Résumé. — En tenant pour établi que la seconde moitié du quatrième livre des Géorgiques (v. 281-558), qui comprend l’épisode d’Aristée, constitue une unité, l’auteur de cet article s’intéresse à la pratique de la bugonia (qui consiste à faire naître une ruche à partir d’une carcasse de bœuf) en Égypte, ainsi qu’à Aristée, qui usera d’une pratique similaire en Arcadie, quand il perdra sa propre ruche. Une chaîne de signes métapoétiques, présents dès l’ouverture (v. 281-286), incite à lire le passage comme un discours sur la poésie. L’ensemble de la description de l’Égypte et du « sacrifice » du bœuf fait allusion aux mythes du bœuf sacré des Égyptiens (Apis), dont les qualités représentent les différentes parties des Géorgiques jusqu’au point où commence la bugonia. Parallèlement, Aristée présente toutes les caractéristiques d’un poète, tandis que la phraséologie du passage sur les abeilles renferme des allusions à la poésie et aux poètes – surtout si on le lit en songeant à l’Ion de Platon. Lorsqu’une forme de poésie a accompli son cycle biologique, elle doit se renouveler. La nouvelle ruche qui en résultera sera la nouvelle poésie.

One of the most vexing and yet intriguing issues in Virgilian scholarship is that of the bugonia in Book 4 of the Georgics. The structure, in fact the whole narrative from 4.281 to the end of the last book of the Georgics at 559 where the sphragis begins, has perplexed scholars and the discussion of the issue has often produced more questions than answers. In one attempt to approach such an obscure subject it may be as good a start as any to begin with the truism that in Latin literature the interpretation of a text depends to a great extent on the sources located each time by research. But in the case of the bugonia the problem seems to be created partly because of the sources, for the obvious reason that many of them have never come down to us while others are particularly enigmatic and terse. In such a case, we cannot really proceed to an evaluation of Virgil’s originality and the extent to which he relied on source material with a similar or a different

1. A version of this paper was read at the Leeds International Latin Seminar on 1st May 1998. I sincerely thank those who participated in the discussion. My special thanks go to Prof. R. Thomas for his insightful remarks and his support as well as to Prof. Papanghelis for his valuable criticism. I am also indebted to the anonymous readers of the periodical for their useful suggestions.
theme. But beyond this, we often feel unable to decipher his reasons for including such a cryptic passage in the work. From what we know from antiquity, the questions as to the purpose the *bugonia* served in the Virgilian text has been raised since Servius’ times, when the ancient commentator thought that this unit of the *Georgics* substituted for the poet’s praise of Gallus. What, therefore, we have to admit from the start is that this paper treads on very slippery ground.

By the term *bugonia* the ancients meant, in general terms, the technique of creating a new hive of bees out of the carcass of an ox. If we accept that Aristaeus’ ‘epyllion’ is a separate unit in itself, covering lines 4.315-558, then reference or description of this technique is placed both before (proem: 4.281-286 and at 4.287-314), as well as at the end of it (538-558). On the basis of the characters appearing in it, the ‘epyllion’ is then articulated in the following manner: [bugonia] – Aristaeus – Cyrene – Proteus – Orpheus – Proteus – Cyrene – Aristaeus – *bugonia*. The presentation, therefore, of the characters involved in the narrative is interwoven in a well-knit pattern. In it, Aristaeus is the first character to appear (317 and f.) as well as the last, applying the *bugonia* technique in Arcadia. His presence, however, has been anticipated before the first description of the *bugonia* in Egypt within the proem (*Arcadii […] magistri,* 283). The second and also the penultimate character to appear in the ‘epyllion’ is Cyrene; then Proteus appears—the third character—recounting the story of Orpheus’ love and death; his role in the narrative comes to an end together with his story. In this way Orpheus’ embedded story is placed at the centre of the whole intricate structure. The transition from one section to the next is effected smoothly and in stages. At each stage, there seems to be some kind of a *rite-of-passage* which leads to the acquiring of knowledge of a sort.

5. L. P. Wilkinson (1969), p. 112 thinks that *Arcadius magister* may not be necessarily Aristaeus and suggests as a better translation: “an Arcadian master”, a view that did not prevail.
There seems to be in all these, however, a crucial detail that has hardly drawn the proper attention of scholars. It concerns the description of the *bugonia* technique before and at the end of the ‘epyllion’. Habinck—and, in response to him, Thomas—are two who have noticed the difference between these two cases. The issue, I feel, is not concluded, and we still have to answer the question as to why the first *bugonia* takes place in Egypt and the second in Arcadia.

Here we shall simply try to show the way the poet approaches some of his sources for the *bugonia* and to examine the reasons why it is placed initially in Egypt. What, in other words, is the role of the *bugonia* itself and what does the bee-hive, which is going to be created, represent?

