

# COLUMELLA'S LIVING HEDGE: THE ROMAN GARDENING BOOK

By JOHN HENDERSON

The subject of this essay is not Roman gardens, their reconstruction or restoration, but Roman gardening. This must be found on the page, and specifically in the work of Columella, who has more to say on this aspect of *Country Life* than the rest of Classical Antiquity put together — literally more, in quantity, but also, and more to the point, *more to the point*.

Reference to Columella's Garden always means the poem of 436 hexameters that bursts into the prose *De re rustica* as Book 10. It appears on its own in a cluster of manuscripts, and has regularly been read as a free-standing composition.<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I resist this sin of excerption, to explore the role of gardening on Columella's farm.<sup>2</sup>

## I. GARDENING TIME

Gardening begins with the garden, and the garden begins with enclosure. Democritus said, or was made to say, in his lost and anyhow more or less transparently pseudonymous *Georgic*, that a wall won't last and the price isn't right. Columella knows gardens need, before anything else, to 'keep out people and animals'. His chosen solution is that of 'the earliest authorities', and he gives precise instructions, exact timing, and detailed measurements for establishing a low-cost and indestructible 'living hedge' (*uiuam saepem*), of thorn.<sup>3</sup> You will need plenty of seed, though for once it won't matter just which variety, plus lengths of old ship's rope or the like, some vetch, a good supply of twigs, and two or three intensive bouts of spadework and bending the back. 'And so this is the very method of garden enclosure that won most approval from people of old'. Now that this is settled, we can get on with choice of site: beside the farmhouse (*iuxta uillam*); soil quality: rich; and water-supply: a stream abutting, or else a well (to be 'dug out at the precise moment when the sun occupies the last segment of Virgo', i.e. September before the autumn equinox). Negatively: no garden must lie below a threshing-floor. Now we have our garden space, preparations for sowing can begin: watering as, when, and where need be, digging over, muckspreading, and weeding, weeding, weeding ('once for all, at every moment in time, plan to get rid of weeds'). These are essential preliminaries to spring and to autumn sowing alike. Some species sow at both seasons, others only in the autumn. More precisely, the gardener needs to run down, month by month, which species sow best when, from January through August (but only parsley/celery is on between the end of April and the tail end of August).

Gardening, however, always breaks down operations to specifics. Horticulture means getting to grips with individual plant care. They are all different, they have their own ways. Garlic, cabbage, lettuce, leeks/chives, asparagus, cucumber/gourd, onion, navew/turnip/radish . . . — these are the complicated, tricky, ambitious items; and dotted in amongst them are the short and sweet propositions, along with their own customized entries: artichoke, mustard, coriander, rocket, basil, all-heal, celery/parsley, parsnip/carrot, rampion, elecampane, alexanders, mint, rue, thyme and savory, pepperwort, beet, chervil and orach, poppy, dill, caper.

<sup>1</sup> cf. esp. F. Boldrer (ed., trans., comm.), *L. Iuni Moderati Columellae Rei Rusticae Liber Decimus (Carmen de Cultu Hortorum)* (1996), esp. 33–50, on the paradosis; E. de Saint-Denis (ed., French trans., comm.), *De L'Agriculture, Livre X (De l'Horticulture)* (1969), esp. 8–11, on Book 10 ~ *De re rustica*.

<sup>2</sup> For recent scholarship: R. Martin, 'État présent des études sur Columelle', *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 11.32.3 (1985), 1959–79.

<sup>3</sup> cf. Varro, *De Re Rust.* 1.14.

At this point end the instructions which are in Columella's opinion needed on Garden Care:

hactenus praecipendum existimaui de cultu hortorum et officiis uillici, quem quamuis instructum atque eruditum omni opere rustico esse oportere prima parte huius exordii censuerim, quoniam tamen plerumque euenit, ut eorum quae didicerimus memoria nos deficiat, eaque saepius ex commentariis renouanda sint, omnium librorum meorum argumenta subieci, ut cum res exegisset, facile reperiri possit, quid in quoque quaerendum, et qualiter quidque faciendum sit. (11.3.65)<sup>4</sup>

And at this point, too, he gives us to understand, end the instructions which are in Columella's opinion needed on the *World of the Countryside*. For I have been summarizing his chapter on the annual gardening round, from his Book 11. Here the very last paragraph adds, instead of his regular round-up and obligatory promise of the subject in store with his next volume, what must come across as the firmest conclusion to a text that you could wish for:

It very often turns out that recall of what we have learned lets us down and it needs refreshing pretty regularly from the manual. I have therefore added an appendix containing the *Topics of All Columella's Books*. As and when the need arises, finding what to look for in each book, and how to deal with each problem, will easily be possible. (ibid.)

## II. GETTING INTO COLUMELLA

Columella is virtually always read in the Loeb edition.<sup>5</sup> Here the final note to Book 11 reads:<sup>6</sup>

The final paragraph of this book seems to show that the author intended to have concluded his work at this point and therefore added a kind of index or summary of the contents of the first eleven books, like those given by Pliny the Elder and Aulus Gellius. If this was so, it appears that, when he added Book XII, he did not transfer the summary to the end of Book XII, nor did he alter the final paragraph of Book XI. *The index has not survived*. (Vol. 3, pp. 170-1. *My emphasis*)

This is, however, plain wrong. Lundström's 1906 apparatus comments:<sup>7</sup> 'Placed here at the end of Book XI [the MSS] show a conspectus of topics', and this duly takes the form of a full list of 'Contents', for each of the books in sequence from *Liber Primus* through *Liber Decimus Rei Rusticae*, rounded up with the bare rubric *Liber Undecimus Rei Rusticae: carmen de cultu hortorum*, and the no less bare concluding *Liber Duodecimus: hic est uilicus et hortorum*.

<sup>4</sup> 'Thus far, I decided, should instruction go, and that's it, on horticulture and the estate manager's duties. Yes, I did opine at the entrée to this work of induction that he must be trained and informed in every single country task. But more often than not it transpires that recollection of what we have learned lets us down, and it all needs frequent renewing from the manual. That is why I have subjoined the contents of all the books of *Columella*, so that when the need arises it can easily be found what needs checking out in each matter, and what method each matter requires.'

<sup>5</sup> There is no Oxford, or Teubner *Columella*, the

Budé has no Book 11 so far, the flimsy fascicles of the Uppsala edition begun by Lundström in 1897 and completed in 1968 are not so accessible: V. Lundström, Å. Josephson and S. Hedberg (eds), *L. Iunii Moderati Columellae Opera Quae Exstant*, Fasc. 1-8 (1897-1968). There are no translations from jolly Penguin *vel. sim*.

<sup>6</sup> H. B. Ash, E. S. Forster and E. H. Heffner (ed. and trans.), Vols 1-3 (Loeb Classical Library, 1941-55). Two editors in a row perished on the way; the third and last volume, with Books 10-12, was by Heffner.

<sup>7</sup> Fasc. 7: 62, ad loc.

This last entry is then followed in most of the paradosis with *incipit* notes on the next book.<sup>8</sup> The formatting of the first nine (or ten) books is in the closest agreement with all this paratextual material: each is preceded by the relevant section of the global list of topics, and the titlature they give for their book tallies closely, too.<sup>9</sup> After the full general list of contents, we continue with the rubric *L. Iuni Moderati Columellae rei rusticae liber tertius decimus. Vilica*, and then: *Liber tertius decimus haec continet*, introducing a nice and full break-down of the topics for the last book, on the same format as for the books up to the *Garden Poem*.<sup>10</sup>

All this means that the bulk of the manuscript tradition (ninth century, and through the fifteenth century) has an *extremely* coherent overall reference system. One which makes Columella, and he would preen if he knew it, the most consultable classical text to have come down to us.<sup>11</sup>

There is a snag, though. The rubrics and the indexing all agree to include as their Book 3 of the *De Re Rustica* what all editions since the Aldine of 1514 extract and postpone to sit uncomfortably after the twelve-book manual, under the title *De arboribus*.<sup>12</sup> There should therefore be our twelve, not the paradosis' thirteen, books in the general index as in all modern editions:<sup>13</sup> in short, editions must agree, the indexing system of our *De Re Rustica*: 1–9 and 12 shall head each book with a list of contents; 11 will not, but is followed by a complete contents for all of our 1–11; whereas 10 has no list of contents, and does not figure in the contents provided after 11.

Now that Loeb note may have been meant to deny the existence of Columella's promised index after Book 11. Heffner might wish to preserve us from mistakenly accepting the *De arboribus* as part of the author's final version of the *De re rustica*, in thirteen books, as that general index does (if you don't doctor it, à la Lundström). He may prefer to seem to deny the existence of *any* index at this point rather than to seem to accept the one we have as the work of *Columella himself*. Or perhaps it was just a bad day, and Book 12, the home strait, was beckoning.

However this may be, the index, and Columella's promise of an index, are not just a vital part of the history of his manual's utility in the history of farming in early modern

<sup>8</sup> 'Continet autem quae intra uillam agi debeat a muliere officio uilicationis praeposita de conditura uinorum. de custodia pomorum. et pleraque alia quae in oeconomis libris praecipuntur. Praeter hos duodecim libros singularis est liber ad eprium marcellum de cultura uinearum et arborum. hic liber aliter quam indicem habet inscriptus.' Note that Lundström excises from his text the *argumentum* for the Contents of *Liber Tertius. ΦΥΤΕΥΤΙΚΟΣ surcularis*, plus the breakdown listing its main subjects in order, as given in the MSS. This material he relegates to the apparatus, where it is duly noted.

<sup>9</sup> I is *Qui rusticari uelint. II sementivus* (the *explicit* has the label: *de sementibus*). IV is *surcularis prior*, V lacks a title, but VI is *surcularis tertius*. VII is *KTHNIKOS* (the *explicit* has: *ueterinarius medicinalis*), teamed with VIII *De minore pecore* (*explicit*: *ueterinarius medicinalis de minore pecore*). IX, *De uillationibus pastionibus. auarius et piscator*, pairs with X, *De uillationibus pastionibus. macellarius et apiarius*. XI *De cura hortorum carmen* (*explicit*: *KHΠΟΥΠΙΚΟΣ de cultu hortorum*). is followed by XII *Prosa de cultu hortorum*.

