

Chapter 1

Preamble. Virgil *Vates*: Defining a New Prophetic Voice

The fourth eclogue is Virgil's shortest yet most avowedly ambitious poem. The poet invokes slight growth in song but takes Roman consulship for a poetic standard. Reaching beyond even this range, he begins speaking in a prophetic voice, envisioning a reform for the whole world under the rule of a new hero-god. This growth in theme and style unfolds with a certain coherence when the work is approached as a poem. Yet a recent review of scholarship on eclogue four begins by observing that no history of the question exists, for there is no unanimity on the nature of the question itself.¹ The lack of scholarly unanimity may reflect the lack of literary understanding in philologists, who once again may have been putting the wrong kinds of questions to poems. As a remedy, it would be well to remember that the eclogue is poetry and written if not for literary men at least for a highly literate reader.²

Seeking then to approach a piece of poetry in ways that suit poetry, the present study makes two working assumptions: that the poem is orderly and organic .. a whole of form and feeling .. and that reading an organic piece requires attention to the whole shape of the work. Without attention to the whole, the spectacle of disunity will continue to belie Virgil's unifying vision.

The present chapter approaches the first large segment of the poem (4.1-17), which prompts special consideration of relations between the poem and contemporary circumstances. Subsequent chapters carry the reading forward while returning to expand on particular questions touched in passing here, such as relations with other poetry and characteristics of language and style.

A. (4.1-3) The reader meets at once the paradox that Virgil invokes certain Muses only to provoke them: (4.1-3)

Sicelides Musae, paulo maiora canamus.
non omnes arbusta iuuant humilesque myricae;
si canimus siluas, siluae sint consule dignae.

¹ Karl Büchner, "P. Vergilius Maro, Ekloge 4,," in Pauly-Wissowa's *Realencyclopädie der clas~sis~chen Al~ter~tums~wis~sen~schaft* (Stuttgart, 1955) 2.15.1195.31-36, abbreviated hereinafter as *RE*.

² H. J. Rose, *The Eclogues of Vergil* (Berkeley, 1942) 203.

Sicilian Muses, let us sing slightly greater songs.
 Humble plantings of tamarisk do not serve everyone;
 if we sing woods, let woods be consul-worthy.

‘Sicilian Muses’ points to the tradition of Theocritus: \neg Theocritiae. says Servius; and \neg Myricae. also points to him, representing his kind of poetry.³ Yet Theocritean singers kept their place, an elaborately courteous distance from the poetic deities, while Virgil presses the Muses directly. The humility of Theocritean bucolic gets dismissed on esthetic and ethical grounds, neither ‘pleasing’ nor ‘serving’, which are two senses of the verb *iuuare*, ‘to benefit in a pleasing way’.⁴ Although the verb is not particularly difficult or rare, it does combine pleasure and utility, which had long been antithetical views of poetry’s value both in Greece and then at Rome. Proposing to add utility to pleasure, Virgil would enlarge pastoral scope in a direction further specified in the next verse.

Defining still more precisely his ambition, Virgil concludes \neg siluae sint consule dignae. (‘woods be consul-worthy’). \neg Siluae. like \neg myricae. stands for the traditional pastoral that must grow, while the desired direction of growth now gets expressly Roman coloring, with the highest Roman magistrate used as a standard:⁵ Virgil wants pastoral poetry worthy of a consul, which means, in Roman terms, of the highest authority and dignity.⁶

Supporting and conveying this ambition, the very sounds of the words reecho with an almost incantatory effect, which recalls the character of the older Latin *carmina*, prayers, oracles and spells:

sicel- can-/ /si can- sil- sil- si- con-

³ \neg Arbusta... myricae.: hendiadys according to H. Hommel, \neg Vergils ‘messianisches’ Gedicht, *Wege zu Vergil*, herausgeben von Hans Oppermann (Darmstadt, 1963) 369, n. 19; a good solution since *arbusta* is generic, *my-ri-cae* specific. On the phrase as overt symbol for poetry, see *RE* 2.15.1195.60ff and R. Waltz *LEC* 26 (1958) 4.

⁴ On *iuuare*, \neg faire plaisir à (surtout à l’impersonnel *iuuat*)... par suite ‘aider.’... Intensif expressif appartenant la langue parlée; banni de la prose classique, see Ernout-Meillet, *Dict. Etym. Lang. Lat.* (Paris, 1959⁴). Horace says that poetry can either *prodesse* or *delectare*, or unite them, \neg . . . simul et iucunda et idonea dicere uitae, *A.P.* 333-34, cf. 343-44. His \neg iucunda. is formed on the root of *iuuare*. In his final example of Augustan poetics, *Epist.* 2.17 Horace says that poetry is \neg utilis urbi, si das hoc, paruis quoque rebus magna iuuari. (124-25), where the verb becomes *didaktikon* in sense.

⁵ In Virgil’s works, *consul* occurs only at *B.* 4.3, 11; *A.* 6.819, 7.613. A similarly weighted term, *Roma*, for example, occurs but twice in all the eclogues, *B.* 1.19 and 1.26; *Troia* but once, 4.36, cf. 2.61, a very Alexandrian use of *Alexander*.

⁶ The single-minded and concrete manner supersedes the labored relations with Rome imagined in the first eclogue: see Philip Damon, \neg Modes of Analogy in Ancient and Medieval Verse, *University of California Publications in Classical Philology* (Berkeley, 1961) 281: a very suggestive treatment of the eclogues as a whole, and of their differences from Theocritus.

B. (4.4-7) Virgil begins to sketch what is meant to appear as the occasion for his ambitious poetics: (4.4)

ultima Cumaeci uenit iam carminis aetas.

now the last age of Cumaean song has come.

