

## NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS

### DONATUS AND THE DATE OF THE *CULEX*

It is often the case that in dating a work of classical antiquity the scholar has no external evidence to assist him and must rely on whatever references to contemporary events he can discover in the work in question. On the other hand, it may be that the external evidence exists but is inconsistent, that an ancient writer, in providing the date of another's work, will contradict himself or other ancient writers. In the case of the *Culex*, there is, in the *Life of Vergil* by Donatus,<sup>1</sup> what seems at first sight to be an unequivocal statement on the date of the poem's composition. This occurs in that section of the *Life* where Donatus describes the early compositions of Vergil (17–18): "deinde Catalepton et Priapea et Epigrammata et Diras, item Cirim et Culicem, cum esset annorum XVI. cuius materia talis est . . ." There are two minor textual variants: MSS G and Z read XV, M reads XVII. All the others, however, read XVI.

When one turns to what are probably the most widely used editions of the *Life of Vergil*, it becomes clear that the majority of editors regard this straightforward statement as too good to be true. Instead of the figure XVI, C. Hardie and J. Brummer read XXVI and A. Rostagni XXI.<sup>2</sup> Now it is not difficult to explain either of the presumed corruptions on palaeographical grounds; the variants in G, Z, and M show how exposed numerals are to the errors of copyists. In the case of the figure XXVI, one can assume the haplography of X;

and in the case of XXI, confusion between V and X. But it must be borne in mind that these readings are emendations and not based on the evidence of a manuscript; the onus of proof rests upon the emender. The purpose of this paper is in a sense negative. It will not attempt to prove that Donatus was necessarily right about the date that he assigns to the *Culex*; rather, it will show that there is no evidence to justify altering the words of Donatus as they have been transmitted, be they accurate or otherwise.

The first to cast doubt on the information provided by Donatus was Joseph Scaliger who, in his introduction to the text of the *Culex*, stated that the poem was written by Vergil in his mature years.<sup>3</sup> Scaliger supported his statement by two observations (to be considered in some detail later): (1) the poem is dedicated to Octavius ("Iusimus, Octavi, gracili modulante Thalia," line 1), but Octavius, the future emperor, was only nine years old when Vergil was sixteen; and (2) Donatus seems to be contradicted by certain lines of the *Silvae* in which Statius suggests that Lucan wrote the *Bellum civile* (which was unfinished at the time of his death at the age of twenty-five) while he was still younger than Vergil was when the latter wrote the *Culex*.<sup>4</sup> Most modern scholars are under the illusion that Scaliger was the first to alter the XVI of Donatus' text to XXVI.<sup>5</sup> This is not the case; in fact Scaliger dismisses the information of Donatus, the

1. It is the practice of some scholars to refer to Suetonius as the author of the *Life of Vergil*; indeed, there are few who will not grant that at least part of the material contained in the *Life* that has come down under the name of Donatus was written by Suetonius. It is beyond the scope of the present paper to enter into the debate; the author is referred to throughout as Donatus for the sake of convenience.

2. C. Hardie, *Vitae Vergilianae antiquae* (Oxford, 1954); J. Brummer, *Vitae Vergilianae* (Leipzig, 1912–33); and A. Rostagni, *Suetonio: "De Poetis" e biografie minori* (Turin, 1944). The arguments of the latter are taken from his *Virgilio minore*<sup>2</sup> (Rome, 1961), hereafter cited as Rostagni. The chapter on the date of the *Culex* that appeared in the first edition (1933) of Rostagni's book can be found in "I pri-

mordi dell'evoluzione poetica e spirituale di Virgilio," *RFIC*, LIX (1930), 12–47. E. Diehl, *Die Vitae Vergilianae und ihre antiken Quellen* (Bonn, 1911), retains XVI.

3. *Publii Vergilii Maronis appendix* (Lyons, 1573), hereafter cited as Scaliger.

4. *Silv.* 2. 7. 73–74.

5. Among those who have made this mistaken assumption are Hardie and Brummer (n. 2); Rostagni; W. B. Anderson, "Statius and the Date of the *Culex*," *CQ*, X (1916), 225–28; E. K. Rand, "Young Virgil's Poetry," *HSCP*, XXX (1919), 115; G. Funaioli, "Virgilio minore," *Athenaeum*, XII (1934), 213–38; F. Giancotti, "Sulla cronologia e sulla dedica del *Culex*," *Maia*, IV (1951), 70–76; and A. Salvatore, *Appendix Vergiliana* (Turin, 1960), II, 83.

