classically-educated historian and journalist, who in the course of a long career published extensively on the history of Greece and the Balkans. In 1904-1905 he contributed a two-part article to The Westminster Review entitled “A Tour Through the Peloponnesos”, in which he encouraged readers to stray off the beaten track and to explore the remoter parts of the country. Travel in Greece in the twentieth century, he confidently asserts, requires only three things: “patience, a working acquaintance with modern Greek, and a small supply of Maggi’s soups and Peters’ milk chocolate for emergencies.” His tour begins at Nafplio, and encompasses many of the major ancient sites in the Peloponnese – Tiryns, Mycenae, Argos, Epidaurus, Sparta, Olympia – as well as sites connected with medieval Greek history and the history of the Greek Independence movement.

As in the Italian articles just discussed, Greece is presented as a timeless, classical land.

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152 “Farming in Tuscany”, p. 7, quoting G. 2. 532-533 and 539-540: “This is the life the old Sabines once lived, and Remus and his brother; in this way Etruria grew to strength…nor had they yet heard trumpets blare, nor swords sounding on hard anvils.”
154 “Farming in Tuscany”, p. 17.
155 For a brief biography of Miller see Runciman (2012).
156 Miller (1904) 639.
“The Greek boatman is not very different now from what he was in the days of Aristophanes.”\textsuperscript{157} Sparta, we are told, is “much as it was in the times when Thucydides described it.”\textsuperscript{158} The reader’s interest is thus piqued by a vision of Greece which would have been familiar to those with a classical education (mention of Hercules at Nemea recalls “that no less Herculean task of our college-days, the Nemean odes of Pindar.”\textsuperscript{159}) But it is the \textit{Georgics} which is again used to describe local people. Describing a roadside scene in the Peloponnese, Miller writes:

Great numbers of shepherds with huge flocks of sheep and goats met us on the way, and at times completely blocked the path. Few sights of country life are more picturesque than this exodus of the herdsmen from the low-lying winter-pastures round Sparta in the valley of the Eurotas to the higher feeding grounds near Tripolis. The shepherds had their families and their few chattels with them. Some of the women were carrying babies, slung in a sort of quiver on their backs; some of the men had lambs or puppies in their arms; others were transporting their possessions on donkeys. One was irresistibly reminded of the picture of pastoral life in the \textit{Georgics}:

\begin{quote}
“Omnia secum
Armentarius Afer agit, tectumque Laremque,
Armaque, Amyclaeumque canem, Cressamque pharetram.”\textsuperscript{160}
\end{quote}

The rural people of the Peloponnese remind the author of nothing so much as the African herdsman in \textit{Georgics} 3. Miller’s aestheticization of what he sees (“few sights of country life are more picturesque”) is not matched by inquiry: description takes precedence over interaction. Any sense of the hardship of their lives is lost amidst a highly literary act of imagination, as the traveller processes an unfamiliar experience by means of familiar text.

\textsuperscript{157} Miller (1904) 641.
\textsuperscript{158} Miller (1904) 648.
\textsuperscript{159} Miller (1904) 640.
\textsuperscript{160} Miller (1904) 646-647, quoting G. 3. 343-345: “The African herdsman carries everything with him, his shelter and his hearth, his weapons, his Amycleaean dog and his Cretan quiver.”
While Greece may not have been directly implicated in British imperialism in this period, Egypt was. The occupation of the country by Britain in 1882 was noted in Chapter 2. On the outbreak of the First World War Britain declared the country, still nominally a possession of the Ottoman empire, its protectorate, using it as a base for Allied armies and employing the (often involuntary) services of 1.5 million Egyptians in an Egyptian Labour Corps.\textsuperscript{161} Rebellion was suppressed in 1919, but in February 1922 the country was granted nominal independence.\textsuperscript{162} In 1920 the classicist J. S. Blake-Reed published in the \textit{Manchester Guardian} a report from Egypt entitled “The Holy Carpet”.\textsuperscript{163} In the piece he describes the ceremonies in Cairo which marked the departure of the \textit{kiswa} and the \textit{mahmal} to Mecca. The \textit{kiswa} is a large black cloth, embroidered in gold with quotations from the Qu’ran, which was (and still is) used to drape the Ka’ba, the cube of stone at the centre of Mecca’s Grand Mosque, during the annual \textit{hajj}, or pilgrimage. The \textit{mahmal} was a richly-decorated ceremonial palanquin, carried by a camel as part of the pilgrim caravan from Cairo to Mecca. Blake-Reed reports on the spectacle of two pre-departure ceremonies on successive nights, and uses the opportunity to speculate as to the origins of the Ka’ba and to compare the histories and rituals of Islam and Christianity. British readers gain an insight into Egyptian life and Islamic practice, and are reminded that Cairo was the place from where the Manchester Regiment embarked for Gallipoli in 1915.

Towards the end of his speculations, Blake-Reed discusses the practice of circling the Ka’ba at Mecca, remarks on the Abrahamic origins of the ritual attested by the Qu’ran,\textsuperscript{164} and then quotes the \textit{Georgics} in comparison:

\textsuperscript{161} Daly (1986) 745-746.
\textsuperscript{162} Daly (1986) 747, who notes (p. 747) four points which remained “at the discretion of the British government: the security of British communications, the defence of Egypt, the protection in Egypt of foreign interests and minorities, and the Sudan.”
\textsuperscript{163} For Blake-Reed’s scholarly reviews see Blake-Reed (1914), (1913), (1913a), (1912), (1911).
\textsuperscript{164} Rippin (2005) 115.
We are inevitably reminded of the virtue that in all ages and climes has attended the
symbolical weaving of the magic circle. *Terque nouas circum felix eat hostia fruges*,
writes Virgil, in the Georgics…

It is again striking how the *Georgics* offers the most immediate point of reference when a writer
seeks to familiarise an unfamiliar practice and location. Here the lines quoted refer to the rituals
of Italian farmers in honour of Ceres, part of a passage we have seen quoted in elegiac
descriptions of British harvest customs. Blake-Reed’s rough anthropological comparison
arguably equates the citizens of Cairo in 1920 with the Italian farmers of the *Georgics*, and so
can be seen to portray Egyptians as primitive or ancient. As in other articles examined here,
aestheticization is matched by de-politicization: absent is any reference to the contemporary
political tensions between Egyptian nationalism and the British empire, tensions which had led
to violent revolt in 1919.

Finally for this section, we turn to a series of three articles on Algeria, published in *The Times* in
1925. A correspondent tours the country by car, and highlights places of potential interest to the
British tourist. Algeria was a French colony between 1830 and 1962, something which informs
the politics of description in these pieces. A distinction is made between the “civilization” of the
colonial centres and the timeless, primitive lives of the rural inhabitants. “Along the coast is
South Europe”, we are told, where there is “the most modern civilization, with all the comfort
and convenience in the great cities and towns.” It is clear that the writer views French rule as
unproblematic, at one point querying whether or not Algeria will, in the future, be “able to
compete with the Riviera as a resort for European hibernators.” The civilization of colonial
society is contrasted with rural Algeria and its Roman archaeological sites, in which little has
changed over time. Jemila, now the UNESCO World Heritage site of Djémila, is “as the Romans
left it”, but has now “been brought into direct communication with the well-beaten track of

the auspicious sacrificial victim go three times around the new crops.”
French civilization.” Yet, the writer continues, “with all its strategic strength and the power of legions to which it points, Jemila…is almost wholly lacking in anything that can be called history.”

In Chapter 2 I noted the work of two scholars, Laroui and Mattingly, which highlighted both the overwhelming impact of European colonialism on the historiography of north Africa, and the ways in which European colonizers imagined themselves as successors to Rome. For this correspondent, civilization and history are distinctly European, not African, things. The history which ended with the Roman empire has been revived only by French rule; what happened in between is of no concern. Algeria is, in fact, presented in entirely classical terms: a reference to Sallust, a quotation in Greek from Aeschylus’ Supplices, Virgil’s sunt lacrimae rerum (which, we are told, “was first said in Africa”), and reports of a Roman inscription recently uncovered in a hotel garden. Such classical comparisons serve to strengthen the colonial Roman inheritance, and important here is Mattingly’s awareness of the twin processes at work in the depiction of north Africa in Roman terms. “If the European claim to be the rightful inheritors of North Africa was to carry weight”, he argues, “it was necessary to disinherit the native peoples. An important corollary, then, to making a close identification between the modern imperial power and Rome was to reinforce the feeling of inferiority and separateness of the indigenous population.”

This act of disinheritance is seen both in the denial of non-colonial history and in the descriptions of Algerian rural life. It is this latter aspect which involves the Georgics. The people of Africa are simple and rustic, their way of life ancient, their country a timeless place reminiscent

170 “Roman Africa: From Jemila to Timгад”, The Times, 22 October 1925, p. 15, referring to Sall. Inv. 17. 5-6: “All the same, Sallust, who knew Constantine well when it was Cirta, attests the healthiness of the country, where, he says, death comes only of old age or of the onslaught of wild beasts.”
171 “Roman Africa: From Jemila to Timгад”, p. 15, quoting Aesch. Supp. 284-286 in (untranslated) Greek: “Even Greek Aeschylus speaks of these nomad females, astraddle on their beasts, and his grandiloquent brevity hits them off perfectly. With his rather vague geography he has heard of them as Indians, and is the first European to use that name, but he puts them near the Aethiopians.”
172 “Jemila: A Roman City in Algeria”, p. 13, quoting part of Verg. Aen. 1. 462 (“There are tears in human life”) and referencing the fact that, in the poem, Aeneas speaks this line in Carthage.
173 “Roman Africa: From Jemila to Timгад”, p. 15.
174 Mattingly (2011) 47-49.
of the classical past. The main produce in the area of Bishkra (modern Biskra) is dates, “hinc anni labor” we are told, while in October it is still warm enough “for nudus ara to be appropriate.”\footnote{Roman Africa: The Georgics of Algeria”, p. 17. The two quotations are from G. 2. 514 (where Mynors and Conte read *hic anni labor* for *hinc anni labor*), where ploughing is the basis of the farmer’s year, “hence the year’s work”; and G. 1. 299, the instructions for field work, “plough and sow stripped”.} The pruning of vines still happens “according to Virgilian precept”, while the people of Kabylia, a mountainous region east of Algiers, still use Virgil’s *trapetum* for pressing olives.\footnote{“Roman Africa: The Georgics of Algeria”, The Times, 27 October 1925, p. 17: “The olive they have, and the handmill – Virgil’s *trapetum* – is still in use among them.” Cf. G. 2. 519: *uenit hiems: teritur Sicyonia baca trapetis* (“Winter comes: the Sicyonian olive is pressed in mills”). Sicyon was a Peloponnesian town west of Corinth.} They are “the purest remnant of the ancient race whom the Romans had to conquer”, and a people whom the writer cannot help but admire, “the last to be tamed by all the successive conquerors of this beautiful land.”\footnote{“Roman Africa: The Georgics of Algeria”, p. 17.}

The most prominent example comes when the antiquity of Algerian life is juxtaposed with the modernity of the motor car:

One’s car, as it purrs along at 60 kilometres or so an hour, over distances which took horses long and weary days to accomplish, affords glimpses of rude health on all sides.

This country is the home of Virgil’s Libyan shepherd – his *armentarius Afer* – who still, as in that magic time, drives his all before him – flock, gear, roof, and hound; and when one has seen some of the mighty evidence of Roman power one understands why Virgil added his patriotic simile: –

\begin{quote}
As when in arms our own keen Roman soldiery marcheth

Under a load ill at ease, and where he is unsuspected

There hath arrived, his camp ready pitched, his station in order.
\end{quote}
As one speeds south one overtakes caravans yet more picturesque: herds moving with the camels, which bear women and children and bedding and even poultry, on their backs…. 178

The sense of identification with Rome is evident in the phrase “that magic time”, and also in the introduction, not in the Latin, of “our own” to the translation of G. 3. 346-348. The militarism of the simile is for the writer patriotic, not problematic. “Picturesque” Algerian rural life is little changed since Roman days, in contrast to the “civilization” of French colonial society.

In these three articles, then, use of the Georgics serves to aestheticize, and so to depoliticize, the life of the Algerian colonial subject. Algerians are labelled and described in literary terms, not interviewed or sought out for meaningful discourse. Any sense of the realities of colonial rule is lost amidst an image of a simple way of life little changed since antiquity. If the Roman comparison serves to support colonial ideology by emphasizing, in the case of the colonizer, development, inheritance, and civilization, in the case of the native population it emphasizes the opposite: stasis, underdevelopment, the absence of history. This Algerian context offers a prime example of the way a text like the Georgics is implicated in the facilitation and legitimation of imperial power. The three articles are designed to whet the appetite of the tourist, intrigued by a land of Roman ruins, but little interested in the problems of the colonial subject, or, it should be said, the brutality of French colonial rule. As Laroui points out, it was precisely the Arab and Berber populations of the plains and plateaux who suffered most from colonialization, through land appropriations and heavy taxation, and through an inherently unjust legal system weighted in favour of those in sympathy with the colonial power. 179 It is this political context which makes the depiction of Algerians in terms of the Georgics most problematic.


179 Laroui (1977) 352-353 and cf. 302-303. See also Thomas (2005) 252: “The colonial legal system undermined established patterns of Muslim land ownership and traditional farming practices. Land laws favoured the settler community, denying Muslim rights to common grazing and cultivable land unless written title could be produced. French colonisation displaced Muslim cultivators from ancestral holdings […] In 1917 settlers possessed 2.31 million hectares of farmland. By 1940 the figure stood at 2.7 million.”
Chapter 2 examined quotations from the *Georgics* that were used to construct the experience of the colonial subject. This trend continues in the period 1900-1930, where I have found examples in Indian, Rhodesian, and South African contexts. While there is broad continuity, in that the line beginning *o fortunatos* (*G*. 2. 458) is used to emphasize the perceived blessings of British imperial rule, in two examples to be discussed these lines are used ironically, to satirize this very notion of happy subjects. Collectively, these sources add weight to my argument for the highly political nature of *Georgics*’ reception in a British context. The quotations appear to be used knowingly, that is with an awareness of their original context and not just as tags. But regardless of the writers’ knowledge of the quotations they use, for readers of the *Georgics* they serve to raise questions about the poem’s depiction of rural life in Book 2.