Such language inevitably brings to mind the oracles, rumors and cosmic speculations that flourished amidst the political turmoil of Virgil's own time;⁷ yet nothing in the poem can be identified conclusively with any extant oracle, scheme or notion of cyclic change and decay.⁸ The existence of such materials gives and surely gave immediacy to Virgil's words; but he evokes them generically, he does not adopt any extant text or program. He uses the manner and the formulas for his own purposes in his own way, making his own image of a portentous moment, a *kairos* as BÜchner calls it.⁹

One closely parallel text has long been recognized. It is not an oracle but the work of a fellow poet writing, like Virgil, in an oracular vein: the sixteenth epode of Horace, which likewise speaks of a crisis in Roman history: (*Epode* 16.1)

altera iam teritur bellis ciuilibus aetas

now another age is being worn out by civil wars.

Both Horace and Virgil speak with visionary concern about their own times, defining the age with a pair of words that frames an entire verse (*a...A*). Horace speaks of 'another... age', which gets repeated without hope; within this outer frame he refers to a generic, anonymous process of civil war. Virgil announces a 'last... age', which signals an end to despair; within this frame he names a source for the word of change, 'Cumaean song'. Dividing this pair, too, he forms a perfectly concentric pattern of adjectives and nouns (*ab..BA*) around his verb and adverb, as if to underline the theme of a definitive event, 'has come already' (*abvaBA*). The verb tense, which in Horace was the present, suggesting repetition, in Virgil is the perfect, suggesting finality. The definitive idea finds expression in a more definitive form. This fact has sometimes been neglected by scholars eager to establish a chronological priority for one poet. How Virgil's form and idea relate to the historical situation will be discussed below. His ideology was to

⁷ On similar elements 'in the air at the time', see A. D. Nock, *CAH* 10, p. 472; Rose (above n. 2) 195, n. 108, speaks of oracles, coins of a child, the Sibyl, cornu~copias; cf. A. Alföldi, *Hermes* 65 (1930) 369ff, with plate, and *CAH* Plates 4, p. 20, e, f, g.

⁸ The myriad attempts to reconcile 'ultima aetas', 'Apollo', etc., with Servius' remarks or with surviving Sibylline books prove inconclusive, e.g. R. G. Austin, 'Vergil and the Sibyl', *CQ* (1927) 100; for brief bibliography, see *RE* 2.15.~1196.50~1197.46, especially again 1197.35-38.

⁹ *RE* 2.15.1197.39-41; cf. W. Weber, *Der Prophet und sein Gott* (Leipzig, 1925) 18-19, n. 4, who speaks of 'grosse Augenblick der Weltwende' and analyzes structure.

endure.¹⁰

Disputes over chronology have distracted attention from another important fact that emerges from the relationship of the two texts. Both poets speak of visionary concerns in a high-flown style; but the concept in poetics that names what both are doing is provided by Horace, who refers to himself symbolically as a bard or prophet, *uates* (*Epode* 16.66).¹¹ Virgil, too, in the eclogue, writing in the same vein, takes on the role of *uates*.¹² It is the ambition hinted by his themes of ‘greater things’ and becoming ‘consul-worthy’, an ambition that he begins to realize already in the confident way he speaks of ‘Cumaean song’.¹³

Continuing in his new role as *uates*, Virgil expands the image of a *kairos* by describing a series of momentous processes as under way. He presents the first of these in a verse with an outer frame (*a...A*) like \neg ultima... aetas,¹⁴ where the themes not only suggest contemporary prophecy but engage yet another Latin poet, Virgil’s older contemporary Lucretius: (4.5)

magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo.

The great series of centuries is being born anew.

Where Lucretius viewed cosmic decline as irreversible, since a system once fully grown could only be worn down and recycled, Virgil imagines the cosmos being reborn, implying a polemic with Lucretius that will be explored in Chapter three. Virgil differs from other philosophical speculation, too, by omitting universal destruction between cycles.¹⁵

¹⁰ Surprisingly, the idea of a relation between eclogue four and epode 16 was slow in maturing, cf. E. K. Rand, *HSCP* 17 (1906) 19-20. The question of precedence can be resolved only by an interpretation of the whole political, poetical situation. Büchner attempts something of the kind, with bibliography, *RE* 2.15.1211.52-67, cf. 1204.65-1206.28; and Nock (above n. 7) on purely historical grounds writes: ‘It seems reasonable to suppose that the Epode was written before not after the Peace...; cf. also R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford, 1939) 218, and G. E. Duckworth, ‘Recent Work on Vergil,’ *CW* 57 (1964) 201, who gives discussion.

¹¹ Horace uses the personal formula, \neg uate me., in contrast to the more impersonal, quasi official language of Virgil, \neg te consule. (11) and \neg te duce. (13), cf. *RE* 2.15.1205.62.

¹² A *Cumaeum carmen* would be sung by a *uates*, which Virgil uses of the Sibyl, *A.* 6.65, 211, and, once only, of himself, *A.* 7.41.

¹³ ‘Cumaean song’ habitually is taken to refer to the oracle of the Sibyl at Cumae on the Italian coast near Naples. G. Radke, ‘Vergil’s *Cumaeum Carmen*,’ *Gymn.* 66 (1959) 217ff, calls these habitual interpretations arbitrary and proposes to interpret *Cumaeum* as a reference to Hesiod, whose father came from Cumae in the East. Without the refinement of paternal origin, Hesiod himself was traced to Cumae by the commentary ascribed to Junius Philargyrius. Elsewhere in Virgil Hesiod’s adjective is *Ascraeus*: *B.* 6.70, *G.* 2.176. Certainly Hesiod must be on Virgil’s mind here, while the frequent assumption, that Virgil must refer to a specific oracle, is tralatitious, lacking even the parallel of the *Aeneid*, which supports the first. Nothing in eclogue four points necessarily to a single oracle, as opposed to the whole genus.