*ignobilis grammaticus*, as unworthy of consideration. In 1675 Le Père de la Rue went a stage further; he accepted the arguments of Scaliger and suggested twenty-six as Vergil's age, but did not alter the text.<sup>6</sup> Both De la Rue and Scaliger made brief observations that they did not expand; the first serious attempt to make a detailed study of the problem and to suggest an emendation appeared in 1729 in a French work, *Dissertation critique sur le Culex de Virgile*.<sup>7</sup> It was unsigned but reappeared some years later in a slightly revised Latin form, *De Virgiliano Culice disceptatio*, from the pen of the Jesuit scholar François Oudin.<sup>8</sup> In his Latin version Oudin suggested the emendation XXV,<sup>9</sup> rehearsing the argument that Donatus is apparently contradicted by Statius and adding that the figure XVI is difficult to reconcile with the words that follow the mention of the *Culex*: "scripsit etiam de qua ambigitur Aetnam. mox cum res Romanas incohasset, offensus materia ad Bucolica transiit" (19; the passage will be considered later). The issue, discussed at length by Oudin, seems to have died down after his death and did not become popular again until the present century after F. Vollmer, in his edition of the *Silvae* of Statius, revived it by stating that Donatus wrote XXVI;<sup>10</sup> he has been followed by most modern scholars.<sup>11</sup> In addition, some, noting the problems mentioned above, have drawn different conclusions and have opted for XXI.<sup>12</sup>

Three issues have arisen over the reading XVI: the apparent inconsistency of Donatus' account, the apparent contradiction with Statius, and, finally, the apparent contradiction with the *Culex* itself. First of all, is Donatus inconsistent? He places the composi-

tion of the *Eclogues* after the battle of Philippi (42 B.C.):<sup>13</sup> "mox cum res Romanas incohasset, offensus materia ad Bucolica transiit, maxime ut Asinium Pollionem, Alfenum Varum et Cornelium Gallum celebraret, quia in distributione agrorum, qui post Philippensem victoriam veteranis triumvirorum iussu trans Padum dividebantur, indemnem se praestitissent" (19). This provoked a question from Oudin: "Quis ita ineptiit aliquando, ut diceret factum esse mox quod annis post decem duodecemve contigit?" His argument has found a good deal of favor, and, indeed, has been used as a weapon by those who deny the authenticity of the *Culex*, since few would claim that a poet could pass from the clumsiness of that poem to the polished elegance of the *Eclogues* in two years. However, the significance of the phrase *cum res Romanas incohasset* must surely be taken into account. *Incho*, when used of literary compositions, has the force not simply of "to begin," but rather of "to write a first draft." This is shown by Cicero *Arch.* 28: "nam quas res nos . . . gessimus, attingit hic versibus atque incohavit, quibus auditis . . . hunc ad perficiendum adhortatus sum." Catullus tells how Caecilius' girl friend was fired with passion when she read the latter's *incohata* *Dindymi dominam* (35. 13–14). Both Cicero and Catullus have in mind compositions that have reached the stages of at least a preliminary draft.<sup>14</sup> So Donatus could here be saying that in the interval between the *Culex* and the *Eclogues* Vergil wrote a first draft of an epic on Roman history but gave up the project before he had completed it. This would be a task that could well occupy a poet for several years. In any case, there is nothing inept in using *mox* to

6. *Virgile* (Paris, 1675), p. 12.

7. Contained in Pierre Desmolets, *Continuation des mémoires de littérature et d'histoire* (Paris, 1729), VII, 295–312.

8. Contained in *Miscellaneae observationes criticae novae in auctores veteres et recentiores* (Amsterdam, 1742), IV, 307–15.

9. It should be noted that Oudin bases his emendation on XV, the reading of G and Σ.

10. P. Papini Statii *Silvarum libri* (Leipzig, 1898), p. 378.

11. The figure XXVI has been adopted by the editors mentioned earlier (see n. 2) and by, *inter alios*, G. Mosti, *Intorno alla questione del "Culex"* (Pisa, 1907); C. de Rossi (in a review of Mosti), *BFC*, XVI (1909), 61–62; C. Plésent, *Le*

*Culex: Etude sur l'alexandrinisme latin* (Paris, 1910); J. H. Mozley, *Statius* (London, 1928); C. Soltero González, *El Apéndice Virgiliano* (Quito, 1958); and K. Büchner, s.v. "P. Vergilius Maro," *RE*, 2<sup>e</sup> Reihe, XV (1955), 1088–89.

12. E. de Marchi, *Di un poemetto apocrifo attribuito a Virgilio* (Biella, 1903); T. Frank, "Vergil's Apprenticeship," *CP*, XV (1920), 23–38; and Rostagni.

13. The problem of the date of the *Eclogues* is beyond the scope of this paper; it is concerned only with the date assigned to them by Donatus.