Over one million Indian troops served in the First World War as part of the British army, in east Africa, in Mesopotamia, and on the Western Front, and yet India’s loyalty served to highlight the hypocrisies and complacencies of British rule.\(^{180}\) The sacrifice of Indians was lauded in Britain while repressive measures like the Defence of India Act (1915) curtailed civil liberties and sought to stave off the growing and multi-faceted movement for greater independence.\(^{181}\) In 1919 the Rowlatt Acts extended the extra-judicial wartime powers established by the Defence of India Act. In April of that year General Dyer ordered his men to fire on a peaceful crowd in Amritsar, Punjab, killing hundreds and injuring over a thousand: the lionisation of Dyer in the British press only served to heighten the shock and anger of many Indians, all the while reinforcing the hypocrisy of “benevolent” British rule.\(^{182}\)

In response to wartime agitation for political reform in India, the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, declared the goal of “responsible government” for India.\(^{183}\) In 1918 he

\(^{180}\) Morrow (2014) 429: “The war had drawn some 1.5 million Indians into military service for the British Empire and brought heavy taxes, war loans, and requisitions of grain and raw materials and inflation, but it did not bring independence or even autonomy. Instead, the British resorted to repression and violence during and after the war to maintain their power in India, culminating in the Amritsar massacre of 1919.”

\(^{181}\) See Keay (2000) 471-475. During the war two separate Home Rule Leagues were formed, and Gandhi, newly returned from South Africa, began to deploy his tactic of *satyagraha* in different parts of the country.


\(^{183}\) The text of this Declaration is printed in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, = Montagu & Thesiger (1918) 6. For detail on the final reforms see Markowitz (2002) 368.
travelled to India and met with the Viceroy Lord Chelmsford; together the two men drafted and published what became known as the Montagu-Chelmsford Report in 1918. The language of the report is a stark example of what one might call the self-justifying rhetoric of British imperialism. The proposed reforms are presented not as pragmatic wartime politics, but rather as the final push of a benevolent father: European education has naturally resulted in a desire among Indians for European institutions; it is the duty of Britain to honour its commitment now that some, but not all, Indians, are “ready” for self-government.\(^{184}\) This manifest condescension reveals the supposed \textit{raison d’être} for British rule in India: imperialism as a kind of benevolent tutelage. When addressing a conference of Indian Princes and Chiefs in Delhi in 1916, Chelmsford even used a Latin tag in urging caution in constitutional reform: “the motto I would ask you to place before yourselves is \textit{festina lente}.”\(^{185}\)

Thirteen days after the massacre at Amritsar, and one year after the publication of the Montagu-Chelmsford report, a one-line article in \textit{The Saturday Review} quoted the report under the title “\textit{O fortunatos nimium}”: “The placid pathetic contentment of the masses is not the soil on which Indian nationhood will grow.”\(^{186}\) This line comes from a section of the report arguing that the “sheltered existence” in which Britain has left the Indian population to date should be brought to an end:

We believe profoundly that the time has now come when the sheltered existence which we have given India cannot be prolonged without damage to her national life; that we have a richer gift for her people than any that we have yet bestowed on them; that nationhood within the Empire represents something better than anything India has hitherto attained; that the placid, pathetic contentment of the masses is not the soil on which such Indian nationhood will grow, and that in deliberately disturbing it, we are working for her highest good.\(^{187}\)

\(^{184}\) Montagu & Thesiger (1918), 138-139, 179.
\(^{185}\) Thesiger (1919) 84, quoted at Keay (2000) 473. \textit{festina lente} means “make haste slowly”.
\(^{186}\) “\textit{O, Fortunatos Nimium},” \textit{The Saturday Review of politics, literature, science and art} (London), 26 April 1919, p. 396.
\(^{187}\) Montagu & Thesiger (1918) 144.
The Virgilian title neatly links the attitude of the Report with the end of *Georgics* 2. For the reader acquainted with the poem, the Indian population become happy farmers, unaware of how blessed their passive and non-political existence within the British empire has really been. Yet the article can be read ironically, satirising this very complacency in the language of the Report, at a time when nationalist politics in India were anything but placid or tame. Just below the article a six-verse poem is printed, which appears to satirise the position of Montagu and Chelmsford. The first verse I quote here:

A Statesman, landed from the West,
    Found India steeped in calm –
With secular indifference blest,
    She lay beneath the palm.

‘Tis surely very sad, said he,
    That folk so poor content should be.\(^{188}\)

Thus the lines from *Georgics* 2 become highly politicised in the context of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. The complacent and paternalistic tone of the report suggested to the author of the *Saturday Review* piece G. 2. 458, whereby the Indian colonial subject is imagined as a happy farmer. Furthermore, the piece and the accompanying poem can be seen not only to report but to satirise this attitude as patently hypocritical given the contemporary political context.

On 1 January 1890 Cecil Rhodes’ British South Africa Company chartered a “Pioneer Column” to colonise what would become the state of Rhodesia. Members were to receive land and mining rights in exchange for their services: this heavily-armed force of “latter-day conquistadores” arrived in Fort Salisbury in September of the same year.\(^{189}\) In 1893-1894 and again in 1896-1897 there were a series of revolts by the native inhabitants of the area, the Ndebele and the Shona, which were brutally suppressed with the use of dynamite and the Maxim machine gun.\(^{190}\)

\(^{189}\) Saunders & Smith (1999) 611.
Rhodesia became a frontier white society, where white settlers struggling in harsh agricultural conditions sought to restrict native agriculture, something which should be viewed in the context of the racial politics which progressively eroded the rights of the country’s black population. Relevant here is the double aspect of this racial politics. White Rhodesian society discriminated against black farmers, but also resisted incorporation within the Union of South Africa inaugurated in 1910, fearful of Afrikaner immigration from the south.

In 1912 an article by Charles Boyd in the *Fortnightly Review* spoke of Rhodesia in glowing terms. As in other pieces examined here, colonial life is aestheticized in classical terms: “To think of Rhodesia, its vast sunlit reaches of space and peace, its Homeric air, its scarcely less Homeric people...is always a peculiar pleasure.” Boyd’s effusive praise, however, hides an underlying problem, which is to say the difficulty in attracting white settlers to farm the land, what he calls “the right class of farmer”. The reasons for his Homeric comparison become clearer when he describes the ideal candidate: the public-school graduate. “For an old Public Schoolboy – and Rhodesia is still in spirit, or in fact, the Public Schoolboy’s Colony – I can imagine no cleaner, saner, happier life than a Rhodesian farmer’s.”

Rhodians fear the immigration, Boyd continues, of poor farmers from South Africa, should Rhodesia join the Union of South Africa (which it never did). Turning to the question of whether or not Rhodesia should join the newly-formed Union, Boyd discusses the issue in racial terms:

There never was a racial issue in Rhodesia, and so far, *o fortunatos nimium*, there are no party politics. But any premature entry into Union must inevitably drive Rhodians, English or Dutch, into one of two camps. They will go with their blood, as they go now

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193 Boyd (1912) 721.
194 Boyd (1912) 732.
195 Boyd (1912) 733.
196 The Union of South Africa was ratified in 1909, on which see Saunders & Smith (1999) 621-622. Boyd (1912) 735 writes: “They [sc. Rhodesians] are afraid of the incursion of the bijwoner, or poor, small Dutchman; and between the bijwoner of the Transvaal, and the poor white of Cape Colony, they see Rhodesia deluged with mere squatters of a very hopeless type.”
for the moment in the South African Union, until the process of blending has gone further.197

Boyd’s primary fear appears to be the potential for tension between Afrikaner and British farmers in the event of entry into the Union of South Africa. This fear, it should be noted, was a part of British discourse about South Africa in this period.198 At the moment, and outside the Union, Rhodesian farmers enjoy a happiness they do not realise, as such they resemble the farmers of Georgics 2. Boyd, in the passage quoted above, “can imagine no cleaner, saner, happier life than a Rhodesian farmer’s.” Yet this de-politicized, utopian image of Rhodesia ignores the native population, their history of rebellion against colonial rule and the racial discrimination practised against them. The Georgics’ image of a conflict-free countryside is again put to political use, but in a way which is deeply ironic.

European settlement in southern Africa was dominated by British and Dutch-Afrikaner populations, with the latter outnumbering the former 3:2 at the end of the nineteenth century.199 Two British colonies along the coast, the Cape Colony and Natal, coexisted with two Afrikaner republics, the South African Republic (Transvaal) and the Orange Free State, whose origins lay in the Great Trek of the 1830s, when Dutch settlers had migrated north to establish their independence from British rule. The discovery of gold reserves on the Witwatersrand in 1886 meant that by 1898 the Transvaal had become the largest single producer of gold in the world, and this economic context was a major factor in relations between Britain and the Boer republics.200 The first phase of the second South African War of 1899-1902, between Britain and the two republics, witnessed a series of British defeats which caused shock and embarrassment in Britain. By September 1900, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State had been annexed by the

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197 Boyd (1912) 736.
198 See Saunders & Smith (1999) 619 on the policy of Alfred Milner, Governor of the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony, in the aftermath of the second South African War: “Since he had always viewed the South African situation in terms of a struggle for supremacy between two rival imperialisms, Boer versus British, Milner brought to bear on his task a racial imperialism which led him to believe that South Africa would never be ‘safe’ for Britain and her Empire unless the Boer population was outnumbered by white people of British descent, brought about by extensive immigration and settlement.”
British crown, at which point a further and more entrenched phase of the war began. In order to counteract the guerrilla tactics adopted by their enemy, the British government adopted a scorched-earth policy, involving the construction of eight thousand blockhouses and a vast network of wire fencing, the destruction of some 30,000 farms, and the incarceration of Afrikaner civilians in what were called “concentration camps” (to be firmly distinguished from the subsequent Nazi use of the term) in which some 28,000 civilians died, mainly from disease.\textsuperscript{201}

Many in Britain were outraged by such a policy.\textsuperscript{202} The Treaty of Vereeniging, signed 31 May 1902, ceded control of the two Afrikaner republics to Britain in exchange for promises of eventual self-government (and that any discussion of political rights for the native African population would be indefinitely postponed).\textsuperscript{203}

In November 1902 the Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, toured South Africa in order to assess the post-war situation.\textsuperscript{204} British policy was one of conciliation, emphasising the need for the two major settler populations in South Africa to work together, conscious both of British economic and trading interests and the numerical superiority of the Dutch-Afrikaner population. The Treaty of Vereeniging had allotted the sum of three million pounds in aid for the defeated Republics, designed to compensate farmers who could prove their losses and to speed up the process of post-war reconstruction.\textsuperscript{205} Before his departure for South Africa, Chamberlain was called before a committee of MPs to clarify confusion as to the source of this money. British MPs had assumed the money would come from a loan advanced by Britain, but the Boer representatives were adamant that the money should be a free gift of aid from the imperial treasury. Chamberlain’s remarks are recorded in Hansard. “You cannot make war without suffering on both sides”,\textsuperscript{206} he stated, but he took issue with the notion that the material devastation was as bad as had been reported:

\textsuperscript{203} Saunders & Smith (1999) 620.
\textsuperscript{204} On Chamberlain and South Africa see Crosby (2011) 154 and Marsh (1994) 546-549.
\textsuperscript{205} Davenport & Saunders (2000) 238.
\textsuperscript{206} Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 4) vol. 114, col. 236 (5 November 1902).
One thing is certain. The property of the ordinary Boer consisted in his farm, in his farmhouse and buildings, and in his cattle and stock. No doubt in very many cases his farmhouse has suffered or been actually destroyed and his cattle have been taken […] But the land, which, after all, is his principal capital asset, has increased in value since the war, and I am informed – I speak only from information – that the average value of land in the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony at the present time is very much greater than it was before the war.207

An article in The Speaker took issue with Chamberlain’s responses:

“O fortunatos, sua si bona norint, agricolas.” This remark was once, I believe, made by one Virgil, and was very literally paraphrased the other night by Mr. Chamberlain, since Boer is certainly the Dutch for *agricola*. The Colonial Secretary urged that the Boers are much better off, if only they knew it, as the result of the war. He admitted that “in very many cases” their farmhouses had suffered or been destroyed and their cattle had been taken. But the land, their “principal capital asset,” had increased in value! Which must be very consoling to the Boers, who have lost house, cattle, and agricultural implements, and so cannot farm the land….208

This piece highlights the paradox of a British government seeking to assist in the reconstruction of a warzone they themselves had been in large part responsible for creating. “Boer” is the Afrikaans word for “farmer”, and the writer is acutely aware of the relevance of Virgil’s line. The idea that the Afrikaner population are still happier than they realise, that, despite the patent devastation caused to their property by the war they have something to be grateful for, fits the same pattern we have observed in examples from Ireland, India, and Australia: colonial subjects are unaware of their luck in being subjects of the British empire, and their complaints

208 “Notes on Trade and Finance”, *The Speaker*, 8 November 1902, p. 156.
are consequently less justified than they appear. The hypocrisy of this imperial rhetoric is succinctly satirised in *The Speaker* by reference to Virgil’s *o fortunatos*.

In December 1902, six months after the end of the war, a *Times* correspondent reported on how the land settlement programme in the Orange River Colony was proceeding.\(^{209}\) The article notes the importance of agriculture to the Colony, and also voices the view that speedy and lasting reconciliation between the two sides was essential, that is, that British economic and imperial interests relied on co-operation with the Dutch-Afrikaner population of South Africa. The government of the Colony, it is reported, had been purchasing land and advancing loans to suitable proprietors. Despite this proactive approach, the government of the Colony, we are told, “has not adopted the *rôle* of a munificent patron.”\(^{210}\) Beyond initial financial help, proprietors are left to their own devices in a challenging agricultural environment, something which prompts the author to remember the *Georgics*:

> *Pater ipse colendi Haud facilem esse viam voluit*, wrote Virgil in Italy, and nineteen hundred years later, in the Orange River Colony, he would still be struck by the truth of this remark. Everywhere dismantled houses bear testimony to the prolonged struggle the country has just passed through, and the settler is fortunate if he finds four walls of sun-dried bricks left standing on his holding. A few sheets of corrugated iron, procured often from a neighbouring blockhouse, will convert this into a temporary shelter of a most primitive description…\(^{211}\)

An article in *The Times* thus calls for hard work to repair a situation caused in part by British policy during the war, something recalled by the mention of the old blockhouse from which the new settler can glean some material. The reference to “the truth of this remark” appears to suggest that the quotation is used unironically, without awareness of the potential irony. No less than in the popular or scholarly contexts examined in previous chapters, enthusiastic

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\(^{209}\) After its annexation by Britain the Orange Free State was known as the Orange River Colony.


\(^{211}\) “Land Settlement in the New Colonies”, p. 6, quoting *G. I.* 121-122: “Jupiter himself did not wish the path of cultivation to be easy.”
reception of the *Georgics*’ endorsement of hard work needs to be contrasted with attendant social, political, and imperial contexts.