<sup>10</sup> V. Lundström, Å. Josephson and S. Hedberg (eds), *L. Iuni Moderati Columellae Opera Quae Exstant*, Fasc. 8, *Liber Duodecimus. Vilica* (1968), 11–12.

<sup>11</sup> Rubrics and index are consistently as one (apart from a very few falterings in the numbering of books and, in a few MSS, some confused entries of titles that prefix the wrong materials to the wrong books). For minute cross-comparison, B.-J. Schröder, *Titel und Text. Zur Entwicklung lateinischer Gedichtüberschriften* (1999), 132–3. (My thanks to Michael Reeve for drawing my attention to this powerful book.)

<sup>12</sup> cf. R. Goujard (ed., trans., comm.), *Columelle, <Les Arbres>* (1986), 7–21. Lundström follows suit, excising from his text the *argumentum* for the Contents of *Liber Tertius. ΦΥΤΕΥΤΙΚΟΣ surcularis*, plus the breakdown listing its main subjects in order, as given in the MSS. This material he relegates to the apparatus, where it is noted that he (and his continuators) will be *silently correcting all the headings for the rest of the books*, in order to bring them into line.

<sup>13</sup> Columella's text manages to notice book numbers on four occasions (8.1.1, 10 *Praef.* 1, 11.1.12, 12.13.1), each time on the twelve book count. Our Books 3–5, on vines, olives, and other trees, duplicate the subjects, and to a large extent the wording, of the demoted book *De arboribus*, and that book is the only one without an address to (Publius) Siluinus. So everything works out perfectly once we identify the intruder as a relic from an earlier redaction, cast on a briefer scale. Perhaps in four books, it is conjectured, with *De arboribus* as Book 2 (and with *De cultu agrorum* for Book 1, as stated at *De arb.* 1.1, 3.6). Since Cassiodorus apparently refers to sixteen books of Columella (*Diu. Lect.* 28), the first edition could have been just four books in length, before Columella got established enough to inflate his introductory generalia into a whole book length, before his trees grew from one book to three, and, presumably, before he stretched his farm to include some, much, or all, of the tailpiece material in his later books: somehow, both twelve-book and four-book versions might conceivably have been known to Cassiodorus or his informant? Four to twelve — did Columella start off as didactic farmer Virgil, but wind up as epic hero Virgil?

Europe, they are also an important signpost, at a cardinal moment, within Columella's project of organizing and accessing all the knowledge in his world, between farm and farmhouse. Even though the details *must* have been adjusted to fit the interpolation of *De arboribus*, the appearance of the index here, *both* as an obedient, accurate, and perhaps even basically faithful, scheme of Contents, *and* as a suggestive part of the presentation of the whole apparatus of *De re rustica*, make it far too important to leave to a brisk Loeb footnote for obliviation.<sup>14</sup>

For the *Book of Gardening* is indeed crucially involved in the index's presentation of *Country Life*. Where Columella puts his *Gardens* defines his take on gardening, it says how he means horticulture to gear in with the larger enterprise. And Columella is a systemic organizer to reckon with, concerned throughout to articulate, waymark, and hypertext his individual lessons into an effective programme of teaching. Like every writer on the subject, he composes The Garden as a definitionally separate world, whether proudly, apologetically, or mock-heroically valued against other areas on the farm, and in the process he construes gardening as a validated, i.e. contested, category of culture.

### III. THE GARDENING SUPPLEMENT

Behind that 'living hedge', no garden is ever simply 'barred to man and beast' — only to *unwanted* intruders. In Columella's version, all the garden's foundational operations, of digging, manuring, weeding and so on, palpably interact with the rest of the farming economy. They depend on it, for materials and techniques, and we depend on it for the understanding we bring with us to the garden, so that we hit the ground running — or more to the point so we dig it right away. While the general index ensures that readers can hit instantly on their topic of need wherever it occurs in Books 1 through 9, and the supplementary Contents does the same for Book 12, the index passes up on gardening, and on gardening alone. Not just for Book 10, but also for that gardening section in Book 11 which I summarized at the beginning, with its long course of focused entries, on a plant-by-plant basis which declares itself to forego any overall organizational principle. Each species got its moment of full attention there, then on to the next — the next write-up. Why (—) wasn't the gardening worth proper accessing?

The exceptional treatment may just be down to scribal error.<sup>15</sup> But Columella's text unmistakably puts incommensurate energy into dramatizing a special role for the garden as he conceptualizes it within, and over against, his whole farming enterprise. So the enigma of the suddenly blank and unhelpful index plays within that grander context.

As is instantly most striking, Columella's gardening is special because it grabs a whole, unique, book of *formal* vacation from the prose manual. But it is special, too, because it then collects a headlined reprise, in prose, as the concluding section of Book 11. Though scholarship on *De re rustica* rarely acknowledges it, we shall find that Columella makes it clear that the final book, 12, plays a part, too, in shaping — in re-shaping — the entire project, and not least its articulation of *horticulture*. Before this ultimate modulation, that sturdy no-nonsense delivery of instructions for running the garden plants in Book 11 was itself aligned with and informed by the preceding ten and a half volumes of expert writing and indoctrination. Consultation on an itemic basis is the pride and vindication of Columella's farming vademecum. But it is no way to *understand* this Roman 'epic'.

<sup>14</sup> Schröder, op. cit. (n. 11), 131–42, presents the ingenious but unconvincing thesis that Columella's list of contents was inspired by the Elder Pliny's pioneering indexing system, which persuaded him to re-jig the *De re rustica*, and Book 12 was written so late in his life that it evaded incorporation into the general Contents. She rightly draws attention to the importance of Columella's network of divisions, numbers, and indexes.

<sup>15</sup> The scholarly scribes, be it said, who *must* have worked the index of Contents to fit their version, inclusive of *De arboribus* — where *it* says it belongs, just after agriculture, only as Book III not Book II, since our Book 1 is taken up with a general introduction to the *Country World*, and agriculture arrives as Book 2.

The garden is enclosed *within* Columella's farm, as well as shut away in one corner of it. Gardening will take place, and take its place, in that full context. In particular, the two gardens gloss each other, but they also participate in, and impact on, a loudly structured course of instruction *On the World of the Countryside*. Taken on its own as in my opening summary, Book 11 must also wilt under excerption.

Let me start from that closing paragraph to Book 11. I skipped over a few words there:

At this point end the instructions which are in my opinion needed on Garden Care *and the Duties of an Overseer*. He should, as I argued in the first part of this exposition, be educated and knowledgeable in every rural task. But it very often turns out that recall of what we have learned lets us down and it needs refreshing pretty regularly from the manual.

You will recall that this book was labelled *Vilicus*, 'The overseer'. The back-reference points us to 11.1, the preface to the book:<sup>16</sup>

Claudius Augustalis, tam ingenuae naturae quam eruditionis adolescens, complurium studiosorum et praecipue agrorum sermonibus instigatus extudit mihi, cultus hortorum prosa ut oratione componerem. nec me tamen fallebat hic euentus rei, cum praedictam materiam carminis legibus implicarem. sed tibi, Publi Siluine, pertinaciter expetenti uersificationis nostrae gustum, negare non sustinebam, facturus mox, si collibisset, quod nunc aggredior, ut olitoris curam subtexerem uilici officiis. quae quamuis primo rei rusticae libro uidebar aliquatenus exsecutus, quoniam tamen ea simili desiderio noster Augustalis saepius flagitabat, numerum, quem iam quasi consummaueram, uoluminum excessi, et hoc undecimum praeceptum rusticationis memoriae tradidi. (11. Praef.)<sup>17</sup>

We learn from this programme that Book 11 undoes the completion of Columella's project with Book 10 — his *consummatio* (1 Praef. 7) — with this one more extra shot of rustication.<sup>18</sup> More for us to remember, more for us to consult in the manual when we don't manage to remember: find that index to the whole works — on its way, still unsignalled in the text, past the end of 11. We see, too, that the pointer in Book 11's signing-off paragraph both referred us back to this preface, and, more pointedly, relayed us all the way back to the start of the *De re rustica* as a whole — to the general discussion from first principles, in Book 1, of how best to run a farm. More immediately, however, the preface represents itself as a shock surprise: Book 10 ended with one more in the series of Columella's firm 'At this point, Siluinus, ends my lecture on X' formulae, with no sign of any continuation ahead. Discussion of the decision to versify gardening in Book 10 links back to the original decision to play poet as it shook the reader of Book 9 awake in the envoi of that book:

sed iam consummata disputatione de uillaticis pecudibus atque pastionibus, quae reliqua nobis rusticarum rerum pars subest, de cultu hortorum, Publi Siluine, deinceps ita ut et tibi et Gallioni nostro complacuerat, in carmen conferemus. (9.16.2)<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Some prefaces are recognized as such in the traditional scheme of reference, some are not.

<sup>17</sup> 'Claudius, priest of imperial cult, is one of nature's gentlemen. Equally, the young man is highly cultured. Stimulated by discussions with more than a few expert enthusiasts, particularly with farmers, he pounded me into agreeing to draw up a systematic *Horticulture* in Latin prose. His success in this did not indeed escape me when I was wrapping the aforesaid topic in the code of poetic law.

But you, Siluinus, were persistently requesting a taste of my verse-writing, and I didn't manage to say no. If you felt like me about it, I was at once going to do what I am presently moving on to, a postscript on *How to Run a Farm: the Job of Overseer*, attached by way of supplement: *Garden Care*.

True, I felt I had already to a certain extent gone through this in *Columella, On the Countryside, Book One*. But my imperial priest lobbied for it, over and over, and came on just as strong. So I have overrun the tally of *Books* that I was just on the point of completing, and I now put into the public domain this *Manual of Country Life: Eleven*.'

<sup>18</sup> As speaking name, *Claudius Augustalis* smuggles in 'Closure as Augmentation': 'Le Supplément'.