14. Note the comments of C. J. Fordyce, *Catullus* (Oxford, 1961), and K. Quinn, *Catullus: The Poems* (London, 1970) on these lines.

designate an event that takes place after an interval of twelve years; a glance at the entries under *mox* in Lewis and Short will reveal that *mox* does not necessarily indicate immediate succession. A significant example occurs in Suetonius *Ner.* 6. 2, where the biographer describes a *signum infelicitatis* that attended Nero's *dies lustricus*: "nam C. Caesar, rogante sorore ut infanti quod vellet nomen daret, intuens Claudium patrum suum, a quo *mox* principe Nero adoptatus est, eius se dixit dare."<sup>15</sup> Here, *mox* denotes an interval of eleven years.

So there is no evidence of inconsistency in this part of Donatus' narrative. What then of the supposed contradiction with Statius? The lines in question appear in the *Genethliacon Lucani* (*Silv.* 2. 7), composed in honor of Lucan's birthday and dedicated to his wife Polla. In the work Calliope makes a prophecy at the birth of Lucan (54–74):

ac primum teneris adhuc in annis  
ludes Hectora Thessalosque currus  
et supplex Priami potentis aurum,  
et sedes reserabis inferorum,  
ingratus Nero dulcibus theatri  
et noster tibi proferetur Orpheus.  
dices culminibus Remi vagantis  
infandos domini nocentis ignes.  
hinc castae titulum decusque Pollae  
iucunda dabis adlocutione.  
*mox* coepta generosior iuventa  
albos ossibus Italis Philippos  
et Pharsalica bella detonabis,  
quo fulmen ducis inter arma divi,  
libertate gravem pia Catonem

15. As can be seen in Lewis and Short, the use of *mox* as equivalent of *post* or *postea* is post-Augustan. If one accepts the *Life of Vergil* as Suetonian, then *Ner.* 6. 2 is particularly significant.

16. Vacca, *Life of Lucan* 3: "natus est III Nonas Novembris C. Caesare Germanico II L. Apronio Caesariano coss." 17: "peritque pridie Kal. Maias Attico Vestino et Nerva Siliiano coss."

17. The major difficulty of the clause "et quantum inhi restat ad Culicem" is, as will be shown, caused by our ignorance of the date and occasion of its utterance. The problem is compounded by the obscurity of the words and the fact that scholars have not agreed on their meaning. In the first place, it is not clear whether we have a question or an assertion. Nor is it clear whether the difference between Lucan and the *Culex* is chronological ("What a long time it will be before I am at an age when the *Culex* was written!")—"How long will it be before I am at the age when the *Culex* was written?") or artistic ("What a difference lies between me and the

et gratum popularitate Magnum.  
tu Pelusiaci scelus Canopi  
deflebis pius et Pharo cruenta  
Pompeio dabis altius sepulcrum.  
haec primo iuvenis canes sub aevo,  
ante annos Culicis Maroniani.

Lucan was born November 3, A.D. 39 and died April 30, 65, at the age of twenty-five.<sup>16</sup> The *Bellum civile* was incomplete at the time of his death. All his literary accomplishments, Statius says, came before the age at which the *Culex* was written. He seems, therefore, to be suggesting that the *Culex* was written after Vergil had reached twenty-five. This seems to lend weight to the emendation of XVI to XXVI. At this point it might be convenient to consider the other suggested emendation, XXI, defended by Rostagni on the basis of Statius' remarks in combination with other evidence. These remarks, argued Rostagni, can be related to Lucan's own words, which are preserved in the life of the poet written by Suetonius (*Lucan* 1–2): "prima ingenii experimenta in Neronis laudibus dedit quinquennali certamine; dein Civile Bellum quod cum Pompeio a Caesare gestum est recitavit \* \* \* ut praefatione quadam aetatem et initia sua cum Vergilio comparans ausus sit dicere 'et quantum mihi restat ad Culicem.'" Lucan, Rostagni claimed, appears to be drawing a distinction between the achievements of Vergil and himself at a similar age.<sup>17</sup> The *Neronia* were first held in A.D. 60 when the poet was twenty.<sup>18</sup> In view of his brief but prolific career, it is not unreasonable to assume that

artistry of the *Culex*!"—"What difference is there between me and the artistry of the *Culex*?" or a combination of both ("What a long time it will be before I have attained the artistry of the *Culex*!"—"How long will it be before I have attained the artistry of the *Culex*?""). Compounding the issue is Suetonius' use of the words *ausus sit*; the expression, be it a question or an assertion, might have been intended ironically. On the possible meanings of the expression see O. Ribbeck, *Appendix Vergiliana* (Leipzig, 1868), p. 19; R. Hildebrandt, *Studien auf dem Gebiete der römischen Poesie und Metrik* (Leipzig, 1887), I, 2; F. Leo, *Culex, carmen Vergilio ascriptum* (Berlin, 1891), p. 15; A. Liverani, *Il Culex* (Milan, 1897), p. 22; J. S. Phillimore, "Statius and the Date of the *Culex*," *CQ*, XI (1917), 106; T. Birt, "Zum *Culex*," *PhW*, LI (1931), 1437–40; G. Funaioli, *op. cit.* (n. 5), p. 89; Giancotti, *op. cit.* (n. 5), p. 63; and Rostagni, p. 83.