**The First World War**

The initial impetus for this thesis lay in a curiosity about Virgilian reception during the First World War. While classical texts did play an important role for many soldiers (and civilians) in the processing of wartime experience, where Virgil is concerned that reception appears primarily to be reception of the *Aeneid*. Vandiver has documented the role of classical literature in British poetry of the war, whether in trench journals, regimental publications, or published volumes.²¹²

The outbreak of the war inspired several letters to *The Times* which quote the *Aeneid* in relation to contemporary contexts.²¹³ And while Longley has coined the term “interrupted georgic” in relation to the poetry of Edward Thomas, “the poem in which war or latent epic infiltrates an agricultural scenario”,²¹⁴ it seems at this point that the *Georgics* itself did not feature prominently in poetic receptions of Virgil during the war. Nor, indeed, does the *Georgics* appear regularly in wartime contexts in the periodical and newspaper archive I have consulted. That is not to say, however, that the *Georgics* was entirely irrelevant, only that what follows should be considered indicative, rather than representative of a broader trend.

The three sources examined here demonstrate that the poem became relevant in wartime contexts. In particular, they allow us to explore further some of the themes that have been a feature of Chapters 2 and 3. A letter to *The Times Literary Supplement* shows how C. W. Brodribb found the poem’s depiction of agricultural life directly comparable to Britain in 1917. Herbert Warren found in it lessons for Britain and the British empire, in ways which reveal the global politics of the poem’s reception. Vita Sackville-West’s post-war poem *The Land* (1926), meanwhile, exhibits both continuity and change: while offering further examples of the patriotic

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²¹² Vandiver (2010). For the influence of the *Aeneid* in particular see, for example, Vandiver (2010) 130, 217, 219-225.

²¹³ See “Sors Virgiliana”, *The Times*, 14 November 1914, p. 9; “Sors Virgiliana”, *The Times*, 18 November 1914, p. 9; “Sors Virgiliana”, *The Times*, 11 December 1914, p. 9; Harrison (1915), (1915a). This last example is included in Vandiver’s discussion of Latin and Greek in letters to *The Times* (Vandiver (2010) 64-68).

and international aspects which have been conspicuous in British reception of the *Georgics*, it forms an important counterpoint to the aesthetic trend. By employing a more sombre and subdued tone in its depictions of agricultural life, it recalls the realism of Virgil’s original, a realism largely forgotten in British reception. As a prelude to this section, however, I would like to highlight one reception which brought the *Georgics* to the Western Front.

Underlying the material examined in Chapters 2 and 3 is the social bias of Classics in Britain. Given the elite educational system centred around the public school and the two ancient universities, the archive of responses to the *Georgics* is dominated by (though by no means exclusive to) male graduates of this system. Classical education formed the basis for a career in journalism, politics, academia, or other areas of public life. Graduates of this system also fought and died in great numbers in the First World War, something attested to by the memorials conspicuous in the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge today. The overwhelming emphasis on Classics in British elite education meant that Virgil could become the first point of reference in describing the experience of war. Perhaps further research into the letters of officers and soldiers, not undertaken here, will bring to light further Virgilian receptions; here I focus on a single example.

Stephen Hewett (1893-1916) was a graduate of Balliol College, Oxford, who died serving in France, and whose letters from the front were edited and published posthumously by one of his old tutors, Francis Urquhart.\(^{215}\) The resulting collection, *A Scholar’s Letters from the Front*, comprises a series of eloquent and expansive letters, full of classical quotations in Latin and Greek. In his introduction, Urquhart paints a picture of an anxious yet talented student, one who was influenced greatly by his Catholic education at Downside Abbey, and then by his time at Oxford.\(^{216}\) The selection of Hewett’s letters, addressed to several of his Balliol tutors and to members of his family, give a relatively benign picture of life in the trenches, presumably in an effort to limit the anxiety of his mother and his friends. A more grim reality is often hinted at,

\(^{215}\) On Urquhart (1868-1934), reputedly the first Catholic tutor at Oxford since the Reformation, see J. Jones (2004).

\(^{216}\) Hewett (1918) vii-xvii.
however, when we read of the soldiers’ quarters as a “labyrinth of mud”, and find reference on several occasions to the extreme boredom of life in the trenches.\textsuperscript{217}

Classical quotation illuminates many of the details in the letters: Catullus 46, to describe his companions on the trip to France separating into different battalions;\textsuperscript{218} Horace’s \textit{Odes}, on both returning to the trenches after leave and on reminiscences about pre-war life;\textsuperscript{219} and Lucretius, on the relief of hearing the bombardment of a distant trench and not one’s own.\textsuperscript{220} Virgil occupies a prominent place among such quotations. In a long letter to his mother about his first “real experiences” at the front, he says \textit{haec olim meminisse iuvabit}.\textsuperscript{221} In a philosophical letter to his sister Mary he quotes the lament for Umbro from \textit{Aeneid} 7, to describe “the good man killed in battle”,\textsuperscript{222} while in a letter to his sister Kathleen he imagines his part in the war by rephrasing the words of Aeneas to Dido about his role at Troy.\textsuperscript{223}

Hewett was killed in the Somme offensive on 22 July 1916, after only some five months in France. He had been a Second Lieutenant in the 14\textsuperscript{th} Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, formed as the 1\textsuperscript{st} Birmingham Battalion at the start of the war.\textsuperscript{224} Urquhart describes

\begin{itemize}
  \item Hewett (1918) 39, 58, 66.
  \item Hewett (1918) 19-29: “After a very deliberate journey out with a lot of other men I knew, we were eventually told off in quite a haphazard way to various Battalions: \textit{O dulces comitum valete coetus! | Longe quos simul a domo profectos | Diversae variae viae reportant}.” (= Catull. 46. 9-11: “O farewell sweet bands of companions! Those who set out far from home together, many different roads carry back.”)
  \item Hewett (1918) 66: “For to-day I must rejoin my Battalion in the firing line. \textit{Cras ingens iterabimus aequor}” (= Hor. \textit{Carm.} 1. 7. 32, with the ambiguity of \textit{aequor}, meaning a plain or a sea: “Tomorrow we will traverse again a great sea”); Hewett (1918) 24: “And then when we think of the return from the war and the happiness we shall indulge, one remembers all the shining happiness of the past which has made life worth living […] \textit{Non tamen irritum quocumque retro est}.” (= Hor. \textit{Carm.} 3. 29. 45-46, “Nor, however, [will he] write off whatever is past.”)
  \item Hewett (1918) 78: “I feel in a chatty mood, being at ease in support billets, with a cigar in my mouth…and in my ears the loud but soothing noise of a heavy strafe which does not immediately affect us: \textit{suave […] magnum alterius spectare laborem}.” (= Lucr. 2. 1-2: “Sweet [is it] to look on the great toil of another.”)
  \item Hewett (1918) 42, “Someday it will be pleasing to remember these things.” The quotation is part of Aen. 1. 203, but the uncertainty of the original is removed by Hewett’s omission of \textit{forsan et} from the line.
  \item Hewett (1918) 69, quoting Aen. 7.759-760, with \textit{liquida} for Mynors’ \textit{uitrea} in line 759: \textit{te [sc. Umbro] nemus Angitiae, uitrea te Fucinus unda | te liquidi flevere lacus}: “The wood of Angitia wept for you, Umbro, the glittering water of Fucinus, the clear lakes.”
  \item Hewett (1918) 101, reworking part of Aen. 2. 6: \textit{et quorum pars magna fui} (“[Events] of which I was a big part”): “But take it from me that we are only just beginning to take the turn of events in this war: that once taken, the end will come quickly, will come this year [1916], with the accompaniment of incidents overwhelming, breathless, beyond any romance, too exciting to believe, – in which Great Britain will play a great and manifold part, and in which even a single person whom you can scarcely imagine in such connections will take his share. ‘Quorum pars ero.’” Hewett alters the quotation to mean “[Events] of which I will be part.”
  \item For a history of the Birmingham Battalions in the war see Carter (1997).
\end{itemize}
how “he led his platoon in an attack and never returned […] enquiries among men who had been
with him and who had come up after him made it clear, after a while, that he had fallen somewhere
between High Wood and Deville Wood.”\textsuperscript{225} An historical account of the Birmingham Battalions
during the war allows us to fill in a bit of the detail surrounding Hewett’s death. An operation
which began at 10 p.m. on the 22\textsuperscript{nd}, in which the 14\textsuperscript{th} Warwicks and the 1\textsuperscript{st} Royal West Kents
were to take Wood Lane, had gone disastrously wrong, with the 14\textsuperscript{th} Warwicks suffering 485
casualties, including 194 fatalities, in a matter of hours.\textsuperscript{226} Both Hewett’s name, and the name of
Captain Bryson, the Company Commander about whom Hewett speaks fondly in his letters,
appear on the Memorial to the Missing of the Somme at Thiepval.\textsuperscript{227}

Of particular interest here is the letter Hewett wrote to A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, a
Balliol tutor, dated 16 July 1916, six days before his death. It is remarkable for the way in which
it demonstrates how immediate a resource Hewett’s classical reading was as a means of
processing and contextualising his war experience. He describes a long march, in which a passing
car brought a rumour that French forces had captured Péronne. This lightened the mood of the
marchers, but also reminded Hewett of Demosthenes: “I thought of another darker event: ‘Ἑσπέρα
μὲν γὰρ ἦν, ἦκε δ’ ἀγγέλλων τις ὡς τοὺς πρωτάνεις ὡς ᾿Ελάτεια κατείληπται.’”\textsuperscript{228} This gives way
to the letter’s final recollection, in which Hewett is reminded of a moment in the \textit{Georgics}:

But these are greater and more fortunate times. This morning, a Sunday full of sunshine
and real rest – the last rest that we expect for a long time to come – I strolled into the
little garden behind the cottage where the officers of our company are living. There
among his lilies, pansies, and carnations, I found an old Senex Corycius, who hailed me
to accept a great gift of strawberries, and explained many things – the faults of the French
Higher Command, the official neglect of priceless inventions (including one of his own),

\textsuperscript{225} Hewett (1918) xvi.
\textsuperscript{226} Carter (1997) 170-180.
\textsuperscript{227} Carter (1997) 278-285, which gives the Roll of Honour for the 14\textsuperscript{th}, 15\textsuperscript{th}, and 16\textsuperscript{th} Birmingham
Battalions. Bryson is mentioned at Hewett (1918) 47, 77-78.
\textsuperscript{228} Hewett (1918) 110, quoting Dem. \textit{De cor.} 169, where Hewett writes ἦλθε for ἦκε, which is printed by
Dilts (2002): “Evening had already fallen when a messenger arrived bringing to the presiding councillorsthe news that Elatea had been taken.” (Translated by Vince & Vince (1939)).
the defence of Verdun, and – with geographical tracings on the garden path – the stupidity of the German invasion. “Hic magnus tendebat Achilles” – and so forth. I did not agree with even as much as I understood: but one conviction I found that we shared: “Nous les aurons.”

Hewett adopts Virgil’s position as eyewitness, and Tarentum becomes northern France. In contrast to Dryden’s image of the senex as model of philosophical retirement, or the journalist’s encounter with old-fashioned rural life in the north of England, here the senex Corycius is transported to the heart of a conflict zone, an example of survival and self-sufficiency in time of war. As well as revealing a Virgilian moment on the Western Front, Hewett’s reception also suggests the wartime context of the Georgics itself.

In Chapters 2 and 3 I have examined the domestic contexts of the Georgics’ reception in a bid to offer an alternative to the narrow and aesthetic scholarly history of the poem. In contrast to an apparent modern scholarly consensus that the Georgics is primarily a poem, not about agriculture, but about deeper themes, I have tried to show that the agricultural subject matter of the poem was of interest and of relevance to readers’ concerns. This is not to endorse a simplistic either/or view of the poem, nor to deny its obvious concern with love and death, peace and war, but rather to reassert a balance in interpretation. In contexts like the cattle plague of 1865, or the drive for wartime food production 1916-1918, it was the poem’s agricultural instructions which attracted comment. In particular, the reception of C. W. Brodribb points to the immediacy with which the poem’s picture of agricultural life resonated in Britain in 1917.

Charles William Brodribb (1878-1945) joined the staff of The Times in April 1904, having graduated in Classics from Trinity College, Oxford, in 1901. Throughout his long career Brodribb combined his work as a journalist with classical scholarship, penning several...
contributions to the *Classical Review* and publishing, in 1928, an experimental translation of the *Georgics* in English hexameters.\(^{233}\) An obituary in *The Times* in 1945 noted Brodribb’s patriotism, something evident in those other poems of Brodribb’s which take inspiration from the *Georgics*.\(^{234}\) “Among the Lakes”, an undated poem, imagines a Roman in Roman Britain reading Virgil in the Lake District,\(^{235}\) while the 1943 poem “Praises of Wiltshire” adapts the laudes Italiae to an English context: “But let not the forests of Scotland, harbour of horned deer, | Nor Cornwall’s coastline nor green Shakespearean Arden | Muster against Wiltshire’s praises...”\(^{236}\) Such poems provide further examples of the patriotic appropriation of the laudes Italiae conspicuous in British reception.

In March 1917 Brodribb wrote to the *Times Literary Supplement*, again with reference to the *Georgics*, this time noting its appropriateness in the light of a recent speech by the Prime Minister, Lloyd George. I quote the letter here in full:

Sir, – Mr. Lloyd George’s great speech may have sent others besides myself to the end of the second Georgic: –

Agricola incurvo terram dimovit aratro:

Hinc anni labor, hinc patriam parvosque nepotes

Sustinet….\(^{237}\)

Why nepotes? Why his grandchildren, and not his children? The war (and the war also which Virgil had in mind) will explain. The farmer’s sons are of military age and have joined the army; Agricola, being elderly, remains at home. This should give the death-blow to the inferior rival reading penates. Later on we read: –

\(^{233}\) Brodribb (1913), (1922), (1928); Sargeaunt, Brodribb et al. (1917).

\(^{234}\) “Mr. C. W. Brodribb”, *The Times*, 22 June 1945, p. 7: “Perhaps the deepest thing in Charles Brodribb was patriotism, solicitude for the res publica.”

\(^{235}\) Brodribb (1946) 32.

\(^{236}\) Brodribb (1946) 34-35. The posthumous collection *Poems* also includes “Thoughts After Virgil”, dated March 1943 and with *Aen.* 6. 806 (pp. 37-38) as its epigraph, and “Praises of Italy” (pp. 81-82), an excerpt of G. 2. 136-176 from Brodribb’s 1928 translation.