<sup>19</sup> 'But now that discussion of the farmhouse animals and their feeding has reached conclusion, the remaining section of *Countryside Matters* (below), namely: *Horticulture*, Siluinus, shall next, as both you and our friend Gallio co-plotted, be processed into *Columella in Verse*.'

The prose preface to the poem-book 10 at once confirms, and explains, this bombshell:

Faenoris tui, Siluine, quod stipulanti spoponderam tibi, reliquam pensiunculam percipe. nam superioribus nouem libris hac minus parte debitum, quod nunc persoluo, reddideram. superest ergo cultus hortorum segnis ac neglectus quondam ueteribus agricolis, nunc uel celeberrimus. siquidem . . . quare cultus hortorum, quoniam fructus magis in usu est, diligentius nobis, quam tradiderunt maiores, praecipendus est: isque, sicut institueram, prosa oratione prioribus subnecteretur exordiis, nisi propositum meum expugnasset frequens postulatio tua, quae praecepit, ut poeticis numeris explerem Georgici carminis omissas partes, quas tamen et ipse Vergilius significauerat, posteris se memorandas relinquere. neque enim aliter istud nobis fuerat audendum, quam ex uoluntate uatis maxime uenerandi: cuius quasi numine instigante pigre sine dubio propter difficultatem operis, uerumtamen non sine spe prosperi successus aggressi sumus tenuem admodum et paene uiduam corpore materiam, quae tam exilis est, ut in consummatione quidem totius operis, annumerari ueluti particula possit laboris nostri, per se uero et quasi suis finibus terminata nullo modo speciose conspici. nam etsi multa sunt eius quasi membra, de quibus aliquid possumus effari, tamen eadem tam exigua sunt, ut, quod aiunt Graeci, ex incomprehensibili paruitate harenae funis effici non possit. quare quicquid est istud, quod elucubrauimus, adeo propriam sibi laudem non uindicat, ut boni consulat, si non sit dedecori prius editis a me scriptorum monumentis. sed iam praefari desinamus.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, we shall come to understand in retrospect, the manual was by this point substantially complete *according to traditional definitions* of Columella's task. But the garden had become a 'modern' preoccupation, and demands/deserves proper handling. Thus, Columella has already paid his dues in full and, for all that he sees the garden as only a *pensiuncula*, yet it is at the same time *reliqua (pars)*, so the job would not be done without it, 'bonus' or not. This topic is the 'extra mile' that proves we are dealing with the ideal farmer, who possesses all the 'diligence' that his ideal farmer must evince. Rolling up those sleeves, for one last push: *diligens pater familiae*, of the general *Preface*, 'cui cordi est ex agri cultu certam sequi rationem rei familiaris augendae' (I.1.3, 'whose thrill is to follow a sure method of increasing the family estate').

The composite picture we are given has Columella already down to do gardening in prose, 'for' Claudius the imperial priest, when Siluinus appears on the scene plus Seneca's brother Gallio to outbid him, so that Book 11 will supplement both the earlier discussion of the *Vilicus* in Book 1 and the garden of poetry in 10 — 'so long as Siluinus agrees' with the idea. Clearly Columella thrusts these manoeuvres and retrenchments before his readers in order to get us on board, as well as to sell us a story-frame. So, yes, there is a question whether Book 11 fits, or *can* fit, into the 'Siluinus' project, i.e. the entire unified *De re rustica*. There is a special issue of its relations *both* with Book 1 — and this may carry all of 1–9 in its train — *and* with the extraordinary extravagance of Book 10. Book 11 is a 'second thought' which *tells* us that it may well be redundant, if it

<sup>20</sup> 'Your interest, Siluinus. I pledged it you when you did the contract. Now be in full receipt of the outstanding wee dollop of payment. For in my nine books to date I have paid my due, *minus* this fraction: I do now pay up in full.

So, now, the negative balance outstanding is *horticulture*. Low energy and neglected by the ancient farmers of old. Today up there with even the most densely visited sites.

The reasons for this? . . . That is why *Garden Care*, since produce has an increased role in current practices, must be more carefully prescribed by us than our ancestors handed it down.

Horticulture would now be subjoined to the earlier projects in prose delivery, the way I had planned, if my project had not been taken by storm by your insistent demands. Demands which prescribed that I must fill up in metrical verse the missing fraction of the *Georgics*, which Virgil, mind, *Virgil* himself, signalled he was 'leaving for gardening books' from authors 'to come'.

No other way could I ever dare any such thing.

Only in line with the wishes of the poet adored above all others. His godlike decree stirred me on. Without doubt I went stubbornly because of the difficulty of the work. But not without hope of a successful outcome. I have set about a subject which is meagre to a degree, virtually deprived of bulk. It is so spare that it could count as a sub-percentage of my task in the total aggregate of the whole work. In its own right, bounded by its own set of goals, it could no way have visible impact.

For although it has many limbs, about which we can hold forth, nevertheless they are so miniscule that, in the Greek phrase, 'a rope of sand couldn't be wound' from their ungraspable microscale.

So it is that this stuff — whatever came of my work through the night — claims no credit for itself. So much so, it counts it all to the good if it does not dishonour the legacy of earlier texts preserved as the publications of *Columella*.

— But now I must end these disclaimers, my *Preface*.'

is not out to make its predecessor redundant. And this provokes the question whether this 'redundancy' is out to rub something in, and whether that is precisely the (double) point. Does the re-introduction of the figure of the *uilicus* serve to ram home a big issue? Whether or not its slight status as 'interest', or 'bonus ball', is to be taken at face value — does gardening call for the dual treatment it gets? The unique supervenience of *both* Gallio *and* Claudius tell us that their patches are special events; but their partnership with Siluinus tells us that these events belong on the team at large. These gardens may not measure up to all the solid farming that pushed them to the back of the queue; there again, they may be the stars of the entire show. Such are those two editorial concepts compacted in the preface to calibrate the poetic garden against all the work that has preceded: *subnectere*, (§3, 'see attachment'); *non . . . dedecori* (§5, 'no let-downs').

#### IV. AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR: ALL IN THE TIMING

I shall return to the matter of 'Virgil's mandate', waved at us in Book 10. For now, Book 11 needs more exposure. Both the preface and the final paragraph described the contents of this book as 'The Overseer's Duties' plus 'Garden Care' (= Gardener's care/Horticulture), in the relation *subtexere / et*.<sup>21</sup> Our editions divide 'The Overseer, Duties of' into two component sections, but this is not how Columella puts it. His account of the *Vilicus* (11.1.3, first word, and topic, after the preface) takes up from the account given in 1.8, as he signals with a back-reference to the first preface (§5) at 11.1.10. The overlap is considerable (esp. 1.8.5–14 ~ 11.1.19–28),<sup>22</sup> but in Book 11 the job description moves from the general run of duties onto a steadily more insistent focus on the paramount importance of their *correct timing*. Time of year, time of day, workdays and festivals, constant . . . vigilant . . . 'diligence' must radiate from him through all the staff, and counter those eternal enemies, 'ignorance and negligence'. 'As in the rest of life', but 'especially in farming', these foes do more harm than knowledge does good. 'Who could doubt how time's runaway train cannot be caught?', Hesiod was so right in telling us 'He who hesitates is lost', no wonder countryfolk mutter 'Don't hesitate to sow', for if you don't get jobs done on the day for them — 'on *their* day' —, then 'Not the dozen daylight hours of one day but a whole year is dead'. If one job is done 'late', then the whole cycle will be 'late', and this 'cheats the hopes of a whole year'.

This barrage of hectoring voices ushers in one of the most striking sequences in all the *De re rustica* (11.2). The Overseer needs a monthly rota for his 'duties'. He must know the stars and sky, that is: the linkage between astronomy and weather-conditions (or astrology and meteorology). But he must know that farming is applied science, not slide-rule mechanics — using nous, forethought, and multi-vectoring reckoning to adapt general truths to particular prevailing conditions. Virgil was right to tell us in *Georgic* 1 to 'watch the stars and their days' (204–7), but when he kickstarted us with 'Let first-ploughing commence when spring is new' (1.43), we countryfolk need to figure out whether this was the year when spring came early, for there's to be no waiting till the stars come right: thus the detailed and precise almanac which follows, running from 13 January right round the calendar to 12 January, is firmly controlled by the explanation of its format that precedes it: farming can start before spring if the timing is right:

possit igitur ab Idibus Ianuariis (ut principem mensem Romani anni obseruet) auspicari  
culturalurum officia; quorum alia ex pristinis residua consummabit, atque alia futuri temporis  
incohabit. satis autem erit per dimidios menses exsequi quodque negotium, quia neque

<sup>21</sup> In the first case, accurately promising the running-order *Vilicus*, and then gardening; but in the retrospect, when it cannot matter, reversing the sequence.

<sup>22</sup> In the other direction, 1.9.2 at once *explicitly* deferred the duties of herdsmen to the matching panels on cattle and sheep at 6.1–26, 7.1–7.

praefestinatum opus nimium immature uideri possit ante quindecim dies factum, nec rursus post totidem nimium tarde. (11.2.3)<sup>23</sup>

The calendar of 'fortnightly' weather and optimally timed operations covers the wide and varied range of miscellaneous late winter and early spring tasks, but when we reach 1 March:

his diebus commode instruuntur horti, de quibus suo loco dicam secretius, ne inter hanc quasi turbam operum neglegentius olitoris officia descripsisse uidear, aut nunc ordinem reliquarum culturalum coeptum interrupisse. (11.2.25)<sup>24</sup>

Our almanac plays out its annual sequence, the Overseer puts in a brief re-appearance for a round-up of cattlefeed, amounts of, by the month from January through December, and so we reach the firm editorial *diuisio* that marks the arrival of the deferred separate treatment of the Gardener's year.