18. Tac. *Ann.* 14. 20: "Nerone quantum Cornelio Cosso consulibus quinquennale ludicrum Romae institutum est,"

the *praefatio* belongs to the following year, so that Lucan would not be more than twenty-one when he made the comparison. Thus Statius may have had this recitation in mind when he appended the lines “haec primo iuvenis canes sub aevo, / ante annos Culicis Maroniani” and may have intended *haec* to refer solely to the *Bellum civile*. *Detonabis* (66) could then be taken in the literal sense of “you will declaim.” All this, said Rostagni, supports the emendation of XVI to XXI.

There are several flaws in Rostagni’s argument. In the first place, it is important to remember that there is a lacuna between *Bellum Civile recitavit* and *ut praefatione quadam* in Suetonius’ account. If the preface does belong to the *Bellum civile*, what, in that case, is the function of the word *quadam*? Surely *quadam* points to an unspecified recitation. In fact, the only indication of the period when the remarks might have been made is *initia sua*. Lucan compares his “first efforts” with the *Culex*. The first work listed by Statius is the *Iliakon* (55–56): “ludes Hectora Thessalosque currus / et supplex Priami potentis aurum”; the second is the *Catacthonion* (57): “et sedes reserabis inferorum.” The preface in question could belong to one of these works, which are undated; and there is nothing to prove that it does not belong to Lucan’s fifteenth or sixteenth year.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, Rostagni’s theory demands that *haec canes* refer only to the recitation considered above. If, however, the *Genethliakon* is of any value in settling problems of chronology (and it will be shown later that this is in any case unlikely), it is not possible that Statius could have been referring to such an early recitation. Calliope lists Lucan’s achievements in chronological order and among them she includes the *De incendio urbis*. Now this poem could not have been written before June 18, 64, the date of the great fire of Rome. Since this composition is listed before the *Bellum civile*, Statius can hardly be referring to any

recitation of that poem held before June of 64.

As was indicated before the discussion of Rostagni’s arguments, the evidence of Statius, taken in isolation, has been thought to confirm an emendation to XXVI. But it does not, since in fact the chronological information provided by Statius at this point is not to be trusted. In singing the praises of Lucan, Statius does not feel any obligation to restrain himself. The world, he says, is in Baetica’s debt for having given us not Seneca and Gallio, but Lucan: “hoc plus quam Senecam dedisse mundo / aut dulcem generasse Gallionem” (31–32). As a poet, Lucan will be second to none and will surpass even Vergil (75–80):

cedet Musa rudis ferocis Enni  
et docti furor arduus Lucreti,  
et qui per freta duxit Argonautas,  
et qui corpora prima transfigurat.  
quid maius loquar? ipsa te Latinis  
Aeneis venerabitur canentem.

The death of this prodigy is compared to the death of Alexander the Great (93–95) and of Orpheus (98–99). In emphasizing Lucan’s precociousness, Statius is willing to take certain chronological licences. He arranges the poet’s career in two phases, *teneris in annis* (54) and *coepta iuventa* (64). Now although he must have known that the *De incendio urbis* was written after June 18, 64, only ten months before the poet’s death, he still classes it among the works written *teneris in annis*. In this brief remaining period Statius, for the sake of arrangement, squeezes the beginning of Lucan’s *iuventus*—“mox coepta generosior iuventa”; to this period he assigns the *Bellum civile*. This is not all. Statius then says that all the works just mentioned (or perhaps, as Rostagni would claim, the *Bellum civile*—it makes no difference to the present argument) belong to the period just before the beginning of *iuventus*: “haec primo iuvenis canes sub aevo” (73).<sup>20</sup> In view of this, any chronological

19. Anderson, *op. cit.* (n. 5), p. 227, suggests that Lucan might have been working on the *Bellum civile* at a very early age: “It is possible that the *Wunderkind* composed some parts of the poem about the age of fifteen, and it is possible also that when he made the famous reference to the *Culex* he believed that Vergil had written that work at the age of

sixteen.” M. Sonntag, *Vergil als bukoliker Dichter* (Leipzig, 1891), p. 213, believes that the *praefatio* belongs to the *De incendio urbis*.