¹⁴ Eduard Norden, *Die Geburt des Kindes* (Leipzig, 1924) 22, n. 2, remarks the corresponding word order in 4.4-5.

¹⁵ See n. 8; for *integro* in Lucretius and Pacuvius, cf. Chap. 3.

The image of an unfolding *kairos* continues, and so do the literary appropriations and reversals: (4.6)

iam redit et uirgo, redeunt Saturnia regna

now also the maiden returns, Saturn's realms return.

In the motif of maiden Justice returning, Virgil recalls the story, present in Aratus,¹⁶ that Justice left earth as it declined into wickedness, a motif recently recalled by Catullus, who like Lucretius was Virgil's older contemporary.¹⁷ With 'Saturnian realms return', Virgil takes and reverses the traditional idea of a lost golden age, which he appropriates for Italy.¹⁸ In language that recalls both Lucretius and Catullus,¹⁹ he gives an illusion of actuality, 'already now..., now', even though dealing with the material of myth.

A third 'now' opens the next verse, which completes the image of present portents: (4.7)

iam noua progenies caelo demittitur alto.

now a new line is being let down from the deep sky.

Again Virgil entwines two adjectives and their nouns with a verb in one line, although, instead of a concentric pattern (*abvBA*, cf. 4.4), this order is chiasitic (*aABvb*). With the theme of innovation in \neg noua, 'new', the implications of the *kairos* come into focus. Recognizing this, later readers quote all or part of this verse to refer to the poem and its prophecies.²⁰ *Iam noua*, with or without *progenies*, became a commonplace; for example, it was cited by Dante, Raphael and others as a prophecy of Christ.²¹

Attributing the origin of new life to heaven, Virgil recalls and implicitly differs with a polemic launched by Lucretius against Stoic interpreters of Homer (*DRN* 2.1153-56, *Il* 8.19). Virgil's language reaffirms and reformulates mythological traditions as old as Homer against Lucretius, as we shall see in Chapter three.²² At

¹⁶ *Phain.* 100-136, echoed at *G.* 2.474. The constellation, Virgo, appears at *G.* 1.33, next to Chelae or Libra, the sign of Augustus' and Hercules' path to heaven.

¹⁷ *Cat.* 64.398; *RE* 2.15.1197.1-3, refers to Aratus *Phain.* 1339 which speaks of *Dike* becoming a star.

¹⁸ Büchner, *ibid.*, identifies *Saturnia regna* as Hesiod's golden age; if so, a Greek idea has been transposed to Italian content. Moreover, the triple alliteration, *re-, re-, re-*, recalls archaic Latin style.

¹⁹ *Cat.* 62.3-4: \neg surgere iam tempus, iam pinguis linquere mensas/ iam ueniet uirgo, iam dicetur hymenaeos.. Lucretius 5.697: \neg iam redeunt ex ordine certo, of the seasons.

²⁰ Their reading and other elements in the poem itself suggest that Virgil intended \neg progenies, to refer to the child and not merely generically to the golden race, although Horace uses the word *col~lectively* to name humanity: *C* 3.6.48: \neg progeniem uitiosiore, descent to an iron age.

²¹ Radke, *Gymn.* 63 (1956) 82-86, cites other instances in Virgil: used of a single divine or heroic child, *A.* 1.250, 10.301 471, 7.97; family, *A.* 10.329; whole line, 1.19, 6.790. In *Cat.* 66.44, 34.6, single, divine, and in 64.346 for the line of heroes.

²² The idea is reborn, not new: it originates in Homer, was taken up by the Stoics, cf. Radke, *ibid.*, and *RE* 2.15.1197.9-11: Büchner however misses the point of the *imi~tation* while Radke makes little of it: see Chapter three and

the same time, even this striking image of innovation eludes certain identification with contemporary events. Neither specific progeny gets named nor does \neg progenies. evoke a specific figure in myth, as did ‘Maiden Justice’ in the previous line. The resultant indeterminacy has been one of the principal causes of the scholarly disagreements mentioned above; and the dilemma becomes more acute as the impression of actuality grows in the following lines.

C. (4.8-10) In the growing image of the *kairos*, themes of closure and return have given rise to the theme of innovation, on which Virgil now expands, reinterpreting the generic ‘new line’ as a child’s birth, which he at once interprets as a hint of future change: (4.8-10)

tu modo nascenti puero quo ferrea primum
desinet ac toto surget gens aurea mundo
casta faue Lucina: tuus iam regnat Apollo.

You, the boy just now being born through whom iron first
will cease and golden race rise in the whole cosmos,
constant Lucina, favor: your Apollo already rules.

The manner is boldly elliptical, \neg tu modo. abrupt, not connected grammatically with the previous line, although ‘boy being born’ clearly restates in concrete, even familiar, terms the motif of the ‘new line’ descending. ‘Boy’ sounds matter of fact after the generic ‘new line’ and brings the recurrent impression of actuality to a new vividness. *kairos*»²³ Lucina, whose name means ‘bringing to light’, is invoked to favor a birth that is imagined as taking place in a time that is already ruled by her brother, Apollo. The child would be ‘another Apollo’ since ‘yours already rules’, as Heyne suggests:²⁴ ‘another great one like him’ and not a mere replication of the god.