\(^{237}\) G. 2. 513-515: “The farmer has cleaved the earth with curved plough, from this the year’s work, from this he sustains his country and his little grandchildren.” Mynors and Conte print *hic* at the beginning of line 514, conjectured by Markland ad Stat. *Silv.* 1. 2. 144 (see Markland (1728) 26).
Agricola’s household is patriarchal, and includes his sons’ wives as well, whose husbands are away. But “domus = ‘familia,’ in this case the wife,” says Conington with less imagination. The war gives domus a more comprehensive meaning, such as Virgil must have intended it to bear. Thus do our present experiences enrich our interpretation of Virgil, which tends to become diluted in more easy-going times.

Beginning at the end of Brodribb’s letter, we find a bold statement as to the impact the war had on reading Virgil: it is only in wartime, he argues, that a full appreciation of the poet is possible. By exploring precisely this context we can begin to see how the theme of agriculture in wartime brought the Georgics to mind. 1 February 1917 marked the beginning of a second phase of unrestricted submarine warfare by Germany, which meant that all shipping bound for the United Kingdom, allied or neutral, could be sunk without warning. This precipitated concerted efforts on the part of the British government to ensure both the nation’s food supply and the levels of domestic production required for the war effort. This process had begun before 1917, but the renewal of unrestricted submarine warfare meant that it now demanded top priority. Indeed, the war from the outset had had a definite impact on British agriculture. It is estimated that 15 per cent of men employed in agriculture had left for service by July 1915, while in the first months of the war there was widespread requisitioning of horses, hay, oats, and straw for the military. In December 1916 Lloyd George succeeded Herbert Asquith as Prime Minister, and by January 1917 a Ministry of Food and a Food Production Department had been set up, with Lord Davenport appointed Food Controller. The drive to increase the area of arable land was legislated for by The Corn Production Act of 1917, which guaranteed minimum prices for wheat and oats. Conscription had been introduced in 1916, which increased the demand for women...

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238 G. 2. 524: “The blameless household preserves its virtue.”
239 Brodribb (1917).
240 On which see Kramer (2014) 485-487.
242 Whetham (1978) 90.
in what were seen as male jobs: in munitions factories, in transport, and also in agriculture, with organisations like the Women’s Land Army set up to counter shortfalls in labour on farms. So Brodribb’s reading of Virgil is influenced by the contemporary context: farms and families with absent men, and women managing households in their stead. The lines he quotes speak of the virtue of agricultural life specifically in time of war; the image is one of steady continuity, in marked contrast to the lives of those “who delight in their brothers’ blood”.

The speech of Lloyd George referred to by Brodribb was given in the House of Commons on 23 February 1917, when the new Prime Minister informed the nation about the “alarmingly low” state of food stocks and the new measures introduced to increase production. To counter the German submarine threat a new (and ultimately successful) strategy was announced: increased ship-building, incentives for farmers to switch from pasture to arable farming, increased domestic production of timber and iron ore, and the rationing of all “non-essential commodities” (apples and tomatoes were to be prohibited; oranges, bananas, grapes, and almonds restricted). In an effort to convince his audience of the necessity for this strategy, Lloyd George deployed his rhetorical skills. “Women are working now on the land”, he declared, “the country is alive now as it has never been before to the essential value of agriculture to the community.” Reviewing a history of government indifference to agricultural production, he alluded to the years of agricultural depression and to the nervousness of farmers:

There is no memory as tenacious as that of the tiller of the soil, and the furrows are still in the agricultural mind. Those years have given the British farmer a fright of the plough, and it is no use arguing with him. You must give him confidence, otherwise he will refuse

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244 The war revolutionized women’s access to employment, although these gains were largely (but not entirely) reversed at the end of the war: see Grayzel (2002) 27-29, 106, and Storey & Housego (2010). A series of women’s organisations played a role in agricultural production during the war: the largest of these, The Women’s Land Army, had at its height about 23,000 members. For more see Storey & Housego (2010) 43-46 and Grayzel (2002) 42-43.
245 G. 2. 510: …gaudent perfusi sanguine fratrum.
246 Hansard, HC Deb. (series 5), vol. 90, cols. 1591-1614 (23 February 1917).
247 Hansard, HC Deb. (series 5), vol. 90, cols. 1608-1610 (23 February 1917).
248 Hansard, HC Deb. (series 5), vol. 90, col. 1607 (23 February 1917).
to go between the shafts. Now the plough is our hope. You must cure the farmer of his plough fright, otherwise you will not get crops.249

One can see how this rhetorical emphasis on agriculture, reference to the “tiller of the soil” and slogans like “the plough is our hope”, might suggest the Georgics to those acquainted with Virgil, as it did to Brodribb.

Rather than the “cardinal” moments in the poem which contemporary scholarship highlights, or the o fortunatos quotation which is so politicized in this period, for Brodribb it is the social impact of the war at home which sheds new light on the picture of the farmer’s household in Book 2. That Brodribb uses this context to support a particular textual reading serves to emphasize the strength of his response. Nepotes, “grandchildren”, is printed by Mynors (1969), Geymonat (1973), and Hirtzel (1900 – the Oxford Classical Text at the time Brodribb was writing).250 Penates, referring to the Roman household gods known by that name, is the reading of M, the Codex Mediceus, one of the most important witnesses to Virgil’s text, and was argued for by Markland in the eighteenth century and printed by Ribbeck in the nineteenth.251 What might seem like a modern consensus for nepotes, however, has been disrupted by Conte’s printing (in his 2013 edition) of penates, in line with his stated preference for M.252 The arguments for either reading are subjective, and the final decision remains with each individual reader: nepotes stresses the inter-generational continuity and resilience of agricultural life, but, as Markland objected,253 not every farmer has grandchildren; penates is something common to all and is the reading of M, and yet can been judged, as it is by Geymonat and Mynors, to be an inference from

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249 Hansard, HC Deb. (series 5), vol. 90, col. 1600 (23 February 1917).
250 See also D’Agostino (1957) in favour of nepotes.
251 Markland (1728) 26; Ribbeck (1894). See also Funaioli (1947) vol. 2, part 1, 380-381 in favour of penates.
252 Ottaviano & Conte (2013) 101: “Plurimum pollent ad textum constituendum Mediceus et Palatinus, at neuter eorum contra alterum praececellere aperte uidetur, quamquam Mediceum puto aliquanuo frequentius lectiones seruavisse ueros.” (“The Mediceus and Palatinus [codices] are of great importance in establishing the text, but neither of them seems clearly to surpass the other, although I think the Mediceus has a little more frequently preserved correct readings.”) See also the review of Conte’s text by Heyworth (2014).
253 Markland (1728) 26.
*Aeneid* 8. 543. For Brodribb, it was the experience of war which carried the argument decisively in favour of *nepotes*.

Herbert Warren was President of Magdalen College, Oxford, 1885-1928, as well as Vice-Chancellor of the University (1906-1910) and Professor of Poetry (1911-1916). In September 1916, Warren wrote a review of an American translation of the *Georgics* for *The Spectator*, entitled “The Empire and the Land”, which he uses to assert the contemporary relevance of Virgil’s poem.

“If the *Eclogues* are partly mirage”, Warren writes, “the *Georgics* very largely ‘mean business.’ ‘After the war,’ ‘back to the land,’ exactly describes their history and their philosophy.” He reads the lines at *G.* 2. 442-453, which discuss different timbers, as advocating “afforestation” and argues that Virgil endorses a settlement policy for veterans, “whole-heartedly” advocating the policy of “back to the land…in a most glorious and most successful manner.” By the end of the review, it is clear that Warren sees in this history a lesson for the British empire after the war, and sees the *Georgics* as perfect reading for a post-war world:

“…Virgil, in truth, like Tennyson, and like Kipling, did much not only to bless and blazon, but to build, an Empire. And those who have to-day the leisure to think forward, and dream of the future of their land, and of its soldier sons, may do worse than read the *Georgics* again, whether here or in Canada or in South Africa, in Australia or New Zealand, whether in Latin or in English.”

Before critiquing Warren’s reception, it is necessary to examine briefly the contemporary context, in order to note that Warren’s pronouncements were in fact to be borne out by government policy. The Hobhouse Committee had reported in early 1916 and had recommended that a plan be put in place for the settlement of veterans, while the Selborne Committee, whose report was published in March 1917, recommended government help towards the revival of

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254 For a brief biography of Warren see Bailey (2004a).
255 Warren (1916).
256 Warren (1916).
257 Warren (1916).
258 Warren (1916).
forestry in Britain. In a campaign speech at Wolverhampton in advance of the 1918 General Election (which the ruling coalition was to win by a landslide), Lloyd George used language which was strikingly similar to Warren’s. Britain was to be made a land “fit for heroes to live in.” This entailed learning the lessons of the war and striving for national self-sufficiency, reducing waste and increasing the yields of British agriculture. “A systematic effort must be made,” Lloyd George told the assembled crowd, “to bring the population back to the land.” Like Warren, he called for afforestation, and then drew a direct comparison with ancient Rome. The Times’ report reads:

Now I come to the next point. There must be a scheme for settling gallant soldiers and sailors on the land. (Cheers.) Those of you who have read the history of Rome know that this was a problem that always came up after every war, and how the soldiers who had been settled on the land, through lack of balance in tackling the problem, brought about a general failure at the end of every war in achieving the purposes and redeeming the promises that were given. You will recollect that the great Emperor Augustus finally settled the soldiers on the land, and it was only then that you had really peace and prosperity in the Roman Empire. Now, that is a lesson. I do not say that all the soldiers will go back to the land. The vast majority will return to their old occupations. But I am told that a good many of them who have been living an open-air life do not want to return to the close atmosphere of the workshop and factory. If that is the case they ought to have the opportunity of living on the land, but they ought to be trained for the purpose.

261 “Mr. Lloyd George on His Task”, p. 13.
262 “Mr. Lloyd George on His Task”, p. 13: “You also have forest lands which are unsuitable for higher cultivation. You have no idea how we were handicapped because we had to bring timber from Norway and Sweden and Canada, when you have plenty of land in this country that in the old days used to grow fine timber. There is no healthier occupation for the people than the planting, looking after, and cutting down of trees. Those of you who have lived amongst trees know that you get to love them. Life among trees is an ideal life.”
263 “Mr. Lloyd George on His Task”, p. 13.
Such promises were ostensibly kept when the coalition was returned to power. The Forestry Act of 1919 allocated £3.5 million over ten years to plant 150,000 acres of forest trees.\textsuperscript{264} The Land Settlement (Facilities) Act, meanwhile, allocated £20 million to fund county councils in providing smallholdings for ex-servicemen.\textsuperscript{265} 250,000 acres were bought and some 17,000 tenants were settled as part of the scheme, which ran into difficulties amidst the slump of 1921 but continued until 1925.\textsuperscript{266}

Amidst planning for post-war life in Britain, the example of Augustan Rome, and of the \textit{Georgics}, attained sudden relevance in national politics. Yet Warren’s review should also been seen within an international, which is to say imperial, context. He identifies strongly with the poem’s Italian passages, which he calls “the most splendid and lasting ornament which the ‘purple Caesars’ ever wore.”\textsuperscript{267} This identification is one of the most consistent features in British reception of the \textit{Georgics} and, as in other examples discussed in this thesis, one which incorporates a comparison between Rome and Britain. While this comparison is often implicit, here it is strikingly obvious, in lines ostensibly referring to the composition of the poem:

\begin{quote}
To refresh the love of Italy, her land and story, to multiply her population and military power by planting a sturdy peasantry and restoring family life, to develop the economic resources of the Empire, to distribute wealth more widely, to strengthen public spirit and private virtue, and bring back faith and justice – these were the ideals set before Rome by the legislation of Augustus and the truly laureate lays of Virgil and Horace.\textsuperscript{268}
\end{quote}

The blurring of “Empires” is clear: Virgil’s poem, implies Warren, applies equally to Britain in 1916. More than this, Warren sees aspects of continuity in the history of European imperial power. Referring to Virgil, Horace, and Octavian, he asks, “Did they fail or did they succeed,

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{264} Whetham (1978) 169-171.
\textsuperscript{265} Whetham (1978) 137-139.
\textsuperscript{266} Whetham (1978) 137-139.
\textsuperscript{267} Warren (1916): “Everyone knows his ‘purple passages’, the most splendid and lasting ornament which the ‘purple Caesars’ ever wore: the laudation of labour and of the happy husbandman’s lot – ‘Oh all too fortunate, did they know their luck, | The tillers of the soil!’ [G. 2. 458-459] – the praise of Italy – ‘Mother of increase, mighty mother of men’ [G. 2. 173-174], the picturesque romance of her hill-towns and ‘rivers gliding under ancient walls’ [G. 2. 157]...”.
\textsuperscript{268} Warren (1916).
\end{footnotes}
these idealists? They made a system which lasted almost intact nearly half a thousand years, in some senses a thousand more, and whose effects are living yet."269

Warren’s identification with Italy is premised, however, on a binary worldview. If Italy is a familiar land, the “East” is its antithesis. In Chapter 2 I noted Thomson’s description, in *The Seasons*, of indigenous people in South America as uncivilised and racially inferior in comparison with Europe and Europeans. I also noted Sellar’s contrast between “the beauties and riches of Italy” and “the prodigal luxuriance in the forests and jungles of the East.”270 Such descriptions reflect the construction of difference, racial or climatic, that underpins imperial ideology. By making the victims of European rule seem foreign or other, their subjugation and suffering could be more easily defended or ignored.

Here again a reader reproduces, rather than critiques, the imperial rhetoric of the *Georgics* itself, both the political and climatic supremacy of Italy in Book 2, and the representation of vague and threatening eastern forces on the doors of the temple in Book 3:

In Virgil’s lifetime, as in our own, the whole known world was involved in wars, culminating in one general convulsion of Europe, Asia, and Africa. Fighting during those years of struggle went on upon the Thames and the Seine, the Aisne, the Marne, the Rhine, the Danube, the Nile, the Euphrates, in Mesopotamia and Spain, in Belgium and Switzerland, in Tunis and Egypt and Arabia.

“How up to date and natural these lines sound! The sea-war was decided not far from Corfu, and the land-war between Salonika and Kavala. The contest, it is true, was a civil one; but it became a struggle of East and West, in which Germania and the East, as the

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269 Warren (1916).
270 Sellar (1897) 236.
271 G. 1. 509: “From here the Euphrates, from there Germany incites war.”
272 G. 2. 497: “Or a Dacian coming down from the conspiratorial Danube...”
lines just quoted remind us, made common cause, and of conflicting ideals of free
citizenship, though under a monarch, and Oriental tyranny.\textsuperscript{273}

Warren maps the battlefields of the First World War onto the battlefields of late-Republican
Rome, referencing in particular the Battles of Philippi (“between Salonika and Kavala”) and
Actium (“not far from Corfu”). But by following the poem’s rhetorical portrayal of civil conflict
as “a struggle of East and West”, Warren repeats the most vague and simplistic of cultural clichés.