20. On the meaning of this expression see Anderson, *op. cit.* (n. 5), p. 228.

information provided by Statius in those parts of the poem where it would suit his purpose to exaggerate must be viewed with suspicion.<sup>21</sup> This does not mean that the information is necessarily incorrect; but when weighed against the clear evidence of the MS tradition it does not, in itself, justify altering a reading so strongly supported by that tradition.<sup>22</sup>

Thus the *Genethliacon Lucani* provides no convincing reason for altering the XVI in Donatus' text. There remains one final source of information, the *Culex* itself. Those who have related the material in the *Culex* to Vergilian biography in an attempt to assign a date to the poem have done so, naturally enough, only if they assumed that the poem was authentic. In countering the claims of those who allege that the internal evidence casts doubt on the transmitted text of Donatus, I have, for the sake of argument, adopted the same position on authenticity. This does not, of course, mean that my conclusion depends upon the authenticity of the *Culex*, since, if the poem is spurious, the internal evidence derived from it can clearly not be used to date it to a period of Vergil's life. If, then, the poem is spurious, there is no case for a different reading to be answered, and the following section of this paper will simply be unnecessary. There is the possibility that the poem is spurious, but that Donatus believed it to be genuine and was misled by false internal evidence to assign a date to the poem. If such is the case then, again, the proper approach is to assume, as did Donatus, that the poem is genuine and to determine whether the evidence points to an age of composition other than sixteen.

The poem opens with a dedication to a certain Octavius (1–10):<sup>23</sup>

Lusimus, Octaui, gracili modulante Thalia  
atque ut araneoli tenuem formauimus orsum;  
lusimus: haec propter culicis sint carmina docta,

21. For a similar effect of poetic exaggeration on chronology one should note Martial's comment on the *Culex* (8. 56. 19–20): "protinus Italiam concepit et arma virumque / qui modo vix culicem flevrat ore rudi." In using the words *protinus* and *modo vix* Martial conveniently ignores the fact that the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* (and perhaps other poems of the *Appendix Vergiliana*) intervened between the *Culex* and the *Aeneid*.

omnis et historiae per ludum consonet ordo  
notitiaeque ducum uoces, licet inuidus adsit.  
quisquis erit culpae iocos musamque paratus,  
pondere uel culicis leuior famaue feretur.  
posterius grauiore sono tibi musa loquetur  
nostra, dabunt cum securos mihi tempora fructus,  
ut tibi digna tuo poliantur carmina sensu.

After invoking the aid of certain deities (11–24), the poet goes on to ask Octavius to inspire him:

et tu, cui meritis oritur fiducia chartis,  
Octavi venerande, meis adlabere coeptis,  
sancte puer, tibi namque canit non pagina bellum  
[24–26].

hoc tibi, sancte puer; memorabilis et tibi certet  
gloria perpetuum lucens mansura per aevum,  
et tibi sede pia maneat locus, et tibi sospes  
debita felices memoretur vita per annos,  
grata bonis lucens. sed nos ad coepta feramur  
[37–41].

The identification of this Octavius might well provide a clue to the poem's date and circumstances. The epithets *venerande* (25) and *sancte* (26) applied to Octavius suggest a person of exalted station. The poet hopes that his future will be one of everlasting glory ("gloria perpetuum lucens mansura per aevum," 38) and that he will eventually take his place in the abode reserved for the devout ("tibi sede pia maneat locus," 39). All this seems to point to a member of the imperial household, and in particular to Gaius Octavius, the future emperor Augustus. It might be objected that the Octavius in question is himself a writer. The poet hopes at a later date to be able to write poetry worthy of the recipient's literary taste (*digna tuo sensu*, 10). Octavius' own confidence is growing because of his *meritis chartis* (24). But it must not be forgotten that Augustus was greatly interested in literature and wrote, among other things, a poem in hexameters called the *Sicilia*, a tragedy on Ajax, and a collection of epigrams.<sup>24</sup> If the poem is dedi-

22. Diehl, *op. cit.* (n. 2), p. 13, also rejects the assertion of Statius. He does not, however, attempt to question the general reliability of the *Genethliacon* in chronological matters, but contents himself with the statement, "Stat. silv. 2, 7, 73 setzt den *Culex* wohl mit unrecht in das 26. lebensjahr V.s."

23. Quotations from the *Culex* are from the text of W. Clausen, *Appendix Vergiliana* (Oxford, 1966).

24. Suet. *Aug.* 84–85.

cated to the future emperor, it follows that it could not have been written when Vergil was sixteen. At that time Gaius Octavius was only nine years old, and there was no indication of the role that he was to play in Roman history. The supporters of XXVI have therefore claimed that the poem was dedicated to Octavius ten years later, a view first put forward by De la Rue.<sup>25</sup> In that year (44 B.C.) he returned to Rome from Apollonia to claim his inheritance and, because of his new status as Caesar's adopted heir, altered his name to Gaius Iulius Caesar Octavianus.<sup>26</sup> There is, however, a serious objection to this claim. The prologue, despite its epithets, is surely far too playful in tone to be addressed to a person who is planning to step into the shoes of Caesar. It should be noted in particular that the recipient of the poem is twice addressed as a *puer* (26 and 37). However, when Octavian began his political career, he was very self-conscious about his youth and particularly objected to being called a *puer*.<sup>27</sup> According to Servius, so sensitive was he about this that the senate passed a decree forbidding the application of the word *puer* to him.<sup>28</sup> Under the circumstances, the *Culex*, dedicated as it is to a *sanctus puer*, would hardly have pleased him.