As we have already noted, it is generally considered that the ‘epyllion’ of Aristæus constitutes a separate unit within the *Georgics* starting at line 315. This immediately raises the question of the function of lines 287-314 (the *bugonia* in Egypt) and, more importantly, of the proem (281-286). Contrary to the above view, I would like to suggest that lines 281-314 (the proem and the *bugonia* in Egypt) on the one hand, and the ‘epyllion’ of Aristæus on the other should be read as parts of the same unit which should thus start at 281 (at the middle, that is, of the book) and continue to the end of Book 4, at 558. The reasons for this I shall explain presently:

(1) When we look at the Virgilian œuvre thus far, the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics*, we notice the poet’s keen interest in the middle position of a

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10. It is a problem which entails a more specific research and is the subject of my forthcoming (2) work.
11. For a recent discussion on the term ‘epyllion’ in the case of ‘Aristæus’ see L. Morgan (1999), p. 17 and f.
12. This is how Servius sees it, too: *quartus Georgicorum a medio usque ad finem eius* [i.e. Galli] laudes teneret; *quas postea iubente Augusto in Aristaei fabulam commutauit* (ad Ecl., 10.1). The unit, which substituted for the *laudes Galli* appears differently ad Georg. 4.1: *ultimam partem huius libri esse mutatam; nam laudes Galli habuit locus ille, qui nunc Orphei continet fabulam, quae inserta est, postquam irato Augusto Gallus occidit est*. L. P. Wilkinson (1969) thinks that when Servius (ad Ecl., 10.1) writes that the text *a medio usque ad finem* is the substitute for the *laudes Galli* he means the unit which begins at 315, so that the second half could cover 314 lines (p. 280). C. Jacobson (1984), p. 273.
work or a poem, which he considers a place for a new ‘beginning’ or metaliterary discourse. Obvious examples of this are Eclogue 6, the proem to Georg. 3, later the proem to Aeneid 7, but also the internal proem in Georg. 3 (284-294). They all show that the poet has selected this position of a work or a part of it as a particularly appropriate position to talk about himself and his work and / or develop a new theme. This observation is in itself a good enough indication, I believe, that a new section starts at line 281 which runs to the end of Book 4.

(2) Another reason for considering 4.281 as the line which introduces us to this single unit is the thematic ring composition which involves the bugonia at the beginning of this part of the Book and at the end of it. The same technique, functioning in a similar fashion but embracing the Virgilian opus existing at the time, also appears at the end of the Georgics: I am referring to the well-known sphragis with which Virgil concludes both the Eclogues and the Georgics. The last line, Tityre, te patulae cecini sub tegmine fagi, is nearly a repetition of the first line of Eclogue 1: Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi.

(3) The change from the didactic second (appone, 280) to the first singular person (tempus […] / pandere [sc. me] 284; expediam, 286) adds the necessary emphasis by which the poet signifies his intention to start something new at 281. In particular the application of the verb expediam (286), which is also used in the same form at other crucial points of the Virgilian œuvre, implies that we are at the beginning of a thematically long and important unit.

(4) Virgil at the proem (281-286) refers to the bloody sacrifice of the bugonia (insincerus apes tulerit cruor, 285) which should not be identified with the practice of the bloodless Egyptian bugonia (per integram […] pellem, 302) that follows immediately after (287 and f.). In other words the proem appears to be connected not with the Egyptian bugonia but rather with the Arcadian which comes later in the narrative (538 and f.).

(5) The two passages starting at 281 and 315 correspondingly have been closely connected by Virgil himself through the lines 283-284 (tempus et Arcadii memoranda inuenta magistri / pandere) and 317 where there is

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16. Mainly Aen. 7.40, but also Georg. 4.150; see also Aen. 3.379, 6.759, 11.315.
clear mention now of Aristaeus (pastor Aristaeus). Therefore, the invocation of the Muses at 315-316 and the rhetorical question Quis deus hanc, Musae, quis nobis extudit artem? / unde noua ingressus hominum experientia cepit? is a marker that we proceed to a new phase of the same unit in the narrative. In the proem the poet treats the art of the bugonia as Aristaeus’ memoranda inuenta (283). The word memoranda (of memoro) often refers to the mnemonic material a poet draws. The other word of the phrase, inuenta (283) attributes qualities of a sort of πρώτος εἴρητης to Aristaeus in relation to the bugonia. The word, however, and its cognates (similarly with the verb εἴρησκευαι and its cognates for the Greeks) has been used by Roman poets in relation to poetry. Horace (Sat. 1.10.48) calls Lucilius the inuentor of the genre and Propertius (2.1.11-12) explains how the poet-in-love ‘perceives’ his love poetry: inuenio causas mille poetae nouas (12). Ovid, too, calls Mercury inuentor curuae [...] fidis (Fasti, 5.104). This kind of reading recognises Aristaeus as primus, a claim Roman poets kept for themselves and their poetry. In other words, we have here a transference of the famous primus ego syndrome from the first person of the poet to that of Aristaeus. Aristaeus is also a magister. The word also sometimes refers to a poet, as is the case with Ecl. 5.48: nec calamis solum aequiperas, sed noce magistrum. The above references, metapoetic in character, form a chain of signs which increase in number by more poetological signs in the proem, as we shall see. The presence of the poet himself gains strength by the phrase tempus ([…]/ pandere) whose meaning can be adverbially rendered with nunc. This in turn shows that the poet is starting something new now, as for example in the “proem in the middle” in Aeneid 7, with the nunc age (37). The phrase which seems mainly to disclose the poetic intention—again from the proem—is altius omnem / expediam prima repetens ab origine famam (285-286). By this, the poet seems to state in so many words that he will look into all kinds of sources (omnem famam) and will explore the

21. See, e.g., the famous Lucretian ‘primus’ (DRN, 1.117) about Ennius or Virgil, Georg. 3.10: S. HINDS (1998), p. 52 and f.
22. For a metapoetic use of the word, see Aen. 5.867: S. KYRIAKIDIS (1998), p. 73.
23. Tempus pandere: Is perhaps pandere a response to the Lucretian proemic pangere (DRN, 1.25)?
25. L. MORGAN (1999), in the first part of his work, attempts a totally different approach which naturally ties in well with the arguments in his book (p. 17 and f.).
older (altius) tradition (older than the Aristaeus’ bugonia?) from its first beginnings (prima [...] ab origine). The word altius has been understood either as pointing to a ‘higher mode’ or to ‘in greater depth’. But why shouldn’t we read it with the meaning of ‘older’, as other similar cases show? I think that here we have one of the clearest statements as to how the poet will compose his piece: this will be done by going back to all sources in search of the origins of the art of the bugonia. The phrase prima ab origine (286) is of particular importance as it seems to refer to a stage prior to that of Aristaeus: to the first beginning, that is, of the bugonia’s development. Text and context here indicate that things concerning Egypt are prior to those which have to do with Aristaeus, as the nam clause implies immediately after (287).