Neither the birth nor Apollo’s rule has any parallel as a precondition for a golden age.²⁵ Again Virgil cannot be shown simply to reproduce the ideas of others. Yet Servius did take the motif of Apollo’s rule as a compliment to the young Caesar, who had himself portrayed in the symbols of Apollo.²⁶ Like Servius,

.....
Damon (above n. 6) 286.

²³ Once \neg nascenti. is recognized as present in the imagined *kairos*, as Büchner calls it, interpretation must proceed along lines drawn by B. Stumpo, *De IVae Virgiliti Eclogae Quaestionibus, pars prima* (Palermo, 1903) 13, who rejects paraphrases, \neg quo nato. or \neg quo nascente., instead supplementing and glossing \neg quo adiuuante, cuius auxilio.. He recognizes the function of \neg quo., which the poet uses to relate future to present. The paraphrase in its fullest form would be: *nascenti puero quo nato et tum crescente adiuuanteque.*

²⁴ Heyne says that the child is com~pared with Apollo, \neg et prophetica oratione bene ipse dictus est Apollo. Sententia adeo est: faue nascenti puero, alter ille Apollo est.. This suggests a new force for \neg tuus.: ‘yours already reigns; now favor this new one’.

²⁵ RE 2.15.1209.25-27. For Büchner, this is the first sign of the faith that made Apollo a victorious symbol at Actium. Servius (cited in the next note) also read it as a token of that faith.

²⁶ Servius ad loc.: \neg et tangit Augustum, cui simulacrum factum est cum Apollinis cunctis insignibus..

BÜchner sees a compliment for Caesar in ‘Apollo rules’, which he considers the only such specific reference in the poem.²⁷ This may be too restrictive, since Virgil goes on to describe the child in language suitable to a new divinity, ‘he the life of gods take up’ (–ille deum..., 4.15); and the formula parallels references in other eclogues to specially defined divinity and to the ideology of the Caesars, Julius and Octavian. There is the young god at Rome of eclogue one, –ille mihi semper deus. (1.7), qualified generically by –praesentes diuos. (1.41) and often identified with Octavian. In eclogue five there is the result of new apotheosis, Daphnis, –deus, deus ille. (5.64), traditionally read as a reference to the divinization of Julius Caesar. Together all three passages may be said to formulate an idea of divine presence in history that anticipates the later divinization, first in poetry, then in religion, of the young Caesar, soon to be Augustus. To recognize and hail as divine an immanent force in things, *praesentia numina sentire*, is a function of the *uates* in Augustan poetics that may be said to begin here.²⁸ Nor is it unlikely that Virgil strengthened these teasing echoes when he finally arranged the eclogue book.²⁹

Encased in the prayer to Lucina, the note of actuality, ‘boy being born’, barely appears before Virgil makes it an occasion for something greater. Using the relative clause introduced by –quo, ‘by whom’, Virgil casts the boy as the prospective agent of change and goes on to imagine that this agency would induce two processes, which are presented with elaborate symmetry: ‘iron will first leave off’ and ‘gold will arise’, balanced around the pivotal ‘and’. The rapid, compressed thought hardly lets one get to the adjective –casta, which looks back and connects up with the opening of the prayer at –tu.. Special attention is needed to keep in mind the whole prayer and within it the paradox of a coming exchange of iron with gold. As Virgil imagines it, the boy is to cause the exchange. He is to affect the races of iron and gold, thus is not simply identical with them nor with the age. The idea of his agency has caused uneasiness in some commentators, which suggests that with the relative clause Virgil once again stretched language.

Although the birth becomes the focal point and defining image of the *kairos*, Virgil merely locates it there, letting it draw meaning from its context, giving it no solid point of referral in time. The present participle –nascenti. has no inherent relation to past or future. It must depend on the main verb for a temporal fix. –Fae, ‘be favorable,’ is present imperative, simultaneous with other presents of the *kairos*, ‘...is being born, ...returns, ...return, ...is being let down, ...rules’. Nor does the poet give us any reason

²⁷ *RE* 2.15.1197.38-40; cf. Servius auctus: –(Lucina) Octauiam sororem Augusti significari adfirmant ipsumque Augustum Apollinem..

²⁸ On the growth of the idea of a man become divine in the course of the eclogues, *RE* 2.15.1213.1-13.

²⁹ For a suggestion of rewriting in the eclogue book, W. Clausen, –Callimachus and Latin Poetry, *GRBS* 5 (1964) 193.

to wrench \neg nascenti. from this context; hence it does not suggest a birth that has taken place or is about to. Literally Virgil's language refers to neither past nor future, although so much scholarship takes this for granted.³⁰ As a present participle, \neg nascenti. represents a process as currently under way.³¹

Around \neg nascenti., then, the focal theme of the *kairos*, Virgil disposes the elements of the near and the distant, the historical and the literary past, some of them in present tenses, more in futures. He does not allow external chronology to determine the arrangement; for example, as we shall note in a moment, he builds into the image of the child's future events that must have taken place before the poem was composed. Clearly, then, internal principles govern the disposition of material.³² Thus the concreteness of the birth must be seen not as depicting some particular moment but as giving the illusion of a moment, not as history but as historicizing, becoming a part of history itself. If Virgil talks concretely in a central passage, that is an important fact; it indicates a governing idea, not necessarily an historical event. If we keep well in mind, then, the internal relations of the child, the place of the image of birth in the *kairos* and prophecy, we are unlikely to identify him lightly with any other person or figure in other realms, for he will prove quite unsimplifiable, resembling everywhere but no one's own.