Are these difficulties encountered if it is assumed that Vergil wrote the poem at the age of twenty-one? Rostagni and T. Frank claimed that the language of the dedication points to this date.<sup>29</sup> The death of Domitius Ahenobarbus at Pharsalia left vacant the post of *pontifex*, and Caesar nominated Octavius to take his place in the same year, 48 B.C.<sup>30</sup> If the

*Culex* was dedicated to Octavius on this occasion, then the epithets *sancte* and *venerande* would be especially appropriate since they would draw attention to the sacred office. However, if these terms are to be invested with their full religious significance, as they must in such a situation, then they will surely be out of place in a poem like the *Culex*. The gay language of the first few lines of the poem suggests an occasion much more lighthearted than the elevation of someone to a sacred office.

The final objection to identifying the future emperor with the Octavius of the *Culex* is that the ancient authorities are unanimous in postponing the meeting between Vergil and Octavian until after the proscriptions of 42/41 B.C. Donatus does not include Octavian among the individuals who helped Vergil to regain his estate.<sup>31</sup> Probus is more explicit (*Life of Vergil* 10): "deinde [i.e., after the restoration of the farm] per gratiam Maecenatis in amicitiam Caesaris ductus est." The only authority to support an earlier meeting is the *Life of Vergil* attached to the Codex Bernensis, which claims that Vergil and Octavius were fellow students under the rhetorician Epidius.<sup>32</sup> It is doubtful how much reliance can be placed on this late evidence, which appears to be contradicted (implicitly, at least) by Suetonius, who mentions Augustus and Antony, but not Vergil, as one-time pupils of Epidius.<sup>33</sup> Vergil never seems to have attained the easy familiarity with the emperor enjoyed by Horace, for example, and it is difficult to see how they could have been on such friendly terms during their youth.<sup>34</sup>

25. *Op. cit.* (n. 6).

26. One would have to assume that Vergil deliberately used the incorrect name Octavius in the dedication in order to avoid the metrically intractable Octavianus.

27. Suet. *Aug.* 12, Dio 46. 41. 4. On this, see J. H. McCarthy, "Octavianus Puer," *CP*, XXVI (1931), 362-73.

28. On *Ecl.* 1. 42. See C. J. Fordyce, "Octavius in the *Culex*," *CP*, XXVII (1932), 174.

29. Rostagni, pp. 78-80; Frank, *op. cit.* (n. 12), pp. 26-27. E. de Marchi, *op. cit.* (n. 12), p. 65, is the first, as far as I can ascertain, to suggest the figure XXI. He does this to narrow the gap between the *Culex* and the *Eclogues*. Frank is the first to make a detailed defense of this reading.

30. Nic. Dam. *Aug.* 4 dates the election of Octavius to the pontificate immediately after October 18, 48 B.C., when he assumed the *toga virilis*. Vergil was, of course, twenty-two in 48 B.C. Frank attempts to solve this difficulty by assuming that the account of Vergil's life follows the consular years,

since by this reckoning he would still be in his twenty-first year. L. R. Taylor, "Caesar's Colleagues in the Pontifical College," *AJP*, LXIII (1942), 406, n. 68, argues that Octavius was probably not elected until 47 B.C.

31. *Life of Vergil* 19-20. He credits Alfenus Varus, Asinius Pollio, and Cornelius Gallus with the initial restoration, and adds that Maecenas helped Vergil in a subsequent dispute with a veteran who made claims on the land.

32. "ut primum se contulit Romae studuit apud Epidium oratorem cum Caesare Augusto."

33. *Rhet.* 6. 1: "Epidius... ludum dicendi aperuit docuitque inter ceteros M. Antonium et Augustum."

34. One should be wary of the imaginary meetings between the poet and the future emperor such as are described by W. Warde Fowler, "Note on *Culex*—Lines 24-41," *CR*, XXVIII (1914), 119-22, and R. S. Conway, *The Youth of Virgil* (Manchester, 1915), p. 20.