This account (11.3), as you already know from the paraphrase I gave when I started, will turn out to be organized as a full account of gardening from first principles, from the 'living hedge' onward, without strict conformity with the almanac from which it was extruded (11.2). True, once the imaginary plot is sorted, the first section groups tasks in preparation for the sowing season — of early spring. Columella gets us into weeding, muckspreading, second digging five days before sowing time, and orders beds 'divided up' around the Ides of January, to kick in his own editorial sub-*diuisio* that sets out precise instructions for sowing. With the complication that gardens sow in autumn as well as spring, he nevertheless gives a monthly run-down, in less than 150 words, for those sowing times between January and August; but this is still preliminary to the main action: the full treatment required by each plant species in its own right. Of stars and weather, there is almost no mention — repetition so soon would be a price not worth paying, or, to turn this round, the conjunction is worth sacrificing in order to give the horticultural data their own enclosure.

## V. FARMING BY THE BOOK

Thus Book 11 takes the garden out of Columella's representation of farm management, but still tackles it as a pressing challenge to formulate a working annual *timetable*. It works with the presumption that the knowledge that has been applied to the farm still applies behind that hedge; but it insists that the focus of attention must change inside the enclosure. This gardening is a matter of man management.

The account of the garden insinuates the figure of 'The Gardener' (*olitor*), potentially distinguishable, if not already distinct, from 'The Overseer' (*uilicus*). Columella does not affirm this, and the reader is left rather to recognize how similar the planning and the tasks of the garden are to those we were introduced to on the site of the farm, from Book 1 onwards: the orchard, too, called for enclosure — 'wall, hedge, or ditch: no way through for cattle or human' (5.10.1, the opening of the section on fruit-trees). For farm as for garden, first comes choice of site (1.2); preferred soil type is deferred to start Book 2, where the all-important selection of *arable* land is in play

<sup>23</sup> 'So the countryman could inaugurate the duties of cultivation from the Ides of January, thereby respecting the first month, emperor of the Roman year — some of them leftovers from earlier that he will complete (*consummare*), others belonging to time to come that he will begin. No, it will be plenty to carry out each job by the half-month (*semestrum*), because work got done fifteen days beforehand can't be seen as rushed through too early, and, in return, work that many days behind can't be seen as done too slowly.'

With this, Columella has bridged from our editions' account of *Vilicus*, '11.1', into the almanac of '11.2'.

<sup>24</sup> 'The garden really needs putting in proper concerted order for the year, but it is held back for treatment separately, in its place, so that Columella won't seem to have committed the cardinal sin of *neglecting* the Gardener's Duties, amidst the present (so to speak) *mob* of works, or else to have interrupted the cycle I have begun of the rest of the forms of cultivation.'



(2.2);<sup>25</sup> and water-supply — stream, spring, or (not too deep) well (1.5) . . . Ploughing and digging are not so different; hoeing and trenching vary only in scale (2.11.1; e.g. for vines, 3.13, with explicit back-reference, at §10, to 2.2.25, 2.4.3). Irrigation and watering can merge; muck is muck on any scale (2.13). Seed selection (2.6), and sowing or planting cuttings (e.g. the vine, 3.19), weeding, weeding, weeding, picking and harvesting . . . Columella's gardening resumes general farming practices with every round of labour.

Rosebeds (on the farm: 11.2.19, 29) and turnips/navews are to be found in both places (on the farm: 11.2.71; cattle-feed and for paupers: 2.10.22), while medic needs paths 'garden-style' (2.21.26), and the thyme family of herbs are at home in the garden, but serve the beekeeper's hives there as well (back reference from 11.3.39 to 9.4.6: at 9.4.4, 'let a thousand flowers bloom' for the bees — wild or garden varieties, 'everything they love' . . .).

Even the chief difference between approaching the farm and the garden, the provision of adequate and appropriate buildings and staff (1.6 through 1.9, the end of the book), will suggest how Columella's inclusion of his two gardens within *De re rustica* acts out, to the letter, the grand strategy of deployment martialled in his *Preface*. 'Orchard and garden', we were soon told, 'put them below the sewage and byre', so the goodness seeps down (1.6.24).

Next, however, I shall track through the main sequence of reading instructions which the dyad of owner and overseer must take on board as they mug up, and then thumb backwards and forwards through the manual — like any reader who does not resort to consultation through the indexes without further ado.

In the opening *Preface*, Columella bit the bullet of cultural realism (whether for once or as always, scholars disagree). He knows that the *dominus* should run his land, not the *seruus*. Appointing a *uilicus* is not just asking for one unsatisfactory mess or another, it shouldn't be the way of the *Countryside* (1 *Praef.* 10–12). But it is: as his blurb trumpeted first and foremost, 'We have handed the *Res Rustica* over to every worst one of our slaves, as if to the executioner for punishment' (1 *Praef.* 3). And so it proves, of course, with the *De re rustica*, too.

The opening salvo at once weighs into leadership: throwing fifty great authorities at that 'diligent *paterfamilias*', and then putting ahead of their combined weight, plus the 'continual labour and experience of the overseer', the all-important *praesentia domini* that will never be, not outside the covers of Columella (1.1.18). In staffing the farmbuildings, station *uilicus* where he can command the stable-doors (1.6.7), and, failing master, put *uilicus* where he can command the threshing-floor as well (1.6.23). Take the greatest care in choosing your overseer — so many pitfalls here . . . but, for one thing, 'It's possible for an illiterate to perform management plenty adequately, provided he has a super-retentive memory' (1.8.4). And on the other hand, 'It's not right in, and on, Columella land for one person to order and his mate to teach: no one can get work done right who learns what and how it's to be done from an underling' (*ibid.*).

Which is to say, the pedagogic structure of implied *readership* is a shuffle between the authorities and power discourses mobilized by Columella (Hesiod, Cato, one and all; censorious moralization, the word of the ancestors, official calendars, gadgetry, jargon, and theorizing) and their 'underling', the dummy addressee Silvinus and his like.<sup>26</sup> One side standing in for the voice of the teaching and protreptic text, and the other for that fiction, the hardworking *paterfamilias*. A dialectic that relays between expert Columella and experienced Overseer, tempering the subjection of the owner who can and must read by installing him as the empowered overseer of his own slave. Run the slave by the book, make him run the farm and garden Columella's way — while Columella runs the owner, lock, stock, and spade, his way. Readers, however, will imbibe teaching over and above the practical know-how of management. For the

<sup>25</sup> On this critical topic, and the subtlety of its lexicon: K. D. White, *Roman Farming* (1970), 87–9; R. F. Thomas, 'Prose into poetry: tradition and meaning in Virgil's *Georgics*', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 91 (1987), 229–60, at 251.

<sup>26</sup> In a provocative paper, P. Carroll, 'Columella the reformer', *Latomus* 35 (1976), 783–90, opened up enquiry into the role of Silvinus in the structuring of power relations through Columella's text.

editorial salvos, and our direction through the manual, will be man-managing readers along the path toward twin admiration for the knowledge of Columella's specialist expertise and for the power of that knowledge. Over the head of any *uilius*.

## VI. BACK AND FORTH: THUMBING THROUGH THE MANUAL WORK

Book 1 terminates by announcing the view ahead from the threshold of Agriculture proper. Prefatory paratext interrupts (2.1), with a return signalled to the outset, where Columella had begun by deploring the prevalent grumble that Mother Earth is, irremediably, past fertility (1 *Praef.* 1). Siluinus is pictured 'asking why that provocative start?', and the answer acted out is that it is to make an opening to stigmatize our 'inertia', and launch cropping with the key-note 'frequent, well-timed, moderate manuring'. The idea is rehearsed of a story-frame in which each book is released separately, and in good time to affect at least the editorial for the next volume. The junction of Books 2 and 3 at once works the other way, to weaken continuity and ongoing/reflective debate: here Columella winds down with an attenuated lecturette on proper Countryside behaviour on holy day holidays. He defers proper treatment of these proprieties until he has finished writing 'the whole science of agriculture', a virtual formula for adynaton's 'forever'.

Book 3 begins by citing the (paradoxical) first line of Virgil, *Georgic* 2, 'Hactenus aruorum cultus', and apes the poet by moving from ploughland to arboriculture, with the vineyard stealing the show.<sup>27</sup> In the last words of Book 2, Columella flagged himself a vineyard pioneer, and he will ennoble the grape with anecdotes featuring his uncle Marcus and other Graeco-Roman inventors and devotees. 'No *uilius* can be trusted with the job of keeping black from white, red from green, along the rows' (3.20.6). Book 4 is to deliver the actual business of viticulture, now all the preliminary organization and selection is done. But it begins with another tie-in through Siluinus: he already reports, and dismisses, criticisms of techniques advocated in Book 3, in a prefatory flourish. The pattern is repeated for Book 5, third in the triad on trees: but far more spectacularly. A struggle is set before us, blown up since the appearance of Books 3 and 4. Columella told us 'he would not tell all, only most, things, such is the vastness of his branch of knowledge', back in the first *Preface*, but now Siluinus relays fresh criticism, this time for omitting a traditional topic. Columella will not be fazed by condemnation for alleged incompleteness, but another expert, friend M. Trebellius, independently pushed the same subject on him, as intimately connected to his chosen discipline: he will now bow to the joint pressure to include the 'neighbour and conjoined' subject of 'geometry', for all that it is the province 'non agricolae sed mensoris' ('not for a farmer but for a surveyor'). Three lengthy chapters of unreadable diagrams, calculations, and statistics duly interrupt work in the world's vineyards, just at the point where Columella will move away from Italian wine-production, to take in the methods used across the Empire. As an editorial strategy, claiming to hold land measurement at arm's length, as a topic admitted under pressure, reads as deprecation of 'difficult' material, i.e. advertising a challenge to get across to readers. The adventure certainly wakes up the long long parade of vine-rows, and brandishing compositional 'second thoughts' at the outset of the third consecutive *Liber surcularis*, where continuity in terms of subject-matter is itself beyond challenge, stokes up the dramatization of Columella's project still further. In terms of the project of defining *De re rustica* as at bottom an exercise in approximating 'completeness' (*consummatio*), it must rate as a successful shock tactic.