The alliance between Germany and the Ottoman empire in the First World War allows him to
link the \textit{Georgics’} reference to \textit{Germania} with its orientalising depiction of the “East”. The
civilised forces of Britain and its allies, so the argument runs, are forced to defend themselves
against an “Oriental tyranny”.

The first thing to note is that Warren’s patriotic (even jingoistic) appropriation echoes
the way in which many academics in belligerent countries rushed to endorse the war and used
their public position to advocate for its legitimacy and even its necessity, rather than to voice
independent criticisms of government policy, or to question the political basis of the conflict.\textsuperscript{274}

This is despite the fact that Warren was in a prime position to gauge the human cost of the war,
as he received frequent news throughout the conflict of Magdalen men killed or injured.\textsuperscript{275}

Furthermore, the same narrow metropolitan viewpoint is arguably present both in Virgil’s poem
and in Warren’s article. The \textit{Georgics’} focus on civil war can serve to obscure the persistent
belligerence of Roman foreign policy, much in the same way as Warren’s view of the poem
obscures the imperial contexts both of the First World War and the peace settlements which
followed it. The central assumption of the review is one which is pervasive yet problematic: that
the \textit{Georgics} is “a poem of peace”. In a certain sense this is, of course, true, as one can read
Virgil’s poem as a hymn to the staying power of the natural world amidst human chaos. But while
the poem may celebrate national peace, it also, as I argued in Chapter 1, celebrates victories over

\textsuperscript{273} Warren (1916).
\textsuperscript{274} See Irish (2015) 28-29 on the case of British academics, where he discusses a book published by a group
of leading Oxford historians, entitled \textit{Why We are at War: Great Britain’s Case}. In September 1914 the
Foreign Office purchased 3,000 copies for circulation amongst British embassies around the world.
\textsuperscript{275} Bailey (2004).
foreign enemies, both real and imagined, and depicts peoples and places implicated in the history of Roman imperialism. Warren’s reception is thus a further example of the imperial contexts which are central to British reception of the *Georgics*.

To conclude this Chapter I turn to Vita Sackville-West’s *The Land* (1926).\textsuperscript{276} It is both, I will argue, a post-war poem and one which can be read as a large-scale reception of Virgil’s *Georgics*. More than this, it provides an important counterpoint to the aesthetic trend in Britain. *The Land* accentuates aspects of Virgil’s poem which British reception tended to obscure or to ignore: realism (to the point of nihilism), the existential struggle of agricultural life, the labouring populations of the countryside. For the reader of the *Georgics*, Sackville-West’s work offers a fascinating commentary on Virgil’s poem and its tradition, one which originates outside the male, academic interpretative community which has shaped its reception. Her distance from traditional exegesis, and her intimate knowledge of the English countryside, allow her to do something akin to what Yeats did with Catullus,\textsuperscript{277} to look beyond the world of scholarship and to reimagine a classic poet. In this she resembles the yeoman at the end of “Winter”, who “in his calling takes a stubborn pride | That nature still defeats | The frowsty science of the cloistered men, | Their theory, their conceits.”\textsuperscript{278} But while there is change there are also important continuities. *The Land*, like the *Georgics*, describes country life in patriotic terms, and contrasts this with images of the wider world and its peoples. Given the British imperial context behind this local and global description, the geographic aspect of the *Georgics*’ tradition, which has been the main focus of this thesis, remains very much in evidence.

How acquainted Sackville-West (hereafter VSW) was with Virgil’s poem is unclear. VSW herself, in a letter to Richard Church in 1940, rejected the idea that her poem was an

\textsuperscript{276} For cursory treatments of *The Land* from a classical perspective see Wilkinson (1969) 311 and Ziolkowski (1993) 106-109. To the best of my knowledge there is no comprehensive study of the relationship between *The Land* and *The Georgics*. Biographies of Sackville-West include Stevens (1973), Glendinning (1998) and Dennison (2014); for a brief sketch see Hochstrasser (2008). For contemporary context see Dowson & Entwistle (2005) 7-42.

\textsuperscript{277} I refer here to Yeats’ poem *The Scholars*.

\textsuperscript{278} *The Land*, “Winter”, 24. None of the editions of the poem I have consulted, including the first edition, provide line numbers. Therefore I reference lines by section and by page number according to the first edition (= Sackville-West (1926)), the pagination of which is identical to that of the 2004 reprint (Sackville-West (2004)).
“imitation”, stating that she “had never read one line of the *Georgics*, either in Latin which I was never taught or in any translation”, until she was halfway through work on the poem. Yet Harold Nicolson, her husband, recorded in his diary in 1923 her initial idea for the poem: “Vita had an idea of writing a sort of English *Georgics*. The question of authorial knowledge and intention is secondary here. What is important is that readers of the *Georgics* can fruitfully read *The Land* as a reception of Virgil’s poem, something which some of the poem’s first readers were happy to do. The Poet Laureate Robert Bridges praised *The Land*’s “Virgilian bite”, Edmund Gosse its “truly Virgilian solidity.” Two of the first reviews were entitled “English Georgics.” *The Land* is written in four seasonal books, from “Winter” through to “Autumn”, thus recalling another important influence, James Thomson’s *The Seasons*. It shares many of the *Georgics*’ themes (some of which are explored here), and explicitly evokes the Roman poet in its epigraph and its concluding lines. Leaving aside VSW’s intentions, that is, the poem offers the reader of the *Georgics* much food for thought.

*The Land* is, like the *Georgics*, a post-war poem. Published eight years after the end of the First World War, its emphasis on the permanence of the natural world can be seen as an implicit response to the destruction of that conflict:

I sing the cycle of my country’s year,

I sing the tillage, and the reaping sing,

Classic monotony, that modes and wars

Leave undisturbed, unbettered, for their best

Was born immediate, of expediency.  

“I Winter”, *The Land*, 3.

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281 Letter from VSW to Harold Nicolson, 28 June 1926 (= Nicolson (1992) 148), describing Bridges’ reaction to reading her proofs of *The Land*.
284 *The Land*’s epigraph is G. 3. 289-290: nec sum animi dubius uerbis ea uincere magnum | quam sit et angustis hunc addere rebus honorem (“Nor do I doubt how great a task it is to convey these things in words, and to add this honour to lowly themes.”) Virgil is directly invoked in the lines beginning “O Mantuan!” at the end of “Autumn”, *The Land*, 107.
In one of the poem’s most striking images, the earth is imagined as viewed from the Moon (over four decades before the Apollo programme allowed such an image to be captured on film), its warfare invisible from so great a distance. Virgil’s image of temporal distance from conflict at the end of Georgics 1 becomes spatial distance, as the Moon is described as the earth’s “…silver satellite that sees no strife, | No warring of her men, no grief, no anger | No blood spilt red to stain the golden planet.” The First World War appears to be explicitly invoked when nature is described as “an enemy who calls no armistice”: the use of the word armistice would presumably have recalled for many readers the Armistice of 11 November 1918. Furthermore, reviews saw the poem as evoking a vanishing rural past threatened by the challenges of modernity, a nostalgia for pre-war life visible in much English literature of the 1920s. “At the base of all our fleeting civilisations”, wrote J. C. Squire, “is the man with the plough, wresting humanity’s bread from the earth.” Reviewing VSW’s Collected Poems in 1933, Edmund Blunden noted, of The Land, that “the truth it tells has become more urgently necessary; the world to which it invites our affections and fancies, being more blatantly threatened, is already more precious.” This sense of nostalgia may also account for the poem’s sustained popularity in subsequent decades.

We have seen that British scholarly reception of the Georgics focuses on Book 2, both the patriotic import of the laudes Italiae and the final section in praise of country life. While readers did relate to the poem’s agricultural subject matter, including during the cattle plague in 1865, any sense of existential struggle or pessimism which later twentieth-century scholars read

285 G. 1. 493–497: scilicet et tempus ueniet, cum finibus illis | agricola incuruo terram molitus aratro | exesa inueniet scabra robigine pilae, | aut grauibus rastris galeas pulsabit inanis | grandiaque effossis mirabitur ossa sepulcris. (“But of course the time will come when a farmer in those places, having worked the land with curved plough, will find spears eaten away by corrosive rust, or will strike empty helmets with heavy hoes, and will wonder at great bones in dug-up graves.”)
286 “Winter”, The Land, 16.
287 “Autumn”, The Land, 88.
288 Squire (1926).
289 Blunden (1933).
290 The Land went through fourteen printings in its first year and had sold over 100,000 copies by 1971 (Glendinning (1998) 166). For comprehensive bibliographic information on the early editions see Cross & Ravenscroft-Hulme (1999) 34-37.
in the poem is hard to find. Like the domestic receptions examined here, *The Land* focuses on
details of the *Georgics* not highlighted by scholarship. But it also focuses on the realism of
Virgil’s poem, what might be called the futility of human struggle in the face of nature, in ways
which anticipate the work of Putnam, Ross and Thomas.

The *Georgics*’ realism is perhaps most visible at the end of Book 3, when plague destroys
the farmer’s livelihood, and all the preceding instruction about the care of livestock is rendered
useless. Such moments are balanced, however, by more optimistic passages, especially in Book
2, and by the portrayal of propitious deities like the sustained invocation at *G*. 1. 1-23 or the role
of Ceres at harvest time (*G*. 1. 343-350). In *The Land*, by contrast, religion is completely absent,
and even the most sustained passages of praise (to be examined below) are more subdued than
their Virgilian counterparts. In particular, a sense of nihilism surfaces at several points:

And since to live men labour, only knowing
Life’s little lantern between dark and dark… “Winter”, *The Land*, 7.

All this he [sc. the Yeoman] sees, and nothing sees beyond
The limits and the fealty of his lease.
Tenant of his inheritance,
Brief link in life’s long circumstance,
One of the nameless, name-forgotten line
Descended from that nameless ancestor

The first passage perhaps owes something to Macbeth’s soliloquy on futility. Nothing in the
*Georgics*, however, quite matches the sense of human oblivion in VSW’s lines. Two inter-

291 But not impossible to find. Conington & Nettleship (2007) 158 refers to the “the scattered hints of a
pessimist spirit” in the *Georgics*, while Page (1898) 207-208 cites *G*. 1. 199-203 as “a characteristic
instance of Virgil’s pessimism.” These references are cursory, and, I would argue, different in kind to, for
instance, the existential view of Ross (1987) 241: “Virgil’s poem is profoundly pessimistic; conflict is the
ultimate reality in that fire and water are the ultimate elements of all things; peace, conception and growth,
a tempered climate or a fine spring day are only passing hopes and temporary illusions.”
292 *Macbeth*, 5. 5. 22-25: “Out, out, brief candle! | Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player | That struts
and frets his hour upon the stage | And then is heard no more.”
generational moments in the poem, for instance, the farmer of the future (G. 1. 493-497) and the farmer’s life (G. 513-515), both imply a sense of a community’s continuity. In The Land, by contrast, “All things shall pass by | That fret his mind: the shift of policy | Prince’s ambition, wiser governance, | Civilisation’s tides...”. 293

The Land also evokes the same sense of agricultural struggle present in The Georgics. In particular, this struggle is conveyed in military terms. Man “conquers slow | each province of his fief”. 294 The farmer seeking to rid his farm of pests is advised “to wage a constant war”, 295 and indeed the farmer’s entire annual routine is imagined in martial terms: “So he plots | To get the better of his lands again: | Compels, coerces, sets in trim, allots, | Renews the old campaign.” 296 This language extends to descriptions, too, as when sheaves are arranged in a field “like a tented army.” 297 The Land’s image of martial struggle matches that in the Georgics, both in its specific instances of military vocabulary, 298 and in a more general sense of the relentlessness of the work that agriculture requires. One could compare the image of labor...improbus, for instance, 299 or the boat carried back downstream:

sic omnia fatis

in peius ruere ac retro sublapsa referri,

non aliter quam qui aduerso uix flumine lembum

remigiis subigit, si bracchia forte remisit,

atque illum in praeceps prono rapit alueus amni. G. 1. 199-203.

So all things by fate rush towards the worse, and falling away are carried back, just like one who barely forces a little boat against the current with the oars: if he happens to have relaxed his arms, the channel takes him headlong back downstream.

293 “Spring”, The Land, 53.
294 “Winter”, The Land, 12.
295 “Spring”, The Land, 35.
296 “Winter”, The Land, 22.
298 e.g. G. 1. 160, 2. 114, 2. 369-370 and see Gale (1998) 116-118.
299 G. 1. 145-146: labor omnia uicit | improbus et duris urgens in rebus egestas. (“Relentless work conquered all things, and oppressive want in tough situations.”)
This sense of struggle present in Virgil’s original, as well as a broader sense of futility, have been largely excised from the poem in its British reception. The prevalence of the aesthetic trend means that the *Georgics* became a sunny vision of patriotic rural life, shorn of any sense of conflict. *The Land*’s realism, and the military imagery which evokes the post-war context of its composition, not only serve to highlight important similarities between the two poems, but can also prompt reflection as to the limitations of the aesthetic trend.

*The Land* spends far more time than the *Georgics* describing the people who populate and work on the farm, raising questions not just about the *Georgics*’ tradition but about the poem itself. Virgil’s cast of characters are generic, unnamed, labourers, whose status (free or slave) is ambiguous. This reflects the fact that the labour-force of a large Roman farm would most likely have been a mixture of slaves, free regular or seasonal workers, and tenant farmers. It also raises questions as to the poem’s suppression of the slave-basis of Roman agriculture or, put another way, its aestheticization of labour in general. *The Land* mentions a cast of characters by occupation, not by name, but it spends more time describing their work, often in positive terms, like the yeoman, the gardener and the thatcher. In a passage describing the journey of seasonal hop-pickers to Kent we hear of workers “From London slums poured yearly into Kent, | Waking the province with their cockney slang, | And feathered hats, and fear of showers…” VSW’s archaic vocabulary is apparent in lines describing the craftsman, who is “Brother to all the slow fastidious folk | Whose care is matched by their disdain of time; | To basket-makers, shaping Kentish bodges; To osier-weavers, twisting supple wands; To Jack-of-all-trades with his sundry dodges; | Brick-layer, even, carrying his hod; | To Down-bred shepherds, puddling secret ponds…”

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300 See Spurr (1986) 175 n. 46. The *Georgics*’ workforce includes the harvester (*messor* G. 1. 316), the shepherd (*pastor* G. 3 402), and the pruner (*putator* G. 2. 28), the digger (*fossor* G. 2. 264), the vineyard worker (*vinitor* G. 2. 417), and the mule-driver (*agitator* G. 1. 273).
301 Spurr (1986) 175.
303 “Autumn”, *The Land*, 102.
304 “Summer”, *The Land*, 80. A bodge is a measure used for selling oats (*OED* 2), dodge refers here to a trick (*OED* 1. 2a), while a hod is “an open receptacle for carrying mortar, and sometimes bricks or stones” (*OED* 1).
VSW’s poem describes more fully the people involved in agricultural life. In the *Georgics* specific roles are given cursory mention, and extended passages like the farmers at G. 2. 458-474 and the old man at G. 4. 125-148 are highly literary and rhetorical treatments, where the details of the characters themselves remains vague. *The Land*, it could be argued, also aestheticizes labour. Yet by paying more attention to the people, rather than the processes, which agriculture involves, it again offers a corrective to the wider British reception of the *Georgics*, reception which idealises “happy farmers” yet largely ignores the problematic aspects of the poem’s descriptions of rural life. It remains to examine aspects of *The Land* which continue, rather than challenge, trends in British reception. That is to say the poem’s patriotic vision of agriculture and, most importantly, the imperial contexts of its descriptions of the world.