283 tempus et Arcadii memoranda inuenta magistri pandere, [...] 
................................. altius omnem expediám prima repetens ab origine famam.
287 nam qua Pellaei gens fortunata Canopi accollit [...] 

Egypt—among other regions of the world—was also called ’Aer/iə. The name ’Aer/iə or ’Her/iə, which in many cases is explained as dark, is etymologically connected to the word ¢»r. If this is so, then we can take it one step further and think that even from the beginning of Georg. 4, Virgil programmatically alludes to the thematic connection between honey

28. Cinna, 1.4:alta Tyrii iam ab origine Cadmi (Courtney) or Tac., Hist., 2.27: quam altiore initió [...] repetam. 
32. Also Et. M., p. 421.20; Et. Gud., p. 237.47; 237.55 < ἀπ and note above.
33. We should always bear in mind the relation between beginnings / middles / ends of a work and their importance to a poet’s work. Cf. above, note 13 and D. FOWLER (1997), p. 16, 20.
and the Egyptian *bugonia* with the phrase *protinus aerii mellis caelestia dona* / *exsequiar* (4.1-2). This name of Egypt appears in the *Suppliants* of Aeschylus (*Αἰερίη, 75)* as well as in the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius (*Ἡρίη, 4.270)*, whose influence on Virgil’s work has been definitively shown recently:

NissaÔmeq’ Ὀρχομενον τὴν ἔχρασεν ὃμι περήσαι νυμερτής ὅδε μάντις, ὅτῳ ξυνέβησε πάροιδεν, ἐστιν γὰρ πλοῦς ἄλλος, ἐν ἀθανάτων ἱερής.

We were bound for Orchomenos, which is where that unerring prophet, whom you earlier met, foretold you should make landfall. For another sea route exists, which priests of the immortal gods have made known, those sprung from Triton’s daughter Thebe. All the star clusters wheeling in heaven were then still nonexistent, no one then could have answered questions about the sacred race of the Danaans: only Arkadians existed, Arkadians who (so it’s rumored) were living even before the moon, in the hills, eating acorns. Nor was the Pelasgian land then ruled by Deukalion’s lordly line, in the days when Aigyptos, mother of earlier mortals, was known as the Land of Mists, rich in fertile harvests, and Nile, the broad-flowing stream by which all the Land of Mists is watered; there from Zeus never comes enough rain; it’s Nile’s flooding makes crops grow.

(transl. R. Hunter.)

The above passage of Apollonius is of particular importance to us, since Virgil may have turned his mind to it and especially to lines 4.267-

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34. This view does not exclude the other function of the word by which a kind of divinity is attributed to the bees and their work (Aristotle, *HA*, 553 b, 29). See also *Georg.*, 4.220-221.
35. T. G. Tucker (1889), *ad loc.*
When he refers to the Nile with his phrase Nilum [...] et uridem Aegyptium nigra fecundat harena (288-291). In this passage of Apollonius Egyptians and Arcadians are considered the two oldest nations of mankind, but what the poet seems to say is that Egypt comes first. According to Herodotus—among other sources—this belief was also held by the Egyptians themselves: καὶ πολώμοις Τριτών ἴνισσα, ὥπο πάσα / ἀρδεῦσαι Ἁερίη (2.2). In other words they seem to be the prima origo of our poet. It is exactly the same combination, that we find here in the Georgics with regards to the bugonia (286): the poet will narrate the story of the magister from Arcadia, but before he does that, he will trace the story from its first, the Egyptian, beginnings.

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At 4.287 Virgil tells us that the favoured race of Macedonian Canopus (Pellaei [...] Canopi, 287) who dwells on the land watered by the Nile relies for its certam salutem on this technique (294). Virgil persists in his description of Egypt for eight verses (287-294) which actually announce the description of the bugonia (295 and f.). This poetic insistence serves

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37. However, we must have in mind that this sort of description concerning Egypt appears in many and various sources.
38. That is the Nile. E. LIVREA (1973), ad 4.269.
39. I do not think that L. MORGAN (1999) is right in describing harena generally "as the image par excellence of infertility" and "inimical to life" (p. 137). For example, Virgil uses the word harena as ἴλος, for the delta of the Tiber which naturally cannot be described as sterile (Aen. 7.31). Moreover, ancient sources, and especially the etymological lexica, which refer to the Nile leave no doubt as to the etymology of the river's name from νεός + ἴλος (R. MALTBY [1991], s.v.). See also, e.g., Aeschl., PV, 861 or Et. M., 602.9, where at the end of the lemma it is stated: ἐξερχομένος ποτίζει πάσαν τήν γ' ἑκέινον. Plut., Mor., 363E. In real terms the delta of the river is full of silt and is, therefore, nigra, a colour signifying a particularly fertile soil.
41. See also Diod. Sic., 1.10.1.
42. R. THOMAS (1988) ad 4.287-294 is right when he sees that an excessive number of verses is applied in order to say that "bugonia is practised in Egypt." Actually line 294 introduces the reader to the bugonia.
to concentrate our attention on the name of the place. Egypt, therefore, is
indelibly and emphatically associated with the ritual of the bugonia. Besides, the poet’s partiality for ethnographic details is a well-established
Hellenistic tendency.