Critics have tended to separate the child from his context, attempting to identify him with various saviors, gods, kings, incarnate words, Buddha and most notably Christ.³³ Yet all such figures have one characteristic in common with respect to the poem. As BÜchner argues, they all are distant from its identifiable elements, whether literary or historical. Neither pastoral nor political, they afford no further instances of happy coincidence

³⁰ Carelessly referential readings abound, e. g. \neg soon to be born Syme (above n. 10) 218; similarly, Rose (above n. 2) 165: \neg All the difficulties may perhaps be classed under four heads. The first is formal... The next is, broadly speaking, historical... The third is harder... The fourth is hardest of all; why does he foretell the birth?. The literal readings exhibit what BÜchner calls the \neg naive Anspruch des Historikers., *RE* 2.15.1211.9-13.

³¹ The exegetes have strained \neg nascenti. considerably, e.g. Hommel (above n. 3) 374, 379, etc. But Heyne construes correctly: \neg is qui nunc nascitur puer.; Weber (above n. 9) remarks the parallel of present tenses, including \neg nas~cen~ti.. \neg nas~cen~ti.. In such an interpretation, \neg modo. modifies \neg nascenti., 'just now'. In *RE* 2.15.1197.65-1198.3, BÜchner's attempt to construe \neg modo. with \neg fauē. on grounds that Virgil in the eclogues tends to mitigate commands into wishes, does not reckon with the other five imperatives in eclogue four; Hommel has the better of B. on \neg modo., p. 398, n. 26.

³² On the interpretation of tenses and other elements in poetry, two suggestive remarks: C. H. Whitman *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959) 107: \neg Any poet... must deal with words in grammatical relation~ships but these must constantly create the presen~tational, formal syntax of the poem.; and Sidney, defending poetry: \neg The poet's persons and doings are but pictures, what should be, and not stories, what have been... things not affirmatively but allegorically and figuratively written..

³³ *RE* 2.15.1209.5-68; Schanz-Hosius 2 (1935⁴) 223, p. 43, etc.

between Roman public and Greco-Roman literary language. On this, BÜchner's analysis deserves attention:³⁴

If, in the eclogue's basic conception, all the given elements are either undocumentable or belong to the milieu of Greco-Roman culture, other images from other milieus adduced as being analogous, can at the most have had for Virgil the function of an impulse. One would thus not be investigating what had been intended and formed, but, at the best, the world of images dreamed in the subconscious.

All the great archetypal conjectures, then, stand on roughly equal ground where the eclogue is concerned. None is demonstrably prior, all are after the fact of the poem itself. They form a kind of new symbolism, an extension of the imagination in their own right. Some, like the analogy with Christ, are of great historical interest; others, like Eduard Norden's identification with Aion, have interest in the history of scholarship. None can be shown to have been causal for the eclogue, all belong to its history as a cultural icon.

Historians also keep trying to establish identity beyond context, even though 'boy being born' lacks biographical precision, nor does further clarification come from lines in the poem that speak of parental virtue or parental deeds, since both of these bear the plural 'forefathers' as easily as 'father's'.³⁵ Even if a letter surfaced in which Virgil mentioned 'that birthday piece for Y that X keeps asking for', it would not diminish the historical import of the whole construction, what the poet chose to make of the theme. There would still be a new myth, with Apollo in the foreground and the young Caesar in the background, as remarked above. These would reveal more to historians about the historical import of the poem.

On the other hand, BÜchner may be too absolute. He shows that the complex symbol of the child in the poem cannot be reduced to identity with anything else within or outside of its own culture.³⁶ He infers correctly that the child must be identified as something new itself in that culture, hence 'ist ein Symbol'.³⁷ We may agree with him that only this symbol is a proper object of critical attention; nevertheless all we can properly do is to isolate and reduce to deserved insignificance the question of biography.³⁸ Some may wish to concentrate on it even if we do not. We cannot abolish it although we may feel that the main use to be had any

³⁴ *RE* 2.15.1208.63-1209.4.

³⁵ 'Parentum, R, 'parentis, Servius, Nonius, are alternative readings at 4.26; another textual crux with *parens*, 4.62; on 'patriis, as *more maiorum*, see *RE* 2.15.1199.22-2.

³⁶ *RE* 2.15.1211.54-1212.56.

³⁷ *RE* 2.15.1211.54-55.

³⁸ Nock (above n. 7) for example is judicious, not even pretending to describe origin: 'The common assumption among Virgil's contemporary readers was probably that this child was the son to be expected from Antony and Octavia; but if this assumption was correct, the point was not expressly stated.'

longer from the question is a reminder, once again, how historicizing the language here is.

In sum, the image of birth belongs in figurative time to the *kairos*, but where other elements evoke other language, whether in popular or literary culture, the phrase *nascenti puero* has no verbal precedent nor clear contemporary source. Admitting no external explanations, which means that it brings no significant new facts to the poem, it raises instead a question of the meaning and structure of the whole, of what such a theme is doing in the center of the preamble.³⁹ Its relative clause unfolds vision out of recollection, rendering both past and future symbolic, united in the formal present, bringing them from temporality into poetic form. The image of birth is opaque, not showing any further mystery behind it, and resilient, not allowing reduction into things other than itself. Through it, elements of the mythic past focus at one point, then expand to comprehend the future: a powerful nostalgia is reborn as hope. Not limited by a past of its own, the image of ‘boy being born’ confronts external reality on behalf of the whole poetic form, nascent but entire vision and the beginning of a tradition in its own right. Birth is the genius of this poem at this time shaped by this poet. It is the governing idea, communicable also to any other age. In itself perhaps not much greater than other pastoral themes, it proves capable of everything when planted as a new idea in the rich but disordered material of the empire gathering at Rome. Through it, the new *uates* finds a way to speak of the future as well as the present and past, thus achieving the full thematic range traditionally claimed for prophets and prophetic poets and by implication laying claim to their tradition.⁴⁰

D. (4.11-12) Virgil elaborates on the idea of change to come, beginning with a sketch of its start: (4.11-12)

teque adeo decus hoc aevi, te consule, inibit,
Pollio, et incipient magni procedere menses;

You, too, besides, you as consul, will this glory of the age come in,
Pollio, and the great months take up their course.