British readers of the *Georgics* identified strongly with the poem’s descriptions of Italy. Travel in that country gave many first-hand experience of the places described, while the climatic and political supremacy of Italy in the *laudes Italiae* was easily transferred to Britain. *The Land’s* focus is solely on England, though even without an Italian comparison, landscape is a source of national pride.

An English cornfield in full harvesting

Is English as the Bible…

“How slow the darkness comes, once daylight’s gone,

A slowness natural after English day,

So unimpassioned, tardy to move on,

No southern violence that burns away,

Ardent to live, and eager to be done.”

“Summer”, *The Land*, 70.

In the first example the appropriation is not classical but Christian, as (presumably) the King James Bible is used to express the Englishness of the cornfield. In the second example, Britain’s geographical location is, as for Italy in the *Georgics*, inherently favourable, lacking “southern violence.” Such patriotic passages in *The Land* are more muted, less hyperbolic, than the
descriptions of Italy in the *laudes Italiae*. Nevertheless, they show a patriotic appropriation of landscape similar to that found in the *Georgics*, and one which contrasts Britain favourably, as we shall see, with other places in the world.

Harold Nicolson, VSW’s husband, was posted to Tehran in November 1925, as the second-ranking officer at the British Legation. This gave VSW the opportunity to make two visits to Iran in 1926 and 1927. On the first of these visits she added the final lines of the poem, addressed to Virgil, and signed it “Ispahan, 1926”. Her accounts of her travels show her to have been an observant and reflective traveller. Like other sources examined in this thesis, however, her writing casts Iran in primitive and primeval terms. It “has been left as it was before man’s advent”, is a “savage, desolating country”, “[one of the] forgotten regions of the world.”

This sense of otherness is conveyed in classical terms, as a return to antiquity:

…it was a double impression: of isolation and anachronism. Not only had we gone far away in distance; we had also gone far back in time. We had returned, in fact, to antiquity. We were travelling as our ancestors had travelled; not those immediate ancestors who rolled in their coaches between London and Bath, or between Genoa and Rome; but as Marco Polo had travelled, or Ovid going into exile, or the Ten Thousand hoping for the sea.

Visible here is the same description of foreign places that has been a major focus of this thesis. Europeans (including “our ancestors”) journeying to Iran, past and present, are met with a sense of “isolation and anachronism”. What makes such description problematic is that it obscures political contexts. Iran’s history in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

307 Ispahan is modern Isfahan, Iran. The poem’s final lines (“Autumn”, *The Land*, 107) neatly align the poet’s feelings of homesickness for England with Virgil’s imagined homesickness for Mantua at Rome: “Then thought I, Virgil! how from Mantua reft, | Shy as a peasant at the court of Rome, | You took the waxen tablets in your hand, | And out of anger cut calm tales of home.”
found it nominally an independent nation, but in reality a colony of Western powers.\textsuperscript{310} The geopolitical exploitation of Iran was matched by economic exploitation, particularly after the discovery of oil there in 1908.\textsuperscript{311} Massive concessions of rights to mining, drilling, and industrial and economic development were given to the British, who duly monopolised Iran’s oil resources.\textsuperscript{312} Declarations of neutrality in both the First and the Second World Wars were largely ignored: in the latter conflict the country was invaded by British and Soviet forces and its leader forced to abdicate.\textsuperscript{313} Ostensible sovereignty, therefore, was in reality colonial dependence in all but name. Portrayal of Iran as desolate and primitive supports a narrative which makes European imperialism in the country seem less problematic. The point is not to castigate VSW for lack of political commentary, but rather to suggest that her work evokes the subtle ways in which literary description and imperialism intersect.

This dynamic is also visible in The Land. In the same way that the Georigcs’ descriptions of certain peoples and places can be seen to obscure imperial realities, VSW’s poem aestheticizes Egypt and India, two countries subject to British imperialism.\textsuperscript{314} There is a description of the Mughal palace at Fatehpur Sikri, where “Once the great Moghul lolling on his throne, | Between his languid fingers crumbling spice, | Ordered his women to the chequered squares, | And moved them at the hazard of the dice.”\textsuperscript{315} Fritillaries, a type of flower, are compared to “…Egyptian girls | Camping among the furze, staining the waste | With foreign colour, sulky-dark and quaint, | Dangerous too…”\textsuperscript{316} Such descriptions rely on stereotypical qualities of the “East” – exoticism,
sensuality, danger – which, Edward Said has argued, are a key part of European colonial
discourse.\textsuperscript{317}

In particular, climate is used to compare Britain favourably with the Middle East, thus
echoing the rhetoric of the \textit{laudes Italiae}, which links Italy’s temperate climate with Roman
military superiority:

\begin{quote}
Now be you thankful, who in England dwell,
That to the starving trees and thirsty grass
Even at summer’s height come cloudy fleets
Moist from the wastes of the Atlantic swell,
To spill their rain, and pass,
While fields renew their sweets.
Not as the Arab watches in despair
The scrannel promise of his harvest parch…
[…]
Or as the Persian from his hills of snow
Gathers the freshet to the jealous pool,
And floods his garden with a hundred streams
Under the plane-trees when the evening’s cool,
But still for all his pains
Sees roses languish with returning noon,
And in the heat of June
The leaves already flutter from the planes.
\textit{“Summer”}, The Land, 61-62.
\end{quote}

Like the \textit{Georgics}, The Land constructs an image of the world based on the dichotomies of home
and abroad, familiar and foreign. This suggests something which I have argued is relevant to
British reception of the \textit{Georgics}, and to the \textit{Georgics} itself. That is the need to juxtagpose

\textsuperscript{317} See Said (1978).
aestheticizing descriptions of the world from a metropolitan centre with the imperial contexts of the places described.

Examination of the *Georgics* in the First World War shows limited but significant reception. Hewett’s recollection of the *senex Corycius* on the Western Front highlights how the strength of classical culture in British elite education became a resource in extreme circumstances, as a moment of respite occasions a highly personal Virgilian moment. The receptions of Brodribb and Warren, coupled with the rhetoric of Lloyd George, led to a kind of georgic moment in 1916-1917, as the poem’s themes gained sudden relevance amidst a food-supply crisis and planning for the post-war world. These two receptions echo larger trends examined here: the way the poem’s primary subject matter interested readers and was seen as relevant to domestic issues, and the way in which there are imperial contexts to its reception. And while *The Land* offers an instructive critique of the aesthetic trend through its realistic and sombre depiction of agricultural life – a depiction, as in the *Georgics*, inseparable from its post-war context – it nevertheless imagines the wider world in the same politicized way that has been evident throughout this study.
Conclusion

I close by reviewing the main conclusions of the preceding chapters, by highlighting certain continuities which bring together the Roman and British contexts of this thesis, and by suggesting some ways in which it may be of broader relevance.

The primary contention of this thesis is that the *Georgics* can be read with political, as well as aesthetic, appreciation. It has not been my intention to dismiss the poem’s aesthetic achievement. “Taken in parts or as a whole”, Seamus Heaney writes, “it says, ‘Glory be to the world’”.¹ But without noting the contemporary political contexts surrounding its composition, our understanding of the poem is greatly impoverished. Chapter 1 sought to highlight the importance of geography in the poem. In particular, it sought to explore the ways in which peoples and places subject to Roman imperialism are portrayed in its lines, and thus to re-orientate the reader’s focus from the metropolis to the periphery, from Rome to those peoples and places affected by its empire. Latin literature is a privileged literature. It has survived partly through its quality and partly through the politics of survival. We read Latin, and not Punic literature, for instance, because of the particular historical and political development of Europe. Those in search of empire have always found in Latin, and in Virgil, a source of inspiration, traceable in the linguistic afterlife of the word *Caesar*, in the quoting of Anchises’ speech from *Aeneid* 6,² and perhaps even in the internet age.³ This is what makes the *Georgics* a cultural artefact which, in Benjamin’s words, should provoke in the reader “cautious detachment” as well as praise.⁴

In the end, no one reading has a claim to absolute authority. All poetry is continually re-imaginable, and the *Georgics* itself provides the means for reading against, rather than with, an

¹ Heaney (2004).
² Verg. *Aen. 6*. 847-853; for receptions of these lines see Hagerman (2013) 162 and Vasunia (2009a) 107-108.
³ See Vargas (2010) 64, interviewing Mark Zuckerberg, co-founder and (as of 2017) C.E.O. of the social networking company Facebook: “He [Zuckerberg] first read the *Aeneid* while he was studying Latin in high school, and he recounted the story of Aeneas’s quest and his desire to build a city that, he said, quoting the text in English, ‘knows no boundaries in time and greatness.’” The relevant quotation is *Aen.* 1. 278-279 (Jupiter addressing Venus about the Trojans’ fate): *his ego nec metas rerum nec tempor a pono:* | *imperium sine fine dedi…* (“On them [the Trojans and their descendants] I place no boundaries of space or time: I have given them power without limit…”).
imperial viewpoint. Nevertheless, a poem in its broadest sense encompasses a whole tradition, and I have argued here that the *Georgics*, in a British context, became a certain type of poem. Scholarly reception in Britain 1820-1930 consistently put forward an interpretation which was selective, patriotic, and aesthetic. The poem became a timeless masterpiece, as part of a reading which prioritised the sunny moments of Book 2 above all else. To paraphrase Berger, all conflict disappeared.\(^5\) While there were some exceptions, and while the First World War brought a new introspection, this trend was not decisively challenged. And while modern worldwide scholarship on the poem has been much more attuned to the poem’s politics, aesthetic interpretation has remained more prominent than political, and particularly postcolonial, interpretation. A reader browsing library shelves for help with the *Georgics* still receives a picture of the poem which is largely aesthetic. The poem’s agricultural subject matter is still commonly regarded as a surface, secondary to the deeper themes and meanings which lie beneath.

Chapters 2 and 3 sought to offer a contrasting history to this aesthetic trend. In so far as the history of the poem can be written (bearing in mind that the majority of readers’ individual experiences remain private and unavailable to the historian), they sought to explore the variety of ways in which the poem has been appropriated. Firstly, the poem’s agricultural subject matter was of interest to British readers, and was relevant in different ways to their experience. The *Georgics* was invoked to eulogise the disappearing traditions of country life, to provide context for a devastating cattle plague, and to give inspiration to allotment gardeners during the First World War. There are political aspects to this domestic reception too, visible in the way James Graham and Jesse Collings used G. 2. 532-535 to advocate their own particular visions of rural life, or in the way James Booth’s celebration of hard work is implicated in the politics of labour in Victorian Britain. What this material demonstrates is that narrow definitions of the poem’s didacticism should be avoided: the poetry of the *Georgics* encompasses both practical instruction relating to the natural world and a literary exploration of humane themes. To follow Seneca\(^6\) in choosing between the two is a necessarily limiting step. And as I have argued throughout, the

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5 Berger (1972) 13, quoted in the Introduction.
scholarly tendency to focus on the literary over the agricultural in relation to the poem is one way in which the politics of its subject have been obscured.

Secondly, British tourists, journalists, and politicians used the *Georgics* to describe peoples and places around the world, in ways which aestheticized, and at times de-politicized, those peoples and places. Writers’ experiences of difference prompted recourse to a classical poem, by which those experiences could be made more familiar. But many of the descriptions discussed above, of peoples as timeless or primitive, their ways of life apolitical and carefree, are implicated in the rhetoric and the practice of imperialism. There is the myopic condescension of W. C. Furneaux, happy to contrast what he perceives as the backwardness of Indian agriculture with the modernity of the British empire. There is Captain Graham’s depiction of Shoa as a fertile and pristine land, an ideal candidate for the benefits of European “civilisation”. Imperialism becomes less problematic – can be seen as beneficial or even necessary – if it is clothed in the language of benevolent humanitarianism, of the “civilisation” which is always the property of the coloniser, and not of the colonised. The most consistent example of this trend is the way the happy farmers of *Georgics* 2 are taken to represent, in a range of contexts, the colonial subject. There is the paternalistic dismissal of the problems of the Irish population by Robert Peel in the House of Commons, but also the ironic appropriation of *G. 2. 458-459* by Irish MPs, or in pieces satirising British policy in India and in South Africa. Geography and empire are fundamental, that is, not just to the *Georgics* in a Roman context, but to its broader tradition.

How might the receptions examined here influence one’s reading of the *Georgics*? I suggest that they can serve to politicize the text. This is a poem which has been appropriated in political and imperial contexts, something which can send us back to the text with renewed interest in the politics of description. In other words, Chapters 2 and 3 can be seen to support the reading advanced in Chapter 1. In particular, they can invite further consideration of Book 2. Scholars have highlighted poetic and philosophical contexts in relation to *G. 2. 458-459*, as well as the possibility that the lines address wealthy Roman landowners. But the identity of the *agricolae* is ambiguous, and I suggest the potential for condescension in these lines. The poem puts forward, from a highly literary and metropolitan viewpoint, an image of Italian rural life as
happy and carefree. (Other, darker, sections in the poem counteract this picture, but these have been largely forgotten in the poem’s British reception.)