The reference to this place is made in relation to the Nile and its
everly rich black silt, as shown by the phrases effuso stagnantem
flumine Nilum (288) and uiridem Aegyptium nigra fecundat harena (291).
The black (nigra) colour of the river silt is one of the constituting parts
of the area and it corresponds to the reality of the Nile delta.

But the question here is what the bugonia has to do with Egypt and
why does Virgil use it?

When the poet begins to narrate the story from the beginning (onnem /
[...] prima [...] ab origine famam, 285-286) he starts by describing
Canopus, situated at the delta of the Nile. The place was allegedly named
after Kanobos, the captain of Menelaus’ ship, who was lost there.
Canopus was a particularly important place in Egypt as can readily be seen
not only from the archaeological finds but also from the many literary
references to the place. It was an ideal place for festivities and
celebrations due to its climate. It had a temple to Sarapis, a deity which
seems to be a Ptolemaic invention. This god’s name originated from the
Egyptian god Osiris who, according to some sources, is identical with

46. The adjective could also be an allusion to the river’s name: Servius, ad 4.291:

    nam anea Nilus Latine Melo dicebatur (see also notes 31 and 39 above). Plutarch
    says that Egypt was metaggigeos (Mor., 364C).
47. E.g., Serv. and Serv. auctus, ad 4.287.
48. See, e.g., Call., fr. 110.58 (Pt.): Κηρωσιτου ναετες αειμολου; also
    epigr. 55 (Pt.); and Cat., 66.58 Canopeis litoribus. Canopus was apparently used as a
    synonym for Alexandria since it was iuxta Alexandriam: Servius, ad Georg. 4.287 and
    e.g. M. C. J. Putnam (1979), p. 272; R. A. B. Mynors (1990), ad 287-288;
    A. Barchiesi (1999), p. 119. For a different interpretation, see, e.g., C. Perkeld
49. Strabo, 17.1. 16. L. Koenen (1976), p. 151, note 97. See also A. Barchiesi
51. J. E. Stambaugh (1972), p. 60; G. J. F. Kater-Sibbes and M. J. Vermaeren
    μᾶλλον ὑψίμην ἐν τῷ Σαραπίδος Αἰγυπτίως ἢ τοῦ Ὄσιρίδος, ἐκεῖνο μὲν
    [οῖν] ξενικόν, τοῦτο δ’ Ἑλληνικόν, ἅμως δ’ ἐνὸς θεοῦ καὶ μιᾶς δυνάμεος
    ἱπτόμενος (“indeed I should prefer to yield that of Sarapis to the Egyptians than that
    of Osiris, for I believe that the former is foreign and that the latter is Greek, but that
    both belong to one god and one power,” transl. D. S. Richter [2001], p. 195 and f.).
Apis and in Memphis was worshipped as Osorapis. Apis is the sacred bull of the Egyptians and is considered to be the incarnation of Osiris. When the sacred bull dies, it is buried magnificently and the priests search for the new bull; when found, the mourning of the people is over, according to Hecataeus. In Egypt, therefore, people mourn Apis, until they find his substitute in the same way Aristaeus mourns the hive he has lost (tristis, 319; querens, 320; luctus 350; tristis, 355; lacrimans, 356).

Canopus moreover, is connected with the birth of Epaphus, son of Io who is also identified with Apis, according to the sources. The fifth generation of his descendants will come to the Peloponnese, thus bringing into one genealogy Egypt and Peloponnese. The myth of Io is not foreign to Virgil’s interests. In the Georgics we have a reference at 3.148 and f. and in the Aeneid it is the main theme on Turnus’ shield: argumentum ingens, as the poet characterises it. But the connection of the Osiris myth to that of Io is part of the poetic tradition before Virgil’s time; see, for instance, Lycophron’s Alexandra:

οὸλοντο νεκται πρότα Καρνέταο κόνες,
οι τήν βοϊν ταυροπαρθενον κόρην
Λέρνης δυναμεντο, φορητοι λύκοι,
πλάτον πορεύεται κύρα Μεμφίτη
εξήθρας δε πυρσόν ήραν ἡπείροις διπλαῖς (1291-1295).

52. Diod. Sic., 1.85 etc.; Plut., Mor., 368C.
54. Strabo, 17.1.31: έχει δε ιερά, το τε τον Ἄπιδος ὡς ἐστιν ὁ οὐτός καὶ Ὄσιρες; Diod. Sic., 1. 85; τον ιερὸν ταύρον τὸν ὄνομαζομεν Ἀπίν [...] τῆς τοῦ βοὸς τοῦτον τιμής αἰτίαν ἔννοι φέρουσι λέγοντες ὅτι τελευτήσανς Ὅσιρηδος εἰς τοῦτον ἡ ψυχῆ μετέστη. See also Hecat., FGrH 264, F 25 (p. 56.41), etc.; Plut., Mor., 359B, 362D, 368C, 380E. See also Augustine, Civ., 18.5.
55. Hecat., FGrH 264, F 25 (p. 56.34).
57. Aeschyl., Suppl., 311 and f.; PV, 846 and f.
63. G. MOONEY (1988), ad loc.
64. “Io was brought by the Phoenicians to Egypt, where she wedded Osiris (hence called Μεμφίτης πρόμος), and was identified with the goddess Isis”: G. MOONEY (1988), ad loc.
Cursed first of all be Carne’s sailor hounds,
Who carried off the ox-eyed horned maid
From Lerne’s shores—those wolves, those traffickers,—
A baneful bride to give to Memphis’ lord.
They raised a war-torch for two continents (transl. G. MOONEY).