From Lucina, ‘you...’ with her Apollo (8, 10), the poet turns to another addressee, ‘you, too, besides... Pollio’, whose consulship is imagined as marking the beginning of change. The rhetorical continuity, ‘you..., you, too’, creates a hierarchy, which implies that under the general aegis of Apollo’s rule, which embraces an unlimited extent of time, the particular tenure in office of a Roman magistrate, limited to a certain year, will locate

³⁹ W. J. Knight, *Roman Vergil* (London, 1944²) 118, on eclogue four: ‘Its alternations are of thought, with balances of past and-future, and fear and hope.... Perhaps there is even a balance between different parts of the poem, written at different times. The tensions are released and the con~trasts unified in the symbol of the baby, destined to bring new peace and prosperity.’

⁴⁰ Of the prophet Kalkhas, *Il.* 1.70; Hesiod himself endowed by the Muses, *Theog.* 32.

in Roman history an event. In the prophecy, the structure of clauses is intricately woven into the framework of the consular formula: the first subject, ‘glory of time’, then the first verb, then Pollio in the center, then the second verb and finally the second subject, ‘months’, which is a variant of time. The consular formula points to a specific year: Pollio was consul elect for 40 B.C., taking office only after warring factions agreed on a peace settlement in the autumn at Brundisium. But the phrase *ante consule*, although a normal dating formula, does not occur in Virgil’s image of the actual present, *kairos*, the moment of return and birth. He uses the consulship, instead, to give an air of historical concreteness to his imagining of future change. Not then merely a date, it becomes a symbol, bringing into the array of themes a moment in Roman history that occasioned hope.

The meaning of *ante decus aevi* is debated. A *decus* is something belonging to or forming a part of some larger whole, yet giving it particular grace and glory, whether by nature or by human arts induced. As Virgil says in eclogue five,⁴¹ the vine graces the arbor, the grape the vine, the bulls are glory of the herd, crops grace the rich fields. And, in the case of the poet, the *decus* is both natural and of art: Daphnis is every grace to his own; both herds and poets lament for him: (5.32-33)

uitis ut arboribus decori est, ut uitibus uuae,
ut gregibus tauri, segetes ut pinguibus aruis,
tu decus omne tuis....

In eclogue four, the *ante decus* of the epoch would be the child and golden race. With immediacy, the demonstrative *ante hoc* points to the contents of the preceding verses, permitting the translation: ‘this glory of the age’, taking *ante aevi* as objective genitive. On the other hand, translating with Conington ‘this glorious age’, taking *ante aevi* as subjective genitive, would lose the relation of miracle to epoch without gaining a normal construction for the verb *inire*, discussed below. The latter can only be had by supplying a subject, *puer* (the boy, not Pollio as the *Thesaurus* would apparently have it), from the preceding period: he ‘will enter on this golden age’ (Ladew, cited by Lewis and Short); a better translation would be, ‘he will initiate, will institute’. Yet strong internal parallelism in chiasmus with *ante menses*, also nominative and subject, attracts *ante decus hoc* into the nominative. *Ante hoc* is a clear glance back; the other translation is forced.

This interpretation presupposes an unusual use of the verb *inire*, which ordinarily is transitive, ‘to institute or set in operation’. When intransitive, ‘come in’, it nearly always occurs with a specified destination. For periods of time, however, it occurs in the ablative present participle, ‘spring coming in’. Earlier

⁴¹ *B.* 5.34, and cf. *G.* 2.40, Maecenas; *A.* 9.18, *ante decus caeli* of Iris; 9.405, *ante decus astrorum* of Luna; *A.* 11.508, *ante decus Italiae*, cf. Camilla, etc., cited by W. Weber, *Der Prophet* (note 9) 20-21, n.2.

commentators did not hesitate to find a new sense of the verb here: \neg incipere, initium capere. or Servius' \neg exordium accipiet, incohabit..

In the other branch of the chiasmus, *incipere* presents the incisive act, putting one's hand to something. Virgil also uses it at the end of the eclogue, in final commands to the child to begin.⁴² Finally, in the outer chiasmic ring, are the cosmic, measured periods, 'great months', which are placed in an epic separation of adjective from noun. Again Virgil evokes philosophical ideas without any specific doctrine.

E. (4.13-14) The motif of Pollio's magistracy gives way to his leadership: the annual office of the consulship is particularly suited to symbolize auspicious beginning, but less so to suggest the subsequent duration of growth: (4.13-14)

te duce, si qua manent sceleris uestigia nostri
irrita perpetua soluent formidine terras.

under your command, if any traces of our crime remain,
voided they will free the lands from endless fear.

What Virgil imagines under Pollio's leadership is a mysterious undoing of evil, which has its analogue in the promised exchange of iron for gold. Both are conceived as preparing for the final onset of the golden age, even though the one is an abstractly mythological equation, 'iron' giving way to 'golden', while the second is more specifically Roman, 'traces of our crime... free the lands from fear'. What seems to be implied is not displacement or replacement but a transmutation of matter that was there. Matter is conserved but its form changed. Similar conservation was implicit in the original prophecy, where iron was to 'first' leave off 'and' gold arise. The hint of an equation, \neg primum... ac. (8-9),⁴³ and the

⁴² Cf. \neg magnus... ordo. (4.5), where adjective and noun frame an entire verse, also in an account of cosmic time; cf. the separations \neg caelo... alto. (4.7) and \neg toto... mundo. (4.9).