Book 5 ends with a typically blank promise for the 'next volume': *On Cattle Care, with Remedies*. This time Columella himself takes the lead, acknowledging a smart farming opinion that pasturage and tillage are rivals. But he appeals to tradition, and urges that cattlefeed and manure are the necessary terms of a 'sort-of fellowship and

<sup>27</sup> Comparison with *De arboribus* shows how rhetorical amplification has inflated the next three books

with purple passages of enthusiastic rant and preachy exhortation.

linkage'. Strengthening this position, one prominent back reference links cattle to *plough-oxen* (6.2.8 ~ 2.2.22–8<sup>28</sup>). The second book on farmyard animals, *KTHNIKOS / ueterinarius medicinalis*, follows on, as 'minor' to 'major' theme. *De minore pecore* begins with the 'lesser ass', after the first book's grander mule (7.1.3 ~ 6.36–8); assures us that sheep aren't a very different proposition from the larger beasts, i.e. from what we have just absorbed (7.5.1 ~ 6.16–19, 30–5); and even its farm dog — *uillaticus* or *pastoralis* — is altogether humbler than the hunting-hound, *uenaticus* (7.12). There are no prefatory shenanigans whatever, nor does anything ruffle the closing promise: 'Next book will be on livestock at the farmhouse, including fowl, fish, woodland quadrupeds'.

Yet Columella knows, and unlike Siluinus we need no prompt to see, that the *diminuendo* threatens to run the ship aground here. He sticks out his chin: 'What pretty well completed (*consummare*) the science of Country Life, plus the theory of livestock management, I have recorded in seven books. The next one will be titled Book Eight'. This time, he disclaims any 'fellowship or linkage', and makes do with a pun — 'This subject must be managed *non alio loco quam in agris aut uillis*', so it must belong in this place, *uel in uilla uel circa uillam*, in the *De re rustica*. This first book, *De uillaticis pastionibus. auarius et piscator*, at least interacts with the rest of the farm by providing plenty of the finest muck, for fields, vines, and orchards, besides enriching the table and bringing in extra cash. This time the second book in a diptych, *De uillaticis pastionibus. macellarius et apiarius*, will be more untidily bracketed with its predecessor: Book 8 dealt with the aviary and fishpond promised in Book 7, but not the game. The envoi to Book 8 messily declares that he must bring the book to a halt and come back with the rest of the *uillatica pastio* in the next volume, 'in case the reader gets exhausted by an outsize tome' (*immodico uolumine* — 'the volume of a volume'). In postponing the game-run, however, he sneaks in the apiary. The preface to Book 9 produces a briskly unapologetic rationale for itself, claiming that the gamepark is traditional, an enclosure in full view of the farmhouse, *iuxta uillam*, and swarms were until very recently located in holes in the farmhouse's own walls, *in ipsis uillae parietibus*, or else along a covered colonnade, or in the orchard: hence both qualify as more *uillatica pastio*.

As we saw already, the book of bees ends with the surprise promise of flowers — in verse. We have seen how the preface to Book 10 will drop all quibbling about possible qualification as 'relating to the farmhouse', and, far from appealing to tradition, will instead dismiss the possibility of such a claim. Yes, bees were always on the schedule; but in verse? — No, that was down to Gallio reinforced by Siluinus . . .

Through all the buffetings of attack and defence, the turns of assurance and confession, our expert keeps us thinking, on where Farming begins and ends in the *World of the Countryside*, how unified and disparate are its mix of operations, what continuities and disjunctions contend for the body and soul of the *opus*, what priorities and protocols make any recipe contentiously partial, in both senses.

From a Roman reader's point of view, homogeneity has been preserved most clearly in the relative size of the books, in their predominant style, and the criss-crossing network of inter-reference and parallelism. Yet there has been a steady trajectory, too, toward the launch into post-Virgilian hexameters, aether-borne on those myriads of tiny wings. The tradition from Hesiod through Virgil reinforced the logic: arable crops were primal, with those titanic struggles to break and work the earth, the heave of heavyweight oxen, the grand scale of furrowed fields stamping the land with human willpower and know-how. Vineyard, olive grove, fruit-orchard come next: extensive, stunningly altering the face of the earth, involving collective ingenuity, infinitely scrutinized finesse, and miracles of intervention on natural resources; but no one could argue that they could come *before* grain. Fruit is, forever, afters — a riot of culture. Columella can graft *anything on anything*. Roman animals are still givens, and sort themselves into descending sizes. Mammals first, then down the scale to fish and fowl. The question had always been: how far to push — what prize coverage, let alone 'completeness' (*consummare*)? When the garden arrives, the tiniest creatures are followed by the flowers they feed on. Where animals brought with them disease, so remedies, so

<sup>28</sup> The teasing reference is to: *primo . . . uolumine*.

*libri ueterinarii medicinales* (from 5.12.5 on), in Columella's garden the presence of *any* animal will spell menace and call for remedy and a fight-back for the plants.

At the garden gate, Columella waves at us that he *follows* Virgil's hives with the flowers he marked out in *Georgic 4* as extruded from his Farm (10 *Praef.* 3–4, 10.1–5).<sup>29</sup> And indeed he began preparing for his bombshell when he first turned to bees, in 9.2. Here he revs up the writing, with a grand run of 'authorities' featuring the 'busy bee' Hyginus — 'industrie collegit' — but starring Virgil's 'flowery poetic' — 'poeticis floribus illuminauit'. Yes, bees attract all the sweet nonsense of Greek mythology — 'bougonia' ('poeticae magis licentiae quam nostrae fidei'), Melissa, the Bee-Nurses of baby Zeus on Crete . . . Bees live in a walled enclosure, in a flower garden of their own, with running water, at a nice spot — preferably *sheltered* from the sewage and byre. They need to be by the farmhouse, under the master's eye, so his manager won't cheat or idle. They need remedies, the bee-keeper needs a (brisk) calendar — to run from the spring equinox in March through the year and round to February again. Bees, then, are more farming. But they are also 'gardeners' in *their* garden, and they make/let Columella write *differently*. Behind that hedge, he gets ready to fly.

#### VII. COMPLETING THE COURSE

Decisions on what (not) to include in the *consummation* had turned on precedent, on definition and dispute, on diligence and discretion. Now *modality* comes into the count: 'how/what to write' merge/emerge on the page, as flowers of rhetoric bed down in Columella's lines.

Columella the poet. Clearly verse-form changes the dynamics of representation drastically. And the Gardening Supplement of 11.3's rows of prose will bring out the differences starkly. But this is an essay about context, about (de)contextualization. I must just turn back one last time to the overall *Preface* to *De re rustica*, where an extensive programme for the work was presented, if thinly masked as a vaunt of the enormous range of knowledge which a Columella must deliver on — all told, he says, more than a lifetime's worth of work (§22–8):

nam qui se in hac scientia perfectum uolet profiteri, sit oportet rerum naturae sagacissimus . . . siderum ortus et occasus memoria repetat . . . caeli et anni praesentis mores intueatur . . . iam ipsa terrae uarietas . . . in arboribus uineisque . . . conserendis ac tuendis et in pecoribus parandis conseruandisque . . . equinum atque . . . bubulcum, . . . pecus ouillum, . . . caprinum, . . . [suillum] . . . et ut a pecoribus recedam, quorum in parte auium cohortalium et apium cura, . . . tot . . . species insitionum, tot putationum, tot pomorum olerumque cultus, . . . tot generibus ficorum sicut rosariis, . . . prata et salicta, genistaeque et harundines . . .

The perfect expert must have researched into

- astronomy and meteorology, pure and applied;
  - soil physics and yield;
  - arboriculture and viticulture;
  - livestock management, across the range of large and small beasts;<sup>30</sup>
  - farmyard animals — birds and bees (no fish),
- and in addition to all I have counted out,
- all the types of grafting and pruning,
  - all the fruit and veg. cultivation,
  - all the attention to figs and rosebeds,
- neglected by everyone until recently, but certainly not by Columella.
- Meadows, willow plantations, broom and reeds, need slight care, that much though no more.

<sup>29</sup> Punster Pliny matter-of-factly notes that nothing escapes him: 'uideo Vergilium praecellentissimum uatem . . . hortorum dotes fugisse et in his quae rettulit flores modo rerum decerpisse' (*Nat. Hist.*

14.7). Cf. R. T. Bruère, 'Pliny the Elder and Virgil', *Classical Philology* 51 (1956), 228–46, at 235.

<sup>30</sup> Controversially allowed in by Columella, as he already notes in brief here.

The list is flattening, and, he ventures, even risks putting students off the whole subject. You can see that the programme fits the work as we have it pretty well — suggesting that in its present form it did *not* prefix a Book 1 which went out into the world while the author waited for reception before settling on a firm plan ahead. It does *not* accurately predict our *De re rustica* in several respects: grafting and pruning are oddly separated from trees and vines; fruit and veg. are misleadingly brought together; though figs are dealt with, in ten varieties, but half-way in, at 5.10.9–11, rosebeds will never get proper treatment, only a string of honourable mentions, under both farm and garden. Meadows don't find much for us to read, but willow, broom, and reed cram into 4.30, 4.31, and 4.32 . . .

Columella's garden may nurture veg. and Book 10 would allow in fruit, too. *Flowers*, however, are *not* scheduled in the *Preface*. There is, in fact, nothing at all to suggest here that Columella had written, or meant to write, anything after our Book 10. Plenty to suggest that if he knew how the whole programme was going to work, he wasn't out to hand over the package before we start. Rather, he winds up the *Preface* by breaking off with a characteristic promise/deferral (§33):

De cuius uniuersitate nihil attinet plura nunc disserere, quoniam quidem cunctae partes eius destinatis aliquot uoluminibus explicandae sunt, quas ordine suo tunc demum persequar, cum praefatus fuero quae reor ad uniuersam disciplinam maxime pertinere.<sup>31</sup>

Which is almost to say that he has released clues a-plenty: any more, and he risks losing readers. Readers who like to find out by ploughing on, by digging in, and turning over.

In particular, there was no word of any index, or of Contents listings to access each book. Market gardening *may* count as promised, although some 'vegetables' and all 'fruit' could be claimed for treatment away on the farm and orchard. But there is no hint of any intricacies involving either versification or a full account of the *Overseer's Duties*, whether or not featuring farm and garden almanac and calendar. As for Book 12, *Vilica* could seem utterly cut off from *everything* that precedes, including *Vilicus'* Book 11, which at least presents that satisfying explanation, that it supplements Book 10. Literally cut off, too, by its exclusion from the arrangements for, and manuscript provision of, the general index of Contents.