I strongly believe, therefore, that Virgil insistence on Canopus and the Nile—which incidentally Plutarch identifies with Osiris 65—aims at recalling that complex of myths.66

The same myth and worship of Osiris / Apis 67 is used by Tibullus, especially on 1.7.28 with his phrase Memphitem 68 plangere docta bouem, which refers mainly to the Callimachean 69 εἰ δ[ν]ήσαι φαλλόν τεθρόν ἵλεμισαι (fr. 383.16 Pf.) 70 from the Victoria Berenice’s. 71 It is more than certain, therefore, that Virgil not only knew the complex of these myths and the rites about the sacred bull by the name Apis but was also concerned with the worship of Osiris. As early as at Georg. 1.1-3 by the phrase quo sidere terram / uertere, Maecenas, ulmisque adiungere uitis / conueniat Virgil seems to refer to the practice that Tibullus attributes directly to Osiris: hic docuit teneram palis adiungere uitam (1.7.33). Osiris’ presence, therefore, as implied from the first proemic verses of the Georgics and in relation to 1.19 (unicque puer monstrator aratri) shows perhaps that it is programmatically placed in Virgil’s work. 72

66. Virgil not only knew Osiris’ cult but he was also concerned with it: J. REED (1998).
67. The relation between Apis and the bull in Egypt was known in Rome. See Suet. (Tit., 5.3) who says that when Titus went to Alexandria he put the diadem (in consecrando apud Memphim boue Apide diadema gestauit, de more quidem rituque priscae religionis).
68. The first use of the word in Latin (P. Murgatroyd [1980], ad 1.7.27-28); the elegiac poet seems to follow a Hellenistic practice (see above Lycophron’s text).
70. G. Lee & R. Maltby (1990), ad 7.28.
71. See also: Hor., Epist., 1.17.60; Ovid., Amor., 2.12-14; Met., 9.693; Juv., Sat., 6.539 and f., 8.29.
72. See also H. PERAKI-KYRIAKIDOU (forthcoming 1), p. 12 and f.
In addition, the existing striking phonetic similarity between the name of the dying bull, Apis and the apes which will be created from its carcass, should not pass unnoticed. However, if Virgil does indeed allude to the Egyptian myth of Apis and Osiris, what does the Egyptian sacred bull represent to Virgil’s readership? Or the bees for that matter?

First of all Osiris / Apis is no stranger to music and poetry. Then, according to Hecataeus and Diodorus Siculus, Apis / Osiris is also connected with agriculture:

tои δὲ ταύροις τοὺς ἱεροὺς, λέγει δὲ τὸν ἀπιν καὶ τὸν Μνεβίν, τιμάεισθαι παραπλησίος τοὺς θεοὺς, Ὀσιρίδος κατα-

δεῖξας, ὀμιὰ μὲν δίᾳ τὴν τῆς γεωργίας χρείαν, ὀμιὰ δὲ καὶ διὰ τὸ τὸν εὐρόντων τοὺς καρποὺς τὴν δόξαν ταῖς τῶν ἄγιοις παραθύσιοι γεγονέναι τοῖς μεταγενεστέροις εἰς ἀπαντα τῶν εἰών (Diod. Sic., 1.88.4). The sacred bulls—I refer to the Apis and the Mnevis—are honoured like the gods, as Osiris commanded, both because of their use in farming and also because the fame of those who discovered the fruits of the earth is handed down by the labours of these animals to succeeding generations for all time (transl. C. H. Oldfather).

In Tibullus, too, (1.7)—who has gathered a great amount of information from Greek sources—Osiris is clearly connected with the invention of agriculture and in particular with the ploughing and sowing, arboriculture, viticulture and the vintage (29-38) and is also connected with Bacchus (39-42). This latter information is also found in Herodotus who explains that Osiris in the Greek language is Dionysus: Ὁσιρίς δὲ ἐστι Διόνυσος κατὰ Ἐλλάδα γιάκισαν. Dionysus / Bacchus is also identified with the bull in the Paean in Dionysum of Philodamus Scarpheus.

73. Diod. Sic., 1.19.4, 6: εἶναι γὰρ τὸν Ὅσιριν φιλογέλοιτά τε καὶ χαίροντα μουσική καὶ χοροί. διὸ καὶ περιάγεσθαι πλῆθος μουσικῶν, ἐν οἷς παρθένους ἐννέα δυναμένας ἄδειν καὶ κατὰ τὸ ἄλλα παπαλαβήµενας, τὰς παρὰ τοὺς Ἑλλήσιον ὀνοµαζοµένας Μόισσας […] (6) κατὰ δὲ τὴν Αἰθίοπιαν διάδεχατο τοὺς αὐθόρσεως τὰ περὶ τὴν γεωργίαν […] (“For Osiris was laughter-loving and fond of music and the dance; consequently he took with him a multitude of musicians, among whom were nine maidens who could sing and were trained in the other arts, these maidens being those who among the Greeks are called the Muses […] In Ethiopia he instructed the inhabitants in agriculture”, transl. C. H. Oldfather). Also Plut., Mor., 356B; Tibullus, 1.7.37 and f.: ille liquor docuit uoces inflectere cantu / mouit et ad certos nescia membra modos.