Since the future emperor has been all but ruled out as a candidate,<sup>35</sup> the search for the identity of Octavius must be directed elsewhere. Ideally he should be a man of letters on close terms with Vergil. Several individuals who bore the name Octavius and lived during this period are known;<sup>36</sup> of these there is one who meets the requirements perfectly, Octavius Musa.<sup>37</sup> This Octavius appears in two of the poems of the *Catalepton*.<sup>38</sup> In *Catalepton* 4, he seems to be about to leave for some unspecified destination and is addressed by Vergil in affectionate terms (1–3): “quocumque ire ferunt variae nos tempora vitae, / tangere quas terras quosque videre homines, / dispeream, si te fuerit mihi carior alter.” In *Catalepton* 11, he is the subject of a playful epitaph, supposedly written after he has fallen unconscious through excessive drinking (1–2):<sup>39</sup> “quis deus, Octavi, te nobis abstulit? an quae / dicunt, a, nimio pocula dura mero?” Vergil was evidently on close terms with Musa and even seems to have shared in his revels (11. 3: “vobiscum, si est culpa, bibi”). He admired his literary accomplishments (4. 5–6): “cui iuveni ante alios divi divumque sorores / cuncta, neque indigno, Musa, dedere bona.” Musa is more likely to have been a historian than an epic poet (the claim of T. Birt);<sup>40</sup> the question, however, is not really important for the present purpose, since both are serious professions and either might have prompted

Vergil to apologize for the relative slightness of a poem like the *Culex*.<sup>41</sup>

Further information on Musa is given by the scholiasts on the *Eclogues*.<sup>42</sup> Servius states (*ad Ecl.* 9. 7): “usque ad eum autem locum perticam limitarem Octavius Musa porrexerat, limitator ab Augusto datus, id est per quindecim milia passuum agri Mantuani, cum Cremonensis non sufficeret, offensus a Mantuanis, quod pecora eius in agro publico aliquando clausissent.” Philargirius (*ad Ecl.* 8. 6) gives a slightly different version: “Octavius Musa civis Mantuanus idemque magistratus, cum tributum ab Augusto fuisset indictum, pecora Vari—nam Varus possessor apud Mantuanos erat—cuius pecora capta pignori tam diu in foro clausa tenuit, donec inedia morerentur. Unde molestiam Mantuanis super amittendis agris intulit Varus, Vergilio tamen perpercit, quoniam condiscipulus eius fuerat.” The accounts are confused, but this can be said of most of our information on the proscriptions of the period. The basic facts appear to be that Musa (a) was a Mantuan, (b) was at some point a fellow pupil of Vergil, and (c) held some official position during the proscriptions following the civil war. It is also just possible that this is the same Octavius whose literary taste Horace so admired (*Sat.* 1. 10. 82–83): “Valgius et probet haec Octavius optimus atque / Fuscus.”

35. An effort to save him is made by F. Dornseiff, *Versmähntes zu Vergil, Horaz, und Properz* (Berlin, 1951), pp. 35–63, who dates the *Culex* to the year 28 B.C., when Augustus built his famous mausoleum. According to Dornseiff, the *Culex* is a parody of that event. The grave of the *culex* represents the mausoleum and the *culex* represents Augustus himself. The theory has, surprisingly enough, won some support, and is adopted by M. Schmidt, *Die Mücke* (Berlin, 1959).

36. For a list of the possible candidates, see Büchner, *op. cit.* (n. 11), cols. 1105–6.

37. The first to suggest Octavius Musa as the recipient of the poem seems to have been Ribbeck, *op. cit.* (n. 17), pp. 9 and 20.

38. The authenticity of the various poems that make up the *Catalepton* has not been settled, but the majority of scholars concede that 4, 5, and 11 are most probably genuine. For the various views held on the authenticity of these poems, see R. E. H. Westendorp Boerma, *P. Vergili Maronis libellus qui inscribitur Catalepton*, I (Groningen, 1949), and II (Assen, 1963).

39. In *Catalepton* 4 the cognomen Musa is used (6, 8), in *Catalepton* 11 the nomen Octavius. The only scholar, as far as

I can ascertain, to deny that both poems are addressed to one and the same person is P. Fabbri, “De Culicis Octavio,” *BCF*, XXXVI (1929), 74–76. He claims that the Octavius of *Catalepton* 11 is the future emperor.

40. The references to *Clio* (4. 10) and *Romanam historiam* (11. 6) suggest that he was a historian. He could have been the Marcus Octavius cited by the anonymous writer of the *Origo gentis Romanae* 12. 2: “ut scribit Marcus Octavius libro primo,” and 19. 5: “Marcus Octavius et Licinius Macer tradunt.” For the theory that he was a writer of epic, see T. Birt, *Jugendverse und Heimatpoesie Vergils* (Leipzig, 1910), p. 69.

41. *Culex* 8–10.