This utopian image could be contrasted, for instance, with Appian’s account of the turmoil surrounding Octavian’s appropriations of land during the Perusine War in 40, what Gabba calls “an agrarian and social disaster,” some ten years before the publication of the poem:

Both Octavian and Lucius [Antonius] sent recruiting officers throughout Italy, who had skirmishes with each other of more or less importance and frequent ambushes. The goodwill of the Italians was of great service to Lucius, as they believed that he was fighting for them against the new colonists. Not only the cities that had been designated for the army, but almost the whole of Italy, rose, fearing like treatment. They drove out of the towns, or killed, those who were borrowing money from the temples for Octavian, manned their walls, and joined Lucius. On the other hand, the colonised soldiers joined Octavian. Each one in both parties took sides as though this were his own war.

Agriculture for many in rural Italy cannot have been so easy and carefree an occupation as the end of Georgics 2 suggests it was. More generally, one could ask the same questions of the laudes Italiae and its depiction of Italy. How problematic is the Georgics’ depiction of a land reliant for its agricultural production on slavery, on the ruthless exploitation of other human beings? In Chapter 2, I suggested that Edward Long’s aestheticization of eighteenth-century Jamaica can serve as a useful challenge to the Georgics’ image of perpetual Italian spring.

While comparisons between the Roman and British empires require caution, to keep both contexts of this thesis entirely separate would be to ignore certain important continuities in the history of imperial power. A first point is that the Georgics arguably does the same thing many

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7 Gabba (1971) 141: “It was a question of an upheaval of immense importance, even greater than Sulla's colonization, which does not appear to have left any appreciable traces in the structure of Italic society. It was an agrarian and social disaster. From an agrarian and economic point of view, the violent and sudden change in a whole class of landowners must have caused a serious disruption in the working of the fields, followed by a drop in production or at least in certain types of production. Most probably industrialized cultivations, such as olives, vines, and pastures, were only slightly damaged, whereas the effect of the confiscations was far more serious on farms whose main produce was cereals, that is to say on middle-sized farms.”

8 App. B Civ. 5. 27, translated by White (1913).
of its receptions do. That is, it imagines the world from a metropolitan centre in ways that can, at times, be seen to facilitate, perhaps even to legitimate, the subjugation of peoples and places by Rome. Its depictions of Egypt offer one example, the Nile’s appearance in the proem to Book 3 and the *gens fortunata* of Book 4. Another is north Africa: how similar is the poem’s depiction of the nomadic life of the *armenarius Afer*, for instance, to the *Times*’ account of colonial Algeria in 1925, which quotes this very passage (*G.* 3. 343-348)? In its inclusion of non-Roman peoples within a teleological narrative of Roman greatness (*G.* 2. 167-172), readers might consider whether the poem suppresses (or, alternatively, hints at) the violence which characterised Rome’s conquering of those same peoples.

At the end of the first century B.C., Roman imperialism operated in places, mentioned in the *Georgics*, that have been subject to Western imperialism not just in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but in the twenty-first.⁹ The British empire may be gone, but there is nothing historical about imperialism. It merely operates in less obvious or less reported forms. Descriptions of the world from metropolitan centres still serve to facilitate the exercise of imperial power. To the examples of the *Georgics* and the *Times* in 1925 could be added much journalism and cultural production in the twenty-first century. News channels bring us images of grieving crowds in the non-Western world, but are less quick to bring us details about the number of those killed annually by American and European bombs. All of which is to highlight the role played by what Gramsci called civil society – journalists, academics, cultural institutions – in the facilitation of power.¹⁰ There are moments in the *Georgics* which appear to endorse Roman imperial power, and it is these moments which have often been ignored or left unchallenged.

It is hoped that the work presented here will be of interest not just to classicists and to students of classical reception, but to historians and literary scholars interested in the themes of geography, power, and representation. In methodological terms, online archives of newspapers and

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⁹ One pertinent example is that of Libya, which endured Italian imperialism in the twentieth century and a six-month NATO bombardment in 2011, on which see Seymour (2012) 287-297.

¹⁰ For a concise overview of Gramsci’s thought in this regard, see Femia (1981) 24. For the role of civil society within Gramsci’s theory of hegemony see Gramsci (1975) 9-10.
periodicals can provide interesting and varied material for students of classical reception to consider. Receptions of other poems and poets could be investigated. In respect of Augustan literature, the relationship between geographical description and imperial power could be further explored. Descriptions of foreign peoples and places abound, not just in Augustan literature but in Latin literature as a whole. One example which comes to mind is Horace’s final ode, where the last four stanzas depict a scene of civic, communal ritual, at the very centre of Rome, predicated on Octavian’s eradication of foreign threats:

```
custode rerum Caesare non furor
civilis aut vis exiget otium,
on ira, quae procudit ensis
et miser as inimicat urbis;
non qui profundum Danuvium bibunt
edicta rumpent Iulia, non Getae,
non Seres infidique Persae,
non Tanain prope flumen orti...
```

Roman identity is implicated in the Other, and Augustan literature offers unique and fertile ground for investigation into the relationship between culture and imperialism, a particular historical moment with trans-historical implications. At the heart of many of the most urgent contemporary issues – climate crisis, migration, food production – lie relationships of power and control which have long historical roots, apparent in both the Roman and the British contexts of this thesis. Political appreciation of the *Georgics* and its tradition, that is, can provide readers with a means of thinking through Europe’s (and the West’s) contemporary, as well as historical,

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11 Some work has already been done in this area: see, for instance, O’Rourke (2011), Parker (2011), and especially Keith (2008) 139-165, who explores the relationship between Roman imperialism and Propertian elegy.

12 Hor. *Carm.* 4. 15. 17-24: “With Caesar watching over public affairs, civil madness will not drive peace away, nor force, nor the anger which forges swords and sets at odds wretched cities; those who drink the deep Danube will not break the Julian decrees, not the Getae, not the Seres and the faithless Persians, not those born near the river Don...”.

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relationship with the rest of the world. In a pedagogical context, this is, I suggest, one further aspect of the poem’s didactic potential.

Classics is a subject with an exclusionist and imperialist history (this is not the whole story, but it is one which is often overlooked). In Britain access to Greek and Latin has been restricted in terms of class and gender, and classical authors have provided inspiration to the theorists and agents of imperialism. This is not a new point, and scholars have investigated radically different sides to the classical story.\textsuperscript{13} In terms of classical reception, however, appreciation of alternative histories should not obscure just how implicated in the workings of power the subject has been. I am sceptical as to whether Classics as a discipline has come to terms with this history. To what extent, for instance, should the decline in institutional pre-eminence which occurred in the middle years of the twentieth century be seen not just in local or national terms, but in the context of global decolonization? The \textit{Georgics} has an imperialist history which should not be overlooked, and the role which the classical past still plays in the construction of Western identity makes the need for cautious detachment all the greater. The challenge is, as I put it in the Introduction, to provincialize Rome, to recognize that there are other ways of doing things, other histories, other forms of knowledge. The \textit{Georgics} does not take sides in any such debate, but in its depiction of a world at once Roman and universal, it offers a starting point, from where a more (geo-)political appreciation of Latin literature can begin.

\textsuperscript{13} See for instance Goldhill (2011) and Stead & Hall (2015).
Appendix

The Geography of the *Georgics*

Note: The geography of the *Georgics* can be classified in a number of different ways, and I stress that what follows is merely one attempt at classification. At Appendix 1A I have listed every word in the poem which denotes a geographical location in the *orbis terrarum*, including rivers, lakes, seas, and mountains, but excluding winds, celestial bodies, non-specific literary locations (like the *Alcinoi siluae* at G. 2. 87), metaphysical locations (like the Elysian fields at G. 1. 38) and the underworld (*passim*), except in three instances where the toponyms concerned also denote physical locations: Mt. Olympus, Taenarus, and Lake Avernus. Rivers, mountains, lakes, and periphrases are indicated by (R), (M), (L) and (P), respectively. Doubtful cases are marked with a question mark. At Appendix 1B I have listed every word which denotes an ethnic group, including literary examples like the Hyperboreans but excluding individual figures whether literary, historical, or divine (Camillus, Jupiter, Hercules, Cyclopes etc.). References to the poem are given according to line number and text reference, and references are provided where periphrases are debatable or less than obvious. Readers are referred to two geographical resources for further information, the searchable map currently available at pelagios.org (http://pelagios.org/maps/greco-roman/) and the Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World (= Talbert: 2000).
1A Toponyms in the *Georgics* listed alphabetically by location

**Aegean, The**

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<th>Description</th>
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<td>Carpathian Sea</td>
<td>4.387</td>
<td><em>Carpathio...gurgite</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crete</td>
<td>3.345</td>
<td><em>Cressamque pharetram</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delos</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td><em>Latonia Delos</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dicte (M) (on Crete)</td>
<td>2.536</td>
<td><em>sceptrum Dictaei regis (sc. Iouis)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ceos</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>*pingua Ceae</td>
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<td>Cnossos (on Crete)</td>
<td>1.222</td>
<td><em>Cnosiaque ardentis...stella Coronae</em></td>
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<td>Lesbos</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td><em>Lesbos</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methymna (on Lesbos)</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td><em>Methymnaeo...de palmite</em></td>
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<td>Paphos</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td><em>solido Paphiae de robore myrtus</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Phanae (on Chios)</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td><em>rex ipse Phanaeus</em></td>
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<td>Paros</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td><em>Parii lapides</em></td>
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<td>Rhodes</td>
<td>2.102</td>
<td><em>Rhodia (sc. uitis)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thasos</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td><em>Thasiae uites</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Asia**

“Asia” in the *Georgics* (and in modern usage) is an inherently vague toponym. Places listed here include mainly those in what is now Turkey, but also locations in Central and South Asia.

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<td><em>ostriferi fauces...Abydi</em></td>
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<td>Ascanius (R)</td>
<td>3.270</td>
<td>*transque sonantem</td>
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<td>Asia</td>
<td>1.383</td>
<td>*Asia...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.171</td>
<td><em>extremis Asiae iam uictor in oris</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td><em>urbes Asiae domitas</em></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>4.343</td>
<td><em>Asia Deiopea (sc. nympha)</em></td>
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<td>Assyria</td>
<td>2.465</td>
<td><em>alba neque Assyrio fucatur lana ueneno</em></td>
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<td>Bactra</td>
<td>2.138</td>
<td><em>Bactra</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Caicus (R)</td>
<td>4.370</td>
<td><em>Mysusque Caicus</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Caucasus Mountains</td>
<td>2.440</td>
<td><em>ipsae Caucasio steriles in  uertice siluae</em></td>
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<td>Cayster (R)</td>
<td>1.383</td>
<td>*Asia...</td>
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<td>Corycus</td>
<td>4.127</td>
<td><em>Corycium...senem</em></td>
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</table>
Cytorus (M) 2. 437 undantem buxo…Cytorum
Euphrates (R) 1. 509 Euphrates
4. 561 ad altum | ...Euphraten
Ganges (R) 2. 137 pulcher Ganges
Gargara (M) 1. 103 ipsa...Gargara
3. 269 trans Gargara
Hellespont, The¹ 4. 111 Hellespontiaci...tutela Priapi
Hermus (R) 2. 137 auro turbidus Hermus
Hydaspes (R) 4. 211 Medus Hydaspes
Ida (M) 2. 84 Idaeis cyparissis
3. 450 Idaeasque pices
4. 41 Phrygiae...pice lentius Idae
India 1. 57 India mittit ebur
2. 116 sola India nigrum | fert hebenum
Lycus (R) 4. 367 Lycumque
Lydia 4. 211 ingens | Lydia
Media 2. 126 Media
4. 211 Medus Hydaspes
Miletus 3. 306 Milesia...| uellera
4. 334 Milesia uellera
Mysia 1. 102 Mysia
4. 370 Mysusque Caicus
Niphates (M) 3. 30 pulsumque Niphaten
Panchaia 2. 139 totaque...Panchaia
4. 379 Panchaeis adolescent ignibus arae
Phrygia 4. 41 Phrygiae...pice lentius Idae
Pontus 1. 58 Pontus
Pontus (Black Sea) 1. 207 Pontus
Thymbra 4. 323 Thymbraeus Apollo
Tmolus (M) 1. 56 Tmolus

¹ See the OLD s. v. Hellespontiacus: “Of the Hellespont: often w. ref. to Priapus as having been born at Lampsacus.”
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<td>2. 98</td>
<td><em>Tmolius</em> (sc. uitis)</td>
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<td>Troy</td>
<td>1. 502</td>
<td><em>Laomedontae luimus periuria Troiae</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. 385</td>
<td><em>Ausonii, Troia gens missa, coloni</em></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 36</td>
<td><em>Troiae Cynthius auctor</em></td>
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</table>

### Africa

*The area comprising what is now Egypt and Libya. Modern and ancient usages of “Egypt” and “Libya” differ considerably.*

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<td><em>Pellaei gens fortunata Canopi</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. 312</td>
<td><em>Cinyphii...hirci</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Egypt | 3. 5 | *inlaudati...Busiridis aras (P)*
| 4. 210 | *Aegyptus* |
| 4. 291 | *uiridem Aegyptum* |
| Libya | 2. 105 | *Libyci...aequoris* |
| 3. 249 | *Libyae solis...in agris* |
| 3. 339 | *pastores Libyae* |
| Mareotis (L) | 2. 91 | *Mareotides albae (sc. uites)* |
| Nile (R) | 3. 29 | *undantem bello magnumque fluentum | Nilum* |
| 4. 288 | *effuso stagnantem flumine Nilum* |
| Pelusium | 1. 227 | *Pelusiacae curam...lentis* |

### Europe

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<th>Page</th>
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<td>Alps, The</td>
<td>1. 475</td>
<td><em>insolitis tremuerunt motibus Alpes</em></td>
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<td>3. 474</td>
<td><em>aërias Alpis</em></td>
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<td>1. 309</td>
<td><em>stuppea...Balearis uerbera fundae</em></td>
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<td>*armorum sonitum toto Germania caelo</td>
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<td>1. 509</td>
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<td>2. 108</td>
<td><em>Ionii...ad litora fluctus</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Noricum</td>
<td>3. 474</td>
<td>*Norica...</td>
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2 See Erren ad G. 3. 5.
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<td>Thule</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>ultima Thule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timauus (R)</td>
<td>3.475</td>
<td>Iapydis arua Timai</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tyrrenian Sea</td>
<td>2.164</td>
<td>Tyrrenusque…aestus</td>
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</table>