74. Cf. Hecat., FGH 264 F 25 (p. 58.25); Diod. Sic., 1.14.1; 1.15.6; 1.17.1.

75. Also Diod. Sic., 1.15.6; 1.19.6.


77. Hrd., 2.144, 42; Diod., 1.13.4, 1.25.2; Plut., Mor., 356B, 362B, 364E; Serv. auct., ad Aen. 11.287.

But agriculture, arboriculture and viticulture are also the themes of the *Georgics* I and II. Osiris / Apis’ myth must be the mythological substratum of the work, and aims to represent the themes of these parts of the *Georgics*. Moreover, the bull is the animal *par excellence* for the *arator* in *Georgics* 3, and one of the animals which in Book 3 falls victim to its erotic instincts and finally to the Noricum plague, thus nullifying all the *labor* of the *tristis arator* (3.517) and leaving him with the work undone (3.519). Furthermore, in Book 1, Virgil places man and animal on an equal footing as regards their labour in the fields (*hominumque boumque labores*, 118) and states that it was the will of Jupiter that tillage be an arduous task (*haud facilem esse uiiam uoluit*, 1.122). Given now that Osiris was also the inventor of the plough, the bull appears to become the symbol of all the constituents of the *Georgics*. The myth, therefore, of the bull seems to represent not only all previous parts of the *Georgics* but also both the *arator* and his labour. The unity in experience shared by the animal, the man and the poet—and encapsulated in the word *labor*—seems to be one of the central themes if not the central theme of the *Georgics.*

The Bees

After the death of the bull the new hive will be created.

It has already been noted that the bees and their communal life in the hive in Book 4 represent human society. But it can also be argued that the

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83. This is clearly shown in many ways and in the repetition of the word *labor* within a small number of verses and each time in different context: 4.106: *nec magnus prohibere labor* and 4.114: *ipse labore manum duro terat* for the bee-keeper who is never called with that name; 4.6. *in tenui labor*; 4.116-117: *atque equidem, extremo ni iam sub fine laborum / uelam traham* for the poet’s person; and at 4.156-157: *uenturaeque hiemis memores aestate laborem / experiuntur* for the bees; and at 4.184 in the gnomic looking phrase: *omnibus una quies operum, labor omnibus unus*. But the most prominent use of the word in Book 4 concerns Orpheus’ vain attempts to bring his Eurydice back to life: *effusus labor* (4.492) to reconfirm what the poet has said in Book 3: *quid labor aut benefacta iuuant?* (3.525). R. Thomas (1987), p. 256 and f.

bees here may represent poets, and poetry in particular, a trope gradually formed (from Homer, Hesiod and Pindar to Callimachus). At Georg. 4.6, Virgil, speaking for himself, states that from his own poetic labor the fame (gloria) attained will not be small. At 4.205, bees attain gloria from the production of honey (generandi gloria mellis). This association between bees and honey with the poet and his poetry—also found in other texts—is enhanced by a set of metaphors from Plato’s Ion. In particular:

(1) Plato says: κούφον. For a poet is a light and winged and sacred thing”, transl. Lamb. Virgil describes bees as “levium spectacula rerum” (4.3) when he introduces his theme to Maecenas, and further down he uses the word leues at 4.55 (as well as at 4.314 in a simile).

(2) Plato emphatically insists (533 d-534) that the poets are possessed by god (ἐνθεος); he further insists on θεια μοιρα (the divine part), partaking in the poetic work. Aristotle also considered the bees as having some divine element: [τὰ συγγενῆ ζώα] οὐ γὰρ ἔχουσιν οὐθὲν θείον,

85. J. Griffin (1979), p. 78 note 18 had supported the opposite view; see also M. Gale (1991), p. 425 and note 58.
89. Mainly Hymn 2.110-112: Ἀρεί δ’ οὐκ ἀπὸ παντὸς ὅδορ φορεόνσαι μελλέσσαι, ἀλλ’ ἔτης καθαρή τε καὶ ἄχροαντος ἀνέρρει ποίησις εἰς ἑρημί τῆς ὅλης ῥήμας ἀκρόν ἀστον.
90. Aratus, Phaen., 761: μοῦχος μὲν τ’ ὅληγος, τὸ δὲ μυρίων αὐτίκ’ ὅνειρο (“The effort is slight, but enormous is later the benefit […]”): transl. D. Kidd (1997).
91. Cf. the word gloria again for the poet, at Georg. 1.168.
92. P. Murray (1996), ad loc.: “The association of wings and words goes back to Homer in the formulaic phrase ἐπεικεῖν πτερόντα […] Poets, of course, traditionally claimed to be divinely inspired and sacred to the Muses”. See also the Callimachean πτεροῦς: fr. 1.32 (Pf.).
93. Naturally, this view is shared by others; e.g., Democrit., fr. D12, apud Clement., Strom., VI. 168.
94. Cf. καὶ μοῦ δοκοῦσι θεῖα μοίρα ἠμὲν παρὰ τῶν θεῶν ταύτα οἱ ἐγιαθοὶ ποιησά ἐρμηνεύειν (535 a, “I believe it is by divine dispensation that good poets interpret to us these utterances of the gods”, Lamb); (536 d); also: περὶ Ὀμήρου λέγεις ἡ λέγεις, ἀλλὰ θεῖα μοίρα καὶ κατοικία, ὡσπερ οἱ κορυφαστικὲς […] (536 c).
ésper tó γένος tó tón melíttôn; in a similar fashion Virgil says: esse apibus partem divinae mentis (4.220).