⁴³ \neg Primum... ac.: *RE* 2.15.1247.31-38, notes that *ac* occurs only here in the eclogues and at *B.* 3.4: \neg fouet ac.; the observation was made by M. Haupt, who supposed that Virgil desired to avoid cacophony, *-et... et*. However, B. Ax-el-son, *Unpoetische Wörter* (Lund, 1945) 82, n. 71, observes that Virgil was little sensitive to such cacophonies in the *Aeneid*, while J. Th. Hanssen, *SO* 22 (1952) 104-5 cites examples not only from the *Aeneid* and *Georgics*, but from *B.* 4.24, \neg occidet et. and 4.38, \neg cedet et., as well as *B.* 9.42, 10.71, not to mention the repetitions of numerous other sounds. In short, desire to avoid a supposed cacophony cannot be adduced to account for 4.9, without the equal and opposite argument that Virgil sought cacophony in 4.24, 38, etc. There ought, then, to be some more particular reasons for \neg ac. in this context.

W. Clausen, \neg On Editing the *Ciris*, *CPh* 59 (1964) 979, notes that Virgil \neg affects it (sc. *ac*) 'in arsi secundi pedis, following Wagner. Both *B.* 3.4 and 4.9 so place *ac*. And yet Virgil did not choose to affect it 4.24. Hence we may hazard yet another meaning, suggested by the structure of the passage itself.

\neg Primum, too, is peculiar: Virgil takes care to place important words at verse ends, as Weber notes (above n. 9) 13. This is the only adverb at a verse end in *B.* 4. The line is enjambed, with \neg primum. qualifying \neg desinet., which begins the next line, and \neg desinet. in turn antithetical in thought though parallel in structure to \neg surget.. Between the two future tenses stands \neg ac., in *arsis s.p.*, a pivot between

strong structural parallelism between antithetical elements suggested that ‘leaving off’ was felt to have its opposite, ‘rising up’ as a concomitant if not actually a consequence. If such indeed is Virgil’s thought, the idea, like the prominent placement of \neg primum, is Lucretian: as one thing perishes, it provides material for another’s growth (*DRN* 1.250-64). The particular function of \neg primum... ac. is to show that vanishing precedes but is in some sense coordinated with coming into being. The child, then, qua agent, is imagined as effecting the change. He is the only new thing under the sun and his activity consists in transmuting the old, iron materials into the new.

Only in his second version of change does Virgil provide a word for the process for which the child is the agent: \neg irrita. is formed from the root that appears also in *reor*, \neg reckon, account, calculate.; likewise in the perfect participle *ratum*, \neg fixed by calculation, ratified, valid. as a will or testament; and also in the abstract noun of process *ratio*, \neg reckoning, accounting. and, by transfer, intellectual or verbal relation, reason, logical or poetic form. \neg Irrita. describes the undoing of some ratified or reasoned product, often the repudiation of a testament. Its reversing, verbal-mental force may be seen in the following example from Terence: (Phormio 951)

nolo. uolo. uolo. nolo rursum. cape. cedo.
quod dictum indictumst. quod modo erat ratum, irritumst.

I will. I won’t. I will again. Take. Give.
What’s said is unsaid, what just was set unset.

To render \neg irrita, one begins with that which just now was formed and retraces it, reducing it to its first elements. These Virgil calls \neg uestigia.. In Heyne’s view, they are the remnants of civil war; older commentators saw a parallel with Horace’s words on the curse of fratricide and internecine conflict among the Romans.⁴⁴ These general interpretations are impeccable, as generic as most of those that we proposed for the first part of the poem. Yet here the poem itself is different. With a new directness it speaks of Pollio as consul and commander. This is not the elusively ambiguous talk of cyclic myths, oracles, birth. Here as not before there is a specific historical referent.

.....
the two imagined, future processes. Word posi~tioning and the balanced opposition of phrases suggest that \neg primum. should in fact be joined with \neg ac. coordinating the two processes that accompany the child’s growth: ‘first’ withdrawal, ‘and then’ new growth. Axelson notes that *ac* occurs almost only in like formulas in Propertius. One may compare the regular yoking of *simul... ac*. As Professor Clausen pointed out to me in conversation, the elements \neg ferrea primum. and \neg aurea mundo. stand in the same verse position, emphasizing the antithesis. In his opinion, \neg ac. must be more closely related to \neg primum. than *et* would be.

⁴⁴ *Scelus* is a key word in *Epd.* 7.1.18: \neg acerba fata Romanos agunt/ scelusque aeternae necis.; quoted in connection with *B.* 4.13 by Mancinellus, later by others. On parallels with Catullus, see Chap. 2 passim.

Pollio, the consul-elect for 40, also played a principal part in negotiating peace between the young Caesar and Marc Antony at Brundisium, representing the Antonian faction.⁴⁵ Before this he had been engaged actively against Octavian's side. He thus is both a remnant of civil war, *uestigium sceleris*, and a resolver of it. He is a *dux* under whose direction the \neg uestigia, himself included, have become \neg irrita, transformed into forces for good. The process of changing evil remnants into good, rendering them *irrita*, which Virgil imagines taking place under his direction, might thus reflect in a bold allegory the parley itself. Pollio as both negotiator and general effected a self-transformation: agent as well as date, says Syme. The fact that Caesar's veterans had to intervene with pressures for agreement and the fact of Pollio's later diffidence towards Octavian only emphasize Virgil's boldness, partiality and, perhaps most important, abstract and highly literary form of expression.