#### VIII. WHAT KEPT YOU? COLUMELLA'S LARDER (TAKES TWO)

Now for the counter-argument, which holds that the apartness of Book 12 is only part of a telling compositional strategy that finally grounds the whole of the *De re rustica*. *Vilica* retrospectively prompts a dynamic reading of the manual's trajectory. All that series of problematized, cancelled, and reduplicated terminal points fetch in here, never to leave.

*Vilicus* and *Vilica* make a pair — an asymmetrical pair, but still a dyad.<sup>32</sup> As the farming almanac reached late autumnal tasks out in the fields, Overseer re-surfaced, to be told to delegate to Overseeress any chores in the farmhouse, *intra uillam* (11.2.71–2). As the manuscripts' rubrics pointed out, both the last books get under way with displayed affiliation to the *oeconomicis libris*. Books 11 and 12 are unmissably thrust at readers as twin projects at their inception. Book 11 waits through the *Preface*, then half a page of text, and a one-liner from Cato before ventriloquating Xenophon and his Latin translator Cicero; the very first words of Book 12 pitch straight into the *Oeconomicus* of

<sup>31</sup> 'There is no point in my discussing the world of *Country Living* as a whole further here and now, since all its departments are for explaining in the considerable number of volumes marked out for them, which I shall carry out, in their proper order, at the moment when I have made my preliminary statement of what I rate as most relevant of all to the whole discipline.'

<sup>32</sup> Cato, *Res Rust.* also introduces the *uilicus* and his instructions at the outset, winding up the body of his tract by summarizing his *officia* (4–5; 142); at that point, he produces a complementary list of *officia* for *uilica*, too (143). This must be Columella's model.

Xenophon-Cicero. Their teaching text prepared a bride for a husband. Columella will work up sentiment for the marital condition as a complementary pooling of resources, to mutual benefit. And he will graft the lecture onto a resumption of his perpetual Jeremiad against absentee owners. By §10, for the finale of this final preface, his censorious voice will be regretting the vanished *matrona* of yesteryear's farmhouse, now ghosted by the *uilica* in her place. The text proper at once pins Book 12 to 11, in teaching us how to pick a good woman for the position: 'to keep to the order of exegesis that I got started up in the earlier volume (*priore uolumine*) . . .'. Soon enough, the parallelism is incised still deeper when it is overlaid with a further level of supervisory subjection: Overseer must keep an eye on Overseeress, since she is his 'helper' in and about the farmhouse, but no derogation from his overall responsibility (12.1.4).

All the same, this is 'her' special sphere of supervisory activity, for she is the staff to service those farmbuildings, and the manufacturing technologies for which they were purpose-built, as the back-reference underscores (12.2.1, 'in primo uolumine' ~ 1.6.9–20, 'ad uillae situm'). *Vilica* matches *Vilicus*, who as I noticed has his description in the first book resuméd and greatly extended in the account of his duties in Book 11 (including several back references to the first book). In 12, we are given a brief recapitulation of the tasks of the *uilica*, in line with the account of the *uilicus* in Book 11 (the second back-reference at 12.2.1). All this amounts to stern instruction from Columella to find ring-structure in these final forays: 12 to shadow 11; both to supplement 1. At the outset we were told how critical it was that the instruction was to empower the missing owner to handle his slave manager, and deter him from managing his master. That was how we first heard the extra task of the owner, to find a good *uilica* to keep a good *uilicus* true (1.8.5). The staff brought closure to the first book, of general foundation. Now they bring closure to the entire edifice.

We watched and felt the books of *De re rustica* closing inexorably on the farmhouse. From the livestock into the farmyard, the duck-pond and bee-hives, that game-run outside the window, the Overseer strategically surveying the vicinity, and finally the non-sedentary life of the Overseeress scurrying in, out, and round the farmhouse, its outhouses, lofts and stores. Everything has been steadily (and literally) homing on the 'larder'. On 'oeco-nomics' — and the incarnation of *domestica diligentia*, at least a match for her mate in *memoria et diligentia*, and anchored to her housekeeping role (12 *Praef.* 4, 6). Her tasks add up to one more demanding all-action 'vocation' of management, but their ensemble composes an agglomeration with a unique profile. Quite distinct from the *uilicus*, let alone the *dominus* supposedly stood over and behind him.

It looks this way. Marriage is to prevent humanity from *perishing* and to get support for old age *prepared* in advance (*Praef.* 1, 'ne . . . occident, . . . praeparare'). Columella's timid female was better suited to *safeguarding* what was brought in under shelter, acquisitions that needed *safekeeping in a lock-up/an enclosure/security* ('custodire, . . . clauso custodire', §3). Her duties are along the same lines as the man given her: 'These are not the only points that must be *safeguarded* in [choosing] an Overseeress' (*custodienda*, 12.1.2), she must *preserve* the same lifestyle as the Overseer (*seruare*, §3). Her job is to *stay* at home (*domi morari*), *retain* (*continere*), *receive* (*recipere*), *keep safe* (*custodire*, 12.1.5) — 'so a year's outlay doesn't go in a month'. She must *remember* what is brought in, and make sure *what is put in store should last* ('meminisse . . . , recondita . . . permaneat', 12.2.1). For it is not good enough to *stash away and keep secure* what she has *taken in* ('clausa custodiat, . . . receperit', 12.3.5): she must *keep looking* to see stores don't *rot* or *spoil* ('ne dilabatur, . . . corrumpantur', *ibid.*). At the meta-level, *Vilica* 'will keep this *principle for perpetual safeguarding*' ('illud . . . in perpetuum custodiendum habebit . . .', 7). She will keep at it, and master and mistress will *look over* her standards, to make sure the pattern at the start is *conserved* ('considerare . . . conseruetur', 10). For this has always been *observed* in well-run states, Greek or Roman — who appoint '*guardians of the laws*' ('obseruatum . . . , custodes . . . νομοφύλακες . . . custodientes', 10–11) . . .

So it will go on, as Columella moves characteristically from general summation and on to the specifics, and proceeds to sort the housekeeper's routines into a yearly round, beginning with the lull just after the sowing season of spring. Jacques André underlines

that, far from facing a jumbled list of items to manage, as her index would seem to profile, *Vilica* moves steadily through the farm and garden calendar, the work determined by the time of year when produce became available for reception at the farmhouse.<sup>33</sup> She does not need to look out for the vagaries and uncertainties of stars and weather, for she must take on, take in, what she is given, and deal with it, for good.

Her first job is just the same as the farmer's and the gardener's: 'preparation' — getting the place and the utensils 'ready for preserves' ('salgami praeparari', 12.4.4). We get her recipes for vinegar and for hard brine, the two main preservative media (12.5–6). This readies her for the spring equinox, when 'herbs need gathering and storing' — all the pickling she can squeeze from the garden: sprouts, cabbage, caper, parsley/celery stalks, rue, alexanders bloom and stalk, same for fennel and wild carrot/parsnip, white bryony flower, asparagus, butcher's broom, white vine, houseleek, pennyroyal, cat mint, charlock, samphire . . .' (7.1, and more to come). 'All these are *preserved* by the same *preservative*' ('una conditura . . . seruatur', 7.2, cf. 7.5, 'conditura . . . seruari', etc. etc.). Spring gives way to summer between lettuce and onions (7–9; 10.1). Fruit now demands timely provision of the sweet preservative, honey — already readied for us in Book 9 (back-reference at 10.5). Cheese takes us to August's apples and figs, for drying and storing, before we run into vintage and the end of summer: *preparations* for this were readied in Book 11 (*praeparanda*; back-reference at 18.1), but the cap fits the Overseeress for a . . . recap.

At this point, Columella eases into a distinctly grand and suave *tour de force* on wine-making, with a tailpiece on raisins (12.18–45). The expert Uncle Columella (5.5.15) is wheeled out — three times — for his only mentions since Book 7, and that fetish fantasy the *diligens pater familiae* steps out, too (21.6). Just as the *uilicus* faded and re-surfaced in the tableaux of his book, *uilica* only re-emerges after the vintage, when the 'processing' of autumn produce 'swells the demands on her' ('compositiones . . . curam uilicae distendunt', 46.1). There are the pomegranates to see to (back-reference to, and verbal repetition of, instructions for keeping them the year round from, 46.2 ~ 5.10.16). Fruit and the awkward herb elecampane take her up to winter and oliveage. Which 'demands again her care', just as vintage just did ('curam uilicae repetit', 50.1, the back-reference repeated at 52.7). With the new year, housekeeper is busy making more oil, salting the pork (of Book 7), pickling navew and turnip whether from farm or garden, and, in January through February, finally pulling the rest of the garden herbs — mustard, alexanders, and rampion — and activating Columella's recipes for salads (savory, mint, rue, coriander, parsley, chives or onion, lettuce, colewort, thyme, cat mint, pennyroyal . . . with nuts, or cheese) and, to help deal with all the *De re rustica*, a digestive or two (white pepper, parsley seed, silphium, cheese; or lovage, raisins, dried mint, pepper . . .). And, with this pair of eupeptic compositions, the ultimate synecdochic self-dramatizations of *De re rustica*, its assembly-line of metaphor and superbowl of metonymy, *finis*.