(3) In Plato (534 a) [oi melópoioi] bakchέouσι καὶ κατεχόμενοι, òσπερ αἱ βάκχαι, αρόνονται ἐκ τῶν ποταμῶν μέλι καὶ γάλα ("the lyric poets] act as frenzy-stricken and under possession—as the bacchants—they draw honey and milk from the rivers"): The Platonic verb αὑρόμαι (draw) becomes in Virgil the substantive “haustus” / aetherios dixere (4.220-221) and dixere might be perceived as a reference to the Roman poet’s sources.

(4) In Plato (534 a) οἱ ποιηταὶ [...] ἀπὸ κρηνῶν μελίρρυτὸν [...] δρέπομενοι τὰ μέλη ἡμῖν φέρουσιν, òσπερ αἱ μελίσσαι ("the poets bring us [...] the sweet they cull from honey-dropping founts [...] , like the bees"). In Virgil the bees that are created from the bugonia: tenuem aera carpunt (311). We note, therefore, that Virgil’s verb corresponds to Plato’s δρέπομαι (= carpo).

In the Platonic text as well as in a considerable number of other Greek texts where the poets are related to bees and honey, the source of the poets’ inspiration is often the flowers or a spring (ἐκ Μουσῶν κήπων τινῶν καὶ ναόν, “in certain gardens and glades of the Muses”); in Virgil there is a turn, one might say, towards the air and aether (esse apibus partem divinae mentis et haustus / aetherios dixere, 220-221), an idea explained by the poet with a namque (221) and what follows it (deum namque ire per omnis terrasque tractusque maris caelumque profundum, 221-222); for the god—Jupiter—is found everywhere, according to the Aratean proem to the Phaenomena.

95. Arist., GA, 761a; Verg., Georg. 4.219-221.
97. We should remember here of other instances in Latin poetry where the word haustus is used in a metaliterary way. Lucretius (1.412) for instance, applies the phrase “haustus e fontibus magnis / lingua mea suavis diti de pectori fundet” whereas Horace (Epist., 1.3.10) writes: Pindarici fontis qui non expalluit haustus.
99. See also Georg. 4.54, purpureosque metunt flores.
100. J. Kordatos (1958), ad loc. Also Call., Hymn, 2.110-112 (note 89).
101. Phaen., 1: D. Kidd (1997), ad loc., with further examples showing that the phrase had become a topos. See also Theocrit., Id., 17.1 (A. S. F. Gow [1952], ad loc.); but even Call., fr. 1.34 (Pf.) and Virgil’s Ecl., 3.60. Th. Papanghelis (1994), p. 31-32; R. Coleman (1977), ad Ecl. 3.60; W. Clausen (1994), ibid.
dimension to the source of poetic inspiration, which now could come from all kinds of sources (omnem / [...] famam, Georg. 4.285-286). 102

(5) There is another major correspondence also between the poets in the Platonic Ion and the bees in the Georgics: In Plato the poets and Ion himself are likened to Corybantes (533 e-534 a, 536 c). The relation between Corybantes, Cybele and the Curetes is attested in antiquity;103 in the Georgics, the bees are connected with the Phrygian goddess (40-41).104 They are also connected with her cymbals when the beekeeper uses them in order to keep the bees from flying away: tinnitusque cie et Matris quae cymbala circum (64).105 Again, in Virgil, the same technique seemed to be effective when they fed Jupiter. There they followed the sounds of the Curetes and their clashing bronze (4.150 and f.).106

(6) Plato chooses to present poets with the collective noun ὠρίσσαθός (533 d-e, a swarm, a cluster) in order to show their dependence from the divine δονας. Virgil, on the other hand, often uses words and phrases which highlight both their collective nature—a characteristic quality of the hive itself107 (e.g., obscum trahi uento mirabere nubem, 60; densae miscentur, 75-76; concurritur, 78; glomerantur, 79) and their dependence on their ruler, their king: rege incolumi mens omnibus una est, 212).

When we look at Virgilian phrases such as genus immortale manet (208) or nec morti esse locum (226)108 concerning the bees and then see that the beehive dies and the bees pulchramque petunt per uulnera mortem (218), we might think that there is an inconsistency on the part of the poet. But both conditions may exist without making the text ambiguous if we are to think that death occurs to the individual bees109 but the species enjoys

102. One could support that in the phrase aerii mellis (4.1) there is a further allusion. See above, p. 156-157.
103. Strabo, 10.3.
106. Also Lucr., 2. 618 and f.
109. T. Hahnek (1990), p. 219: “the bees of Book 4 are incapable of regenerating themselves, but rely on the intervention of the culture-hero Aristaeus”.
immortality. This idea might be more clearly understood if we look at the things allegorized, that is poetry and the poets. Poetry is eternal and passes from one generation to the other. Virgil himself will announce the eternal nature of his poetry at *Aen.* 9.446-449, at the end of the Nisus and Euryalus episode. But when we conceive eternity we should not only think of the everlasting quality and the fame brought upon oneself by one’s own poetry, but rather the eternity achieved through succession and poetic heritage. In Rome, succession had an important role to play and poets felt part of a cultural continuum, seen as the poetic tradition. In this continuum or tradition each generation of poets was succeeded by the next one and each poet working within that tradition often believed that his work was an important contribution to it. It is this succession and continuity which ensures the perpetuity of poetry: *genus immortale manet, multosque per annos / stat fortuna domus, et aui numerantur auorum* (208-209).