**Greece**

*The area comprising modern Greece and southern Albania.*

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<td>1.9</td>
<td>poculaque…Acheloia</td>
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<td>Alpheus (R)</td>
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<td>Alpheum</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.180</td>
<td>Alpea…flumina Pisae</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amphrysus (R)</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>pastor ab Amphryo (sc. Apollo)</td>
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<td>Amyclae</td>
<td>3.345</td>
<td>Amyclaeumque canem</td>
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<td>Arcadia</td>
<td>3.392</td>
<td>Pan deus Arcadiae</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4.283</td>
<td>Arcadii memoranda inuenta magistri (sc. Aristaei)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ascra</td>
<td>2.176</td>
<td>Ascræumque…carmen</td>
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<td>Attica</td>
<td>4.463</td>
<td>Actias Orithyia</td>
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<td>Athos (M)</td>
<td>1.332</td>
<td>Atho</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ceraunian Mountains</td>
<td>1.332</td>
<td>alta Ceraunia</td>
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<td>Cithaeron (M)</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>uocat ingenti clamore Cithaeron</td>
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<td>Corinth</td>
<td>2.464</td>
<td>Ephyreiaque aera</td>
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<td>Chaoniique patris glandes (sc. Iouis)</td>
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<td>Delphi</td>
<td>3.293</td>
<td>Castalian</td>
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<td>Dodona</td>
<td>1.149</td>
<td>Dodona</td>
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<td>Elis</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>Eliadum…palmas equarum</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.202</td>
<td>ad Elei metas et maxima campi</td>
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<td>Eleusis</td>
<td>1.163</td>
<td>Eleusinae matris (sc. Cereris)</td>
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<td>Emathia</td>
<td>1.492</td>
<td>Emathiam</td>
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</table>

*R(h)ætica denotes the province of Raetia in the Alps, but this vine is placed by Pliny just to the south, in the ager Veroniensis (see Plin. HN 14. 16, 67 with Mynors ad G. 2. 95-96).*
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<td>4.390</td>
<td><em>Emathiae portus</em></td>
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<td><em>altus...Enipeus</em></td>
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<td><em>domitrixque Epidauros equorum</em></td>
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<td>1.59</td>
<td><em>Epiros</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.121</td>
<td><em>patriam Epirum</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.405</td>
<td><em>acremque Molossum (sc. canem)</em></td>
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<td>1.38</td>
<td><em>Graecia</em></td>
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<td>3.20</td>
<td>*cuncta...</td>
<td>...Graecia*</td>
</tr>
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<td>3.11</td>
<td><em>Aonio...uertice</em></td>
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<td>4.177</td>
<td><em>Cecropias...apes (P)</em>&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>4.270</td>
<td><em>Cecropiumque thymum (P)</em></td>
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<td><em>saltusque Lycaeii</em></td>
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<td><em>uiridis...summa Lycaeii</em></td>
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<td><em>tua Maenalasa</em></td>
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<td><em>fortisque Mycenasa</em></td>
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<td>3.19</td>
<td><em>lucosque Molorchii (P)</em>&lt;sup&gt;5&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>3.49</td>
<td><em>Olympiacaepraemia palmae</em></td>
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<td>3.181</td>
<td><em>Iouis in luco (P)</em>&lt;sup&gt;6&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.96</td>
<td><em>alto...Olympos</em></td>
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<td>1.282</td>
<td><em>frondosum...Olympum</em></td>
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<td>1.450</td>
<td><em>emenso...Olympos</em></td>
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<td><em>longus Olympus</em></td>
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<td><em>uiamque adfectat Olympo (sc. Caesar)</em></td>
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<td>1.281</td>
<td><em>ter sunt conati imponere Pelio Ossam (sc. Gigantes)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.282</td>
<td><em>scilicet atque Ossae frondosum inuoluere Olympum</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.391</td>
<td>*patriamque reuisit</td>
<td>Pallenen (sc. Proteus)*</td>
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</table>

<sup>4</sup> Cecrops was a mythical king of Athens. Both Thomas (ad G. 4. 177) and Mynors (ad G. 4. 176-178) suggest that the reference is specifically to the honey of Mt. Hymettus in Attica.

<sup>5</sup> See Thomas ad G. 3. 19-20.

<sup>6</sup> See Thomas ad G. 3. 181.
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<td>4.355</td>
<td><em>Penei genitoris ad undam</em></td>
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<td><em>Alphea...flumina Pisae</em></td>
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<td><em>Philippi</em></td>
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<td><em>teritur Sicyonia baca trapetis</em></td>
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<td>3.405</td>
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<td>Taenarus</td>
<td>4.467</td>
<td><em>Taenarias...fauces</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tegea</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td><em>o Tegeae (sc. Pan)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Spercheus (R)</td>
<td>2.487</td>
<td>*campi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taygetus (M)</td>
<td>2.488</td>
<td>*uirginibus bacchata Lacaenis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td><em>Taygetique canes</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tempe</td>
<td>2.469</td>
<td><em>frigida tempe</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.317</td>
<td><em>Peneia Tempe</em></td>
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**Italy**

*The area comprising the modern Italian state south of the Alps.*

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<td>2.225</td>
<td><em>uacuis...Acerris</em></td>
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<td>Alburnus (M)</td>
<td>3.147</td>
<td>*ilicibusque uirentem</td>
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<td>Ameria</td>
<td>1.265</td>
<td><em>Amerina...lentae retinacula uiti</em></td>
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<td>Anio (R)</td>
<td>4.369</td>
<td><em>Aniena fluenta</em></td>
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<td>Avernus (L)</td>
<td>2.164</td>
<td><em>fretis...Auernis</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>4.493</td>
<td><em>ter fragor stagnis auditus Auernis</em></td>
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<td>Benacus (L)</td>
<td>2.160</td>
<td><em>Benace</em></td>
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<td>Calabria</td>
<td>3.425</td>
<td><em>ille malus Calabris in saltibus anguis</em></td>
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<td>Capua</td>
<td>2.224</td>
<td><em>diues...Capua</em></td>
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<td>fluuiorum rex Eridanus</td>
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<td>leuis innatat alnus</td>
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<td>4. 372</td>
<td>et gemina auratus taurino cornua uultu</td>
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<td>Etna (M)</td>
<td>1. 472</td>
<td>undanem ruptis fornacibus Aetnam</td>
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<td>gemit impositis incudis Aetna</td>
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<td>Etruria</td>
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<td>fortis Etruria</td>
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<td>Falernus, ager</td>
<td>2. 96</td>
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<td>Aminneae uites</td>
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<td>Lari maxime</td>
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<td>Lokroei Epizephyrioi</td>
<td>2. 438</td>
<td>Naryciaeque picis lucos (P)</td>
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<td>Lucrinus (L)</td>
<td>2. 161</td>
<td>Lucrinoque addita claustra</td>
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<td>Mantua</td>
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<td>infelix...Mantua</td>
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<td>3 .12</td>
<td>Mantua</td>
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<td>Massicus (M)</td>
<td>3. 526</td>
<td>Massica Bacchi</td>
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<td>Mella (R)</td>
<td>4. 278</td>
<td>curua...flumina Mellae</td>
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<td>Mincius (R)</td>
<td>3. 15</td>
<td>ingens...</td>
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<td>Naples</td>
<td>4. 564</td>
<td>dulcis...</td>
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<td>Paestum</td>
<td>4. 119</td>
<td>biferique rosaria Paesti</td>
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<td>Palatine Hill</td>
<td>1. 499</td>
<td>Romana Palatia</td>
</tr>
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7 Macrobu. Sat. 3. 20. 7 (beginning a list of the different varieties of grape): sicut uuarum ista sunt genera: Aminnea – scilicet a regione, nam Aminei fuerunt ubi nunc Falernum est – ... (“In the same way, these are the varieties of grape: Aminean – evidently from that region, for where the Aminei lived is now the Falernian district —...”).


9 See Mynors ad G. 2. 438.
Rome

1. 466 Romam
1. 499 Romana Palatia
2. 148 Romanos...triumphos
2. 176 Romana per oppida
2. 498 res Romanae
2. 534 rerum...pulcherrima Roma

Sila, La

3. 219 in magna Sila

Silarus (R)

3. 146 lucos Silari circa

Taburnus (M)

2. 38 magnum...Taburnum

Tanager (R)

3. 151 sicci ripa Tanagri

Tarentum

2. 197 saturi...Tarenti
4. 125 sub Oebaliae...torribus arcis (P)

Tiber (R)

1. 499 Tuscum Tiberim
4. 369 pater Tiberinus

Vesuvius (M)

2. 224 uicina Vesaeuo | ora iugo

Levant, The

Idumaea

3. 12 Idumaeas...palmas

Syria

2. 88 Syriisque piris

Tyre

2. 506 Sarrano...ostro
3. 17 Tyrio...in ostro
3. 307 Tyrios...rubores

orbis terrarum

Oceanus

1. 246 Oceani...aequore
2. 122 quos Oceano propior gerit India lucos
2. 481 Oceano
3. 359 Oceani rubro...aequore

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10 See Mynors ad G. 4. 125-126.
11 The OLD, s. v. Syrius, gives: “Of Syria, Syrian”; b: “as the name of a dark-skinned variety of pear”. See Columella, Rust. 5. 10. 18 for a possible Tarentine provenance: …[pira] Tarentina, quae Syria dicuntur… (“…Tarentine pears, which are called ‘Syrian’…”).
4. 233 Oceani...pede
4. 341 Oceanitides ambae (sc. Clio et Beroe nymphae)
4. 381 Oceano libemus
4. 382 Oceanumque patrem rerum

orbis (terrarum)
1. 26 maximus orbis
1. 62 uacuum...in orbem
1. 505 tot bella per orbem
1. 511 saeuit toto Mars impius orbe
2. 114 extremis domitum cultoribus orbem
2. 123 extremini sinus orbis

Scythia
An area not strictly defined in Greek and Roman sources, corresponding roughly to the area extending from the north-western, northern, and north-eastern shores of the Black Sea.

Azov, Sea of 3. 349 Maeotiaque unda
Hypanis (R) 4. 370 saxosusque sonans Hypanis
Phasis (R) 4. 367 Phasimque
Riphaean Mountains 1. 240 ad Scythiam Riphaesque...arces
3. 382 gens...Riphaeo tunditur Euro
4. 518 aruaque Riphaei numquam uiduata pruinis
Scythia 1. 240 ad Scythiam Riphaesque...arces
3. 197 Scythiaeque hiemes
3. 349 Scythiae gentes
Tanaïs (R) 4. 517 Tanaimque niualem

Thrace
An area not strictly defined in Greek and Roman sources, corresponding roughly to modern Bulgaria, southern Romania, north-east Greece and Turkey west of the Bosporus.

Haemus Mountains 1. 492 latos Haemi...campos
Hebrus (R) 4. 463 Hebrus
4. 524 Oeagrius Hebrus
Hister (R) 2. 497 coniurato descendens Dacus ab Histro
### 1B Ethnonyms in the *Georgics* listed alphabetically

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<td>Aethiopes</td>
<td>2. 120</td>
<td>nemora Aethiopum molli canentia lana</td>
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<td>Afer</td>
<td>3. 344</td>
<td>armentarius Afer</td>
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<td>Arabes</td>
<td>2. 115</td>
<td>Eoasque domos Arabum</td>
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<td>Ausonii</td>
<td>2. 385</td>
<td>Ausonii, Troia gens missa, coloni</td>
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<td>Belgae</td>
<td>3. 204</td>
<td>Belgica...essedae</td>
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<td>3. 461</td>
<td>Bisaltae</td>
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<td>Britanni</td>
<td>3. 25</td>
<td>Britanni</td>
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<td>Chalybes</td>
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<td>Cicones</td>
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<td>Ciconum...matres</td>
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<td>canoros</td>
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<td>Dacus</td>
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<td>coniurato descendens Dacus ab Histro</td>
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<td>Gangaridae</td>
<td>3. 27</td>
<td>pugnam...</td>
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<td>Geloni</td>
<td>2. 115</td>
<td>pictosque Gelonos</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. 461</td>
<td>acerque Gelonus</td>
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<td>Getae</td>
<td>3. 462</td>
<td>in deserta Getarum</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. 463</td>
<td>Getae</td>
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<td>Grai</td>
<td>2. 16</td>
<td>habitae Grais oracula quercus</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. 90</td>
<td>Grai...poetae</td>
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<td>3. 148</td>
<td>Grai</td>
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</table>

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12 See Erren ad *G*. 4. 461.
Hiberi 3. 408 impacatos…Hiberos
Hyperboraei 3. 196 Hyperboreis…ab ors
3. 381 Hyperboreo Septem subiecta trioni | gens effrena uirum
Iapydes 3. 475 Iapydis arua Timai
Indi 2. 138 Indi
2. 172 imbellem…Indum
4. 293 coloratis ab Indis
4. 425 sitientis…Indos
Ituraei 2. 448 Ituraeos taxi torquentur in arcos
Ligures 2. 168 adsuetumque mala Ligurem
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Medi 2. 136 Medorum silvae
2. 134 olentia | Medi ora
Parthi 3. 31 fidentemque fuga Parthum
4. 211 populi Parthorum
4. 314 leues…Parthi
Pellaei gens fortunata Canopi 4. 287 Pellaei gens fortunata Canopi (P)
Persis 4. 290 pharetratae uicina Persidis
Quirites 4. 201 paruosque Quirites (sc. apes)
Romanus 3. 346 acer Romanus
Sabaei 1. 57 molles…Sabaei
2. 117 solis est turea uirga Sabaeis
Sabellus 2. 167 pubemque Sabellam
3. 255 Sabellicus…sus
Sabini 2. 532 ueteres…Sabini
Scythiae gentes 3. 349 Scythiae gentes
Seres 2. 121 Seres
Thesidae 2. 383 Thesidae
Tyrrhenus 2. 193 pinguis…Tyrrenhus
Volsci 2. 168 Volscosque ueruto

13 Persis-idis in Latin is attested as a noun denoting both “Persia” and “Persian” (see OLD s. v.) and so the reference here is ambiguous. I read it as “Persian” and have classified it accordingly. Mynors (ad loc.) notes that it may have connoted Parthia and Parthians to the poem’s first audience.
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The British Newspaper Archive: http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/

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https://parlipapers.proquest.com/parlipapers


The Spectator Archive (1828-2008): http://archive.spectator.co.uk/

The Times Digital Archive (1785-2010):


Note 1: All of the above internet links accessed 11 August 2017.

Note 2: For all articles from British newspapers and periodicals 1820-1930 listed in the Bibliography below, I have included the following abbreviations to indicate from which archive the source has been drawn:

BNA: British Newspaper Archive.  
S: The Spectator Archive.

BP: British Periodicals.  
T: The Times Digital Archive.

PHN: ProQuest Historical Newspapers.  
TLS: The Times Literary Supplement Archive.

PPP: ProQuest Parliamentary Papers.
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¹ Readers accessing this article via The Spectator Archive (details given above) should note that, while it is on p. 284 of the original printed edition, it is on p. 8 according to the pagination of the Archive.

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