The message becomes more and more pronounced that *uilica's raison d'être* has been to 'receive, take in, store/preserve (*condo /condio*), keep safe, make long lasting, stop the rot', *all* the produce from *all* the departments of the farming operation. Pickling, seasoning, fermenting, potting, sealing — she spells *closure* for Columella's diligent storehouse of memory. She is like the 'gleucine oil' which she got on with toward the end, when it was *reserved* for this part of the book, though it does not belong to this part of the year, so as not to interrupt the wine-making (*reseruata*, 12.53.1). *Vilica*, too, was '(p)reserved' for this final moment, all her own. That living hedge behind us, hers is the last *enclosure* — the cupboard door Columella shuts on his hugely rich archive:

clausulam peracti operis mei, P. Siluine, non alienum puto indicem lecturis, si modo fuerint qui dignentur ista cognoscere, nihil dubitasse me paene infinita esse, quae potuerint huic

<sup>33</sup> J. André (ed., trans., comm.), *Columelle, De l'Agriculture. Livre XII (De l'Intendante)* (1988), esp. 9–11.

inseri materiae, uerum ea quae maxime uidebantur necessaria, memoriae tradenda censuisse. [nec tamen canis natura dedit cunctarum rerum prudentiam. nam etiam] . . . quicumque sunt habiti mortalium sapientissimi, multa scisse dicuntur, non omnia. (12.59.5: the *clausula*)<sup>34</sup>

At two points in her book, Columella gives notice that he had (p)reserved the *Vilica* for her supplementary role in the *De re rustica*. At 12.52.2, we learn that the place for rendering olives into oil was described in an earlier book ('priore uolumine', 52.2), but 'a few points are relevant, *which he had left out before*'. *Conclusive*, however, is the notice which was paraded at that inaugural moment in the book when the editorial *diuisio* turned from generalia to the seasonal round, with the coming of a housekeeper's spring (12.4.1):

nunc de ceteris rebus quae omissae erant prioribus libris, quoniam uilicae *reseruabantur* officiiis, praecipiemus, et, ut aliquis ordo *custodiatur*, incipiemus a uerno tempore . . .<sup>35</sup>

#### IX. DOING THE GARDEN

It is easy, after all, to suppose that Columella shaped his supplementary pair of books *De officiis*, his and hers, with plenty of that forward planning earnestly recommended to his students. The particular modalities brought to the *World of the Countryside* by *Vilicus* and *Vilica* now look extremely suggestive for opening up Columella's compositions on gardening.

What all three late arrivals have in common are the dynamics of the multi-culture characteristic of the herb and vegetable plot. Those earlier books could cover vast tracts of land with furrow and corn, vine and olive, horse and cow, sheep and goat . . ., and even bees and game could be dealt with 'in the round', one item, species, or variety at a time. But running the herb garden combines that attuned sensitivity required of the gardener who meant to tend his various plants successfully, with the organized efficiency of his better half's kitchen and outhouse skills. The endlessly varied and individualized blends of pickling agent, flavouring, ingredients, container, and store. In both cases, the specifics of each plant's expected and actual life-cycles, vulnerabilities, resiliences, preferences, tolerances, etc., create complex challenges. There are so many bioclocks to synchronize. There are no heroics, just timetabling and technique. Just *jam*.

The work of gardening even lacks the reflected glories of Book 12's vine and olive pressing. But there it stands, beneath the prairie empire of the farm. A concentrated synecdoche of the whole, an intense, intensive, fraction. As we saw, horticulture is agriculture and arboriculture writ small; and it shares with livestock management deep-seated antipathy toward pests, disease, and morbidity. Focus on the garden spelled in Book 11 passionate cult of timing, and profusion of growing methods, as dictated by these so many different subjects. What verse brings the garden of Book 10 is mimesis: intensified *writing*.<sup>36</sup>

The indefatigable applied agriculturalist here pupates into an enthused poet-priest of cosmic ecstasy. Columella singles gardening out as the gem that encapsulates existence. Enter the gate, and find paradise: leave again, and re-enter reality. The rest of

<sup>34</sup> 'The last clause in my treatise, Woody Esq. The right moment to point out to future readers that I never doubted that possible ingredients for this material are virtually infinite, but I resolved to put on record what seemed most essential. . . . Those regarded as the wisest of men are said to have known many, not all, things.'

<sup>35</sup> 'Now I shall give instructions about the rest of the subjects that were omitted from earlier books because they were (p)reserved for the duties of the Overseeress. And, so that some order may be *safeguarded*, I shall begin with spring time . . .'

<sup>36</sup> See W. Fitzgerald, 'Labor and laborer in Latin poetry: the case of the *Moretum*', *Arethusa* 29 (1996), 389-418, esp. 413: 'The poetry that describes the work and skill of the gardener also needs the work of the gardener to help the reader imagine the poet's work'. This is the subject of E. J. Gowers, 'Vegetable love: Virgil, Columella, and garden poetry', *Ramus* 29 (2000), 127-48.

To mark the predominance of *language* behind Book 10's living hedge, I shall weed the Latin and grow some English varieties instead.



*De re rustica* encrypted, and will seal up again, the lyricism that bursts onto the page in its garden — but the hard work that lies behind every blossom is honoured, too, in every line of hothouse verse, and it stands in for the whole range of applied creativity that materializes in every *unglamorous*, perhaps *unglamourizable*, operation down on the farm. In short, Garden *supplements* Farm — sums it up, as re-cap., and completes it (realizes it fully, brings to fruition), as ‘bonus’.

For sure, the poem is structured as a year-round sequence,<sup>37</sup> starting in Autumn just after the vintage when a farmer can find a spot of time for his garden; or starting in Autumn so the poem can climax in rampant Bacchic revel, a festal text triumphant. The calendar will mix and maul stars, weather, festivals, months, gods, myths, rustic formulae, quotation and allusion to classic verse. Forcing the tone, overloading the atmospherics. Pressing for response more than pacing and pegging out the round of duties. If you please, souping up the myth proves gardening always was as grand a theme as any epic thundering.

The teeming space for Columella’s ‘garden symphony’ (‘numeroso . . . horto’, 6) is first envisaged, enclosed, and established, like the garden in 11.3, and like the farm and its sub-divisions from Book 1 on.<sup>38</sup> Poetic programmatics stagger the start, meantime. Virgil’s ‘feast that cost nowt’ is the tag neatly used to introduce the other garden plot (*Georgic* 4.133 ~ 11.3.1), but our poem underscores that its prime concern is affiliation to Virgil, and *his* bequest of *haud mollia iussa*.<sup>39</sup> Intertextual positioning as heir to Virgil’s estate will channel reception of this *Fifth Georgic* from start to finish,<sup>40</sup> as Columella claims the role for Virgil of Virgil’s Hesiod, seasoning *Georgics* produce with a sprinkling of *Eclogues* redolent of sensual bounty behind Tityrus’ hedge.<sup>41</sup> Fooling with Virgil’s epic, too, as Garden challenges Empire for cosmic significance, and walks off with the prize . . . fruit and veg. The power of herb, the glory of spray.<sup>42</sup>

Interwoven scene-setting meshes earth with art:

An old tree to worship as the godhead of Priapus.  
Phallic fright. Eternal presence. A garden’s focal point.  
Groin to menace the boy, the burglar shooed by his sickle.

<sup>37</sup> de Saint-Denis, op. cit. (n. 1), 11–15. As in Ovid’s *Fasti*, the year is synonymous — symphytic — with its poem, and so are its seasons, its times, its rushes and pauses, crises and cycles. (Thus ‘conuertitur annus’, 160, is as much editorial *diuisio* as ‘inuigilate, uiri’, 159, both a wicked misquote of the ‘wrong’ Virgil (*Aeneid* 4.573, ‘praecipites uigilate, uiri’), and a self-incitement to lucubrate, now that the new semester is on its way. Cf., too, 255–7, along with the (advertised) mighty rainbow coalition that lines up so many multi-coloured variations of the concept: ‘now’; and . . . and . . . and, the zenith of poetic sentiment, a picnic pastiche of Virgil sandwiches (282–3): ‘mollissimus annus | dum Phoebus tener ac tenera’ —

So too this is the poet gardener’s thickening, quickening, measured-out wee ‘plot’ — criss-crossed by its intense grid of minuscule paths that ground immediacy in obliquity: ‘angustosque foros aduersos limite ducens | rursus in obliquum distinguat tramite paruo’, 92–3. That formula from the Callimachus manual (cf. the next note).

<sup>38</sup> ‘Principio sedem’, beginning the poem in the first *sedes* of its first line proper (6), recycles *Georgic* 4.8. The language of soil — ‘pinguis, putris, resolutus, graciles imitatur harenas, habilis, creat uuida, neque sicca . . . nec stagnata . . . , etc.’ (7–11) — clamours louder than the marsh frog choir for registration as poetic quality-check. ‘numeroso horto’ (6) at once promised music, rhythmic pyrotechnics, plenty of it;

more specifically, a proliferation of topics, set to pack this emphatically miniaturist domain.

<sup>39</sup> On the *metapoetics* of Virgil’s *praeteritio*: R. F. Thomas, ‘The old man revisited: memory, reference, and genre in Virgil *Georgics* 4.116–48’, in idem, *Reading Virgil and his Texts. Studies in Intertextuality* (1999), 173–205.

<sup>40</sup> Boldrer, op. cit. (n. 1), 15–22, E. de Saint-Denis, ‘Réhabilitons Columella poète’, *Giornale Italiano di Filologia* 31 (1969), 121–36; idem, ‘Columelle, miroir de Virgile’, in H. Bardon and R. Verdière (eds), *Vergiliana. Recherches sur Virgile* (1971), 328–43. Virgil is flashed up in 1 *Praef.* 30 and 1.1.12, and quotation begins at 1.3.8; citations are distributed unevenly, a dozen each in Books 2, 3, 7, 9, just two or three in 1, 4, 5, 6, 11; none in 8 or (nb.) 12.

<sup>41</sup> Columella has learned to work agriculturalist data into poetry, and to hold it there, through studying Virgilian techniques of representation: cf. R. F. Thomas, ‘*Vestigia ruris*: urbane rusticity in Virgil’s *Georgics*’, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 97 (1995), 197–214.

<sup>42</sup> On Columella and epic: P. Toohey, ‘Gardening with god: Columella’, in idem, *Epic Lessons. An Introduction to Ancient Didactic Poetry* (1996), 176–9; and relevant notes in Boldrer, op. cit. (n. 1).

Of course, every plant is a paragraph, every flower a phrase, every seedling a thought, every seed . . . an idea. In the making.

A tutelary god must preside over his genre: crude but seminal Priapus, stood proud at the centre of Columella's garden.<sup>43</sup> Muses must be invoked, too, the fuss of poetic finesse advertised as the point of our exercise:

Pierian sisters, channel the song fine. Columella's Muses.