In the *Georgics* the description of the bee world has been made in terms of an austere and loveless society and heroism is a prominent characteristic of theirs which they share with the epic world. This becomes apparent, among other examples, at 218 *pulchrunicque petunt per uulnera mortem* which clearly anticipates *pulchrumque mori succurrit in armis at Aen.* 2.317. I refer in particular to line 218, because it stands only a few lines before the beginning of the *bugonia* passage. The theme of war and collision runs throughout the *Georgics.*

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110. *Fortunati ambo! si quid mea carmina possunt, / nulla dies unquam memori uos eximet aeuo, / dum domus Aeneae Capitoli immobile saxum / accolet imperiusque pater Romanus habebit* (446-449), or Hor., *Odes*, 3.30, to give just two famous examples.


112. This partly explains the *primus ego* syndrome and the allusivity of Roman poetry (also above, note 21).


114. It has been repeatedly noted that the vocabulary used not only refers to the human communal life but it also recalls heroic terms.

115. I perfectly agree with R. *Thomas* (1982, p. 73), who believes that the society of bees “should not be made to represent an historical moment in the experience of the Roman people”.

Were we to draw conclusions, we might do so here: in the second half of Book 4 there is a recapitulation of the previous themes through the myth of the sacred bull and Apis; similarly, in the same part of the work the bees may represent poets and poetry. Each man—and each poet separately—is a social being with his labores, his wars and losses. The sacrifice of the bull and of what it represents, from which a new bee-hive will spring, implies, or even suggests, the creation of a new poetry rejuvenated without the failing symptoms of an overworked poetic idiom. From the Georgics we proceed to the Aeneid.

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Virgil, Georg. 4.281-317

Sed si quem proles subito defecerit omnis
gect genus unde nouae stirpis reuocetur habebit,
tempus et Arcadii memoranda iuuenta magistri
pandere, quoque modo caesis iam saepe iauencis

insincerus apes tulerit cruor. altius omnem
expediam prima repetens ab origine famam.
nam qua Pellaei gens fortunata Canopi
accolit effuso stagnanatem flumine Nilum
et circum pictis uelitlit sua rura phasesis,
quaeque pharetratae uiciniae Persidis urget,
et diversa ruens septem discurrat in ora
usque coloratis annis deueus ab Indis,
et uiridem Aegyptum nigra fecundat harena,
omnis in hac certam regio iacit arte salutem.
exiguus primum atque ipsos contractus in usus
eligitur locus; hunc angustique imbrice tecti
parietibusque premunt artis, et quattuor addunt
quattuor a uentis obliqua luce fenestras.
tum uitulus bima curuans iam cornua fronte
quaeritur; haec geminae nares et spiritus oris
multa reluctanti obstruitur, plagisqve perempto
tunsa per integram soluuntur uiscera pellem.
sic postum in clauso linquunt et ramea costis
subiciunt fragmenta, thymum casiasque recentis.
hoc geritur Zephyris primum impellentibus undas,
ant nam rubeant quam prata coloribus, ante
garrula quam tignis nidum suspendat hirundo.
interea teneris tepefactus in ossibus umor
aestuat, et uisenda modis animalia miris,
trunca pedum primo, mox et stridentia pennis,
miscentur, tenuamque magis magis aer a carpunt,
donec ut aestuus effusus nabibus imber
erupere, aut ut nervo pulsante sagittae,
prima leues ineunt si quando proelia Parthi.

Quis deus hanc, Musae, quis nobis extudit artem?
unde noua ingressus hominum experientia cepit?
pastor Aristaeus fugiens […]

But it can happen that a man has lost
His whole new generation suddenly
And knows no means to renovate his stock.
Now therefore is the moment to reveal
The Arcadian master’s memorable resource,
How often in the past the putrid blood
Of slaughtered cattle has engendered bees.
I will unfold the legend, tracing it
In every detail to its very source.
Where favoured Macedonian colonists
Dwell at Canopus by the wide expanses
Of the Nile’s flood and sail about their fields
In painted skiffs, and where the neighbouring frontiers
Of quiver-bearing Parthians impinge,
And where the river in its long descent
Right from the swarthy Ethiopians
Splits, hastening to seven separate mouths,
And with black sand makes fertile Egypt green,
There all the land relies on this device.
First, for a site, a narrow spot is chosen
Confined for the very purpose. This they enclose
With a little tile-roof and constricting walls.

Four windows, opening to the four winds,
Admit a slanting light. Then next is sought
A bullock with two years’ growth of curving horns.
Both nostrils and the life-breath of his mouth
Are plugged, for all his struggles. Finally
He is beaten to death, and with his hide unbroken
His flesh is pounded to pulp. In this condition
They abandon him shut up, with broken branches
Under his flanks and thyme and fresh-picked cassia.
All this occurs in the season when the Zephyrs
First ruffle the waves, before the fields begin
To redden with spring colours, and before
The chattering swallow hangs her nest from the rafters.
Meanwhile the moisture in those softened bones
Warm and ferments, and little animals,
An amazing sight, first limbless, then with wings
Whirring, begin to swarm, and gradually
Try the thin air, till suddenly, like rain
Shed from a cloud in summer, out they burst,
Or like a shower of arrows from the twang

Of bowstrings when swift Parthians start a battle.
Muses, what deity fashioned for us
This craft, or whence did this new human practice
Receive its impulse?
The shepherd Aristaeus, abandoning […] (transl. L. P. Wilkinson, 1982.)
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