The verses to Pollio have a literary resonance in addition to the historical. In particular they reecho with other eclogues. In eclogue three, Pollio was lover of the pastoral muse, however rustic, and himself a maker of songs (*B.* 3.84-87). Here as *consul* and *dux* he exercises a more public role. Not initiating the age or transforming traces, though these images in the poem may reflect his actions in the world, he is imagined as authenticating and encouraging with the highest authority, perhaps lending auspices. Not just acting \neg duce. in the literal sense, he too becomes a kind of \neg decus. to the age.

Recognizing that through Pollio Virgil brings history into his poetic plan, we may speculate for a moment how his new images might affect Pollio and other potential audiences. The vivid historicity of the poem has two complementary aspects: not only what realities got absorbed and transformed, but how then the poetic vision might act on other realities. Would the eclogue achieve its the ambition of pleasurable use, *iuuare*, even for the consul it cites? What would Pollio, poet and consul, Antonian sympathizer, think of his role in such a feast? Under the rule of Apollo? And Caesar Octavian, was he a reader? If Virgil's idea and new poetic form seem pregnant with Augustan symbolism, it may be that they were in fact formative. In this sense above all, pastoral could both please and be useful to Rome, by being first to recognize and suitably name a newly growing order, a putative divine scheme, in the world, perhaps even giving the commander some hints of his destiny.

And others? What wider audience did the new *uates* command? Surely the exaltedly visionary language, with its emphatic gestures, 'now... now... now...' or 'that one will', must have made, as Büchner says, a singular impression in that age of

⁴⁵ \neg Pollio the consul was Antonius' man, and Pollio had had a large share in negotiating the treaty..he is an agent here not merely a date., Syme (above n. 10) 219.

nostalgic hopes.⁴⁶ A corresponding wonder might well arise in the literary audience, Virgil's alert and informed readers, at this tone and poetic scope, imbued with echoes of still current literature, but with familiar points reversed. For readers, the poem would offer a new occasion to reflect on recent events in the light of their own poetic culture. Very possibly it would condition their final view of their own experience, in and out of poetry, at least to the extent that they were both highly literate and leading statesmen. They would have the instructive pleasure, if it did please, of recognizing themselves in a very different form, as consuls gracing poetry, a *decus siluis*. For those, like Pollio, who had taken part, were themselves among the traces, *uestigia*, the verbal tenses would have symbolic value, not merely literal. All the moments would be simultaneous in the single reflection and vision, though each glanced at some different actual time when peace was being concluded, an oracle hawked, or perhaps even a birth considered. All the variants of the verbs would play a part as poetic means: perfect, of recollection and realization; subjunctive and imperative, of desire; out of which come futures of hope and realized desire; presents of the conceiving, symbolizing process.⁴⁷

Poetic form, as always, would be ideally present. The concreteness of certain images would have evocative and not merely documentary value; it would entertain a new apprehension of things by alluding to elements of the far and near, real and mythological past. It would instrumentalize the past. Important would be, no longer things in themselves as they had been thought to be seen and done, but now as they appeared in formal juxtaposition to other things, unrelated until the poet saw their relation. The more immediate and concrete past of one's own actions would be invited to conform to a larger, more continuous mythic conception. One would find his own views subsumed in the poet's vision at the expense of independence of thought.

F. From the hints of a start and a progress, Virgil passes to a vision of the end, when the matured child will take up divine life and earthly rule: (4.15-17)

ille deum uitam accipiet diuisque uidebit
permixtos heroas et ipse uidebitur illis,
pacatumque reget patriis uiribus orbem.

He will take up the gods' life and see with gods
heroes intermingled and himself be seen by them
and rule with ancestral virtues a world subdued.

The picture is that of a hero's life, in which the motif of seeing and being seen may recall the cults of Hellenistic god-kings. Intermingling with gods suggests immediate deification; the child's

⁴⁶ *RE* 2.15.1197.47-55.

⁴⁷ On the imaginative use of tenses in poetry, see the remarks of Whitman, cited above, n. 32.

rule is thus described as that of a *diuus praesens*, which will be a key concept in Augustan ideology, as remarked above.

G. The image of the child's future concludes the introductory sequence, which has five sections (3-4-[3]-4-3): the opening challenge to generic change in song (3 lines) has led to the specific image of a portentous present that Büchner calls a *kairos* (4 lines), which has resolved into the idea of birth and future change (3 lines), which allows the fuller images of a future marked by Pollio (4 lines) but then dominated by the child (3 lines).

In seventeen lines, Virgil thus postulates and achieves a new poetic status for himself. He has turned the pastoral poet into a *uates*, prophetic bard. What is more, not only does he command the traditional range of prophecy, which Homer and Hesiod described as telling of past, future and what is,⁴⁸ he has added to the range Rome and a compelling political vision. He has made the pastoral genre absorb history and reach beyond.⁴⁹ In the remaining forty-six verses Virgil elaborates the vision of a world where iron would be growing *irrita*. On the strength of this further accomplishment, expanding his role as *uates*, he then imagines his own victory in a master poetic contest. The way to that confidence lies through multiple appropriations and reversals of his near contemporary poets, some of which the next two chapters will relate.

⁴⁸ Of the prophet Kalkhas, *Il.* 1.70; Hesiod himself endowed by the Muses, *Theog.* 32.

⁴⁹ The hypothetical exception: a second war in the east, the recrudescing heroism of Achilles, which might conceivably have been read as a reference to Antony, though there are sound literary reasons for its appearance in the poem, even apart from this: see Chap. 2 and W. W. Tarn, "Alexander Helios and the Golden Age," *JRS* 22 (1932) 156.