42. The information provided by the scholiasts is rejected as worthless by Diehl, *op. cit.* (n. 22), p. 69. He claims that the name was taken from *Catalepton* 4 and 11 and the information invented. This view is surely too extreme. It is difficult to imagine that the scholiasts would have introduced Octavius into the course of events that surrounded the loss of Vergil's farm simply on the strength of his appearance in the *Catalepton*. We must accept their accounts as based, at least, on the truth, even if they are somewhat confused.

The identification of Octavius as Octavius Musa receives strong support from a curious feature of the prologue of the *Culex* that does not seem to have been noticed hitherto. The jocular tone of this part of the poem is unmistakable. The poet refers to the composition as a *ludus* three times and emphasizes that later he will produce something on a higher plane. One product of this is the apparent play on the word *Musa*, as in line 6: "quisquis erit culpae iocos Musamque paratus." *Culpae iocos* is a self-contained phrase, with the result that *Musamque* gives the impression of having been added as an afterthought.<sup>43</sup> This suggests that there might be a reference to the person Musa and to some recent criticism made against him, deftly introduced by means of lexical ambiguity.

A similar type of wordplay seems to be employed in lines 8–9: "posterius graviore sono tibi Musa loquetur / nostra." The ambiguity here is not only lexical but also syntactical. The *Musa* that follows *tibi* could naturally be taken as vocative; indeed it is not until the following line that it is made clear that *Musa* is nominative. Again, it is the idea of criticism that is involved. "Graviore sono tibi loquetur" could mean that someone "will speak to you in an angrier tone," and the

reader (or listener) might have expected a reference to be made to the "someone" in the following line, instead of the nominative *nostra*.<sup>44</sup>

There is a strong likelihood, then, that Musa was the recipient of the *Culex*.<sup>45</sup> This knowledge does not enable us to assign a precise date to the poem; we can say little about the chronology of Musa's life beyond that he held a minor magistracy in 42 B.C.<sup>46</sup> and was possibly still alive in 35 B.C.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, there is nothing to deny that Musa was the recipient of the *Culex* when Vergil was sixteen, perhaps when they were fellow students. On the basis of this identification of Octavius there is no justification for altering the text of Donatus.

The following conclusion emerges. The date that the MSS give for the *Culex* is consistent with the other information on the life of Vergil given by Donatus. The external evidence, Statius *Silv.* 2. 7, is not reliable; the internal evidence, in the form of a reference to Octavius, is inconclusive. Unless and until new evidence is unearthed the figure XVI should be allowed to stand.

ANTHONY A. BARRETT

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

43. *Musam* (for poetry) introduced after *iocos* produces a very weak hendiadys. There is no reason why the poet should have allowed this awkward formation unless he had some ulterior motive. *Musam iocosque* is metrically impossible but it can be assumed that it would not have been beyond his ingenuity to insert the two words in that order in a way that would be metrically acceptable. One might compare Catullus 68. 10: "muneraque et Musarum hinc petis et Veneris."

44. That the Romans engaged in this sort of play on verbal ambiguity is clearly shown by Hor. *Epist.* 1. 13. 6–9: "si te forte meae gravis uret sarcina chartae / abicito potius quam quo perferre iuberis / clitellas ferus impingas Asinaeque paternum / cognomen vertas in risum et fabula fias."

45. The use of the epithets *sancte* and *venerande* need cause no difficulty. Funaioli, *op. cit.* (n. 5), p. 226, shows that the words can have a purely moral value without any religious or quasi-religious overtones.

46. K. Mraz, "De Culicis auctore," *Studi in onore di Luigi Castiglioni* (Florence, 1960), p. 625, is surely wrong in claiming that Octavius Musa the magistrate would have been too old to be the recipient of the *Culex*, and that the recipient was in fact his son. If Musa was the same age as Vergil, he would have been twenty-eight at the time of the proscriptions, old enough to hold a minor magistracy.

47. The date of Hor. *Sat.* 1. 10.

### AN EMENDATION IN THE *EPITOMA METENSIS*

The so-called Metz epitome has in § 49 the following sentence: "ultra id flumen quidam Mophis, Taxili filius, qui iam patre uiuo Alexandri amicitiae ob eius res gestas cupidus fuisset, patre mortuo legatos ad Alexandrum

misit *oratum*, qui renuntiarent quid uellet, utrum se regnum paternum obtinere, an aliquem missurus esset."<sup>1</sup> Recognizing (as most readers will) that *oratum* is à propos de *bottes*, O. Wagner replaced it in his text with

1. Available editions are O. Wagner, *Jahrb. f. klass. Philol.*, Suppl. 26 (1901), and P. H. Thomas, *Epitoma rerum gestarum Alexandri et liber de morte eius*<sup>2</sup> (Leipzig, 1966). For other

textual problems see my "Notes Critiques sur l'*Epitoma Metensis*," *AC* (forthcoming).