'Winter preparations' tap into awful reserves of energy, plenty of voltage to launch the bard. The gardener's sky is full of dangerous astral vermin, strange monsters come to the rescue, and we are heading for the first salvo from Columella's arsenal of almighty shocks in making gardening weird, wonderful, and — primeval. Here in dead of winter, picture the poet-gardener's first tangle with work as a horrible mutilation of our Hesiodic mother, Earth. Dig her. Right inside. Two foot down. Columella raises the spectre so as to banish its nightmare. Greek Myth says Prometheus first fashioned earthenware humans, from clay plus water; but then Myth wiped us out in the Flood, so our lot only start with Deucalion and Pyrrha casting stones that came alive and restocked the planet. Columella takes off, and outbids, the violent heaves and switches of mythographic poetry, as he gets ready to push and squeeze the conceptual outcome of using personificatory imagery for working the soil. This first blitz hits us before we can take cover — but he means to take the themes of gardening as matrix of love-and-hate to unthinkable extremes. Bash her in, tear her out, turn her over. You know what spadework on a wintry day can be like. Bloody (but) exhilarating.<sup>44</sup>

Columella could use some readers accustomed to rude awakenings in didactic poetry. The Lyre constellation sets — February is here — and our poet is set to lower the tone: what, on earth, is about to hit the fan? 'Don't be ashamed of rich dung and foul ash', as farmer V. had soon told *his* ploughboys:<sup>45</sup>

Then a fattening cake is the thing: ass dung, say, in lumps,  
or cowpat. Feed the ravenous earth till it wants no more.  
The gardener *does it himself*. Basket straps snap with the load.  
Get your fresh-ploughed fallow fed. There is no call for shame.  
All the sewage toilets spew out, from the pipelines of filth.

Soon enough, the gardener's digging and hoeing will break down his violent midwinter erotics into a hypertrophic, hyper-tropical, hothouse of voluptuous poetics. This gardening is, for once out loud, going to be an emotionally draining, and all-engrossing, love-affair. First he moves from latrine to the sheen of spring. In a bright catalogue of floral tribute ('pingite uarios . . . flores', 96):

Now. In all hues, paint the flowers — they are earth's own stars:  
Snowdrops in shimmering white. Burnished marigold-en eyes,  
etc.,  
etc.

A score of vegetables march past at the double, in a full scatter of broadcast seed (*ponatur*, . . . *plena*, 102, *spargite*, 105, *sparguntur*, 120), before Columella's New World symphonic poem, his Ode to Joy, stops the show ('conseritur toto quae plurima terrae | orbe uirens . . .', 127–8):

Share the moment, heavy sow the most prevalent of plants —

<sup>43</sup> cf. P. Stewart, 'Fine art and coarse art: the image of Roman Priapus', *Art History* 20 (1997), 575–88, esp. 575–6; E. O'Connor, 'Martial the moral jester: Priapic motifs and the restoration of order in the epigrams', in F. Grewing (ed.), *Toto notus in orbe. Perspektiven der Martial-Interpretation*, = *Palingenesia* 65 (1998), 187–204.

The array of programmatic slogans gives a snapshot of the writing to come: 'cultus et tempora

quaque serendis . . . cura, nascantur flores, gemment, genus aut aliena stirpe . . . mitis adoptatis' (35–9): a challenge for poetry's quintessential lightness of being (40).

<sup>44</sup> Just like deskwork: the poem starts from received plenitude ('satur autumnus', 43), undoes the lot, then stuffs it full of new fertility ('pingui . . . fimo saturat', 81–2). 'Tons of it. Back-breaking. At your keyboard.'

<sup>45</sup> *Georgic* 1.80: cf. Thomas, op. cit. (n. 25), 236.

'Sing Cabbage'. The array of fifteen varieties takes our garden tour around central and southern Italy and back again, circling around Virgil's writing-den for the *Georgics*, at Naples, city of culture. So grand(iose) Virgil is misquoted and mock-quoted, for his *epic* catalogue of cabbages and kings, the fine crop of more-or-less native heroes with which Italy once 'flowered', when Aeneas came to chop them back.<sup>46</sup>

But every spring's shower of *semen* makes Earth All Mother, all over again:

Just look! Mother so mild is out protesting for her brood,  
she both wants the babies she bore, and she wants them right now,  
and she asks for her step-children, too.

That is: sowing seed now goes ahead alongside shifting seedlings. Cue for another bath of herbage/verbiage (note *disponat*, 177):

All the myriad hues that ritzy Nature delivers,  
a mosaic in plants, by the gardener who sowed them as seeds.

Exploding, this time, to fill the page with luscious lettuces. By the lorryload: types from all over the Roman world, and the Roman archive: two sorts named for a great Republican general; one from out East in Anatolia, at one end of the earth (Cappadocia), one from Columella's home town, Cadiz (Gades), at the other. Sowing time for sexy-sounding Cypriot Paphian takes us out, and into Venus' vernal month of April.

Venus' lettuce now hits that release button, or squeezes the trigger, and sex detonates through the universe. Ocean and Neptune impregnate their wives, the sea teems with life. Jupiter rides again, playing the shower of rain trick he once used on Danae in myth — but this time he comes down, not on some (Acrisius') locked-up daughter, but on . . . Mother Earth. Our bard peaks in a swoon of wonder, as the explosion of motherfucking, sonfucking, sex hits the globe with new life, growth, spring again:

While the thing wants, looks to mate with, the mother who wants it,  
and while that mother, so soft, lies there beneath giving ground,  
germinate in her. Now is the cosmic mating season.  
Now love spurts for intercourse. Now the spirit of the world  
goes pell mell, raving for sex. Whipped then by lashings of lust  
it falls in love with its children, fills them with pregnancies.

The psychobabble rhetoric of *copia* has its moment — the 'plenitude' of poetic amplification ramming home the purple passage of desire, as promised, to the hilt ('implet . . . implet . . . compleat . . .', 199–212; 'genitalia tempora mundi', 196). Does the earth move for you? *It should*. Violence soaks the screen, marked, again, in the order of mimesis, by the poet's own irruption —

sed quid ego . . . (215)

— Columella just jumped the garden wall. He lost it, in that undidactic paroxysm — sounded like some demented, common or garden, Lucretius, whose Epicurean philosophy of eternal genesis-decomposition opens with a cosmic Hymn to Venus-as-Nature in spring spate, before settling to hard analytic work through the postulates and riders of atomic physics. Lucretius could explain later how his Mother Earth signifies Materialist Matter.<sup>47</sup> But Columella must go right back to work — figured as pruning and gardening, as he reins back and gets on with the work of planting and growing.

Before he lands, the reverie soars ever more stratospherically from Apollo's Delphi, where the god's possessed priestess prophesied to the world. Off on a Dionysiac freak-out into the wild 'beyond' — past the Mother Goddess Cybele's home in Anatolia, where her worshippers must castrate themselves in devotion to her. Following Dionysus' vertiginous rout all the way from his birthplace in Nysa, way out East, to triumph over

<sup>46</sup> *Aeneid* 7.664, *floruerit*, cf. 734 ~ 134, 762 ~ 139, and 138, the red flag of *Turni lacus*.

<sup>47</sup> *mater terra = materia*.

the city of Thebes, beneath Mt Cithaeron, and assume his rightful place beside Apollo at Delphi. To have his half of the 'Pierian, Parnassian' action of the Muses. Infusing Dionysus builds the voice of praise into a howl of delight, sub-linguistic cries for Apollo 'Paeon of Delos', and Dionysus 'Paeon of [yelps of adoration]'. Upon which, Columella duly collapses, from this vertiginous fit of sublimity. From this *poetry* (which has committed the atrocities it renounces, and told us so: *sublimi tramite*, 216).

No. Just one Muse will do him; a short trip around the garden; a song to work to — up in the trees, or . . . to come down to earth again . . . down in the furrows, one man and his veg. (one scribe and his compact dictionary: 'me mea = cura leuiore . . . paruo . . . gyro, gracili conectere carmina filo, paruo discrimine . . . | spargantur . . .', 225–31):

So come, on with the next. With dwarf gaps between each furrow,  
see that seed is broadcast . . .

This trough gets another crowd of species planted in these humble rows of verse, before spring returns — nothing to stop our year turning, and turning its page — for a second gasping wave of high-octane thrill. You see, the flowers are ready to pick. Just think ('uersicoloribus anni | fetibus alma parens pingi sua *tempora* gaudet', 256–7: a *uernal* pun and a half):

Oyez, oyez. Harvest looms upon perfumed flowers: now.  
The radiant spring: now. The year's kaleidoscopic offspring  
paint mother's brow, and the make-over gladdens her [he]art: now.

Eyes open, jaw drops, girls blush, perfume as good as the Queen of Sheba's . . .

Now, Muses are girls, whichever way you look at it. More than less. Thus they are sisters — sisters to all the long list of sisters that throng the erotic landscapes of classical poetry (and now fill our heads: 'omnia plena . . . plena . . . | plena' = Columella's party, 280–1). Including the friends of Ceres' daughter Proserpine, out flower-picking in Sicily (near Enna) when the god of Hell surfaced from Ovid's great epic of myth (and sex), to pick him a bride.<sup>48</sup> She was kidnapped, raped, wed, and enthroned. Her mother gets her back, then loses her, annually. And that is our year, our allotment of seasons. The more the marryer. Columella tries it on his chosen nymphs, all over again: 'Trust me, gentle maidens, you are safe with me' . . .

Up at dawn to pick the buds, Columella goes back to (re-awake) what may be Virgil's earliest poem,<sup>49</sup> where goatherd Corydon despairs of beloved Alexis's scorn. Another wild nymph, their 'Naiad', can come fetch more baskets of flowers, to help Virgil's poem win the day, repair the (w)hole in his poetry, and . . . ultimately make an old peasant a very happy man, safe behind a Virgilian hedge:

You, too, Naiad, stop 'Alexis scorning Corydon's wealth',  
'lovely as Alex is, you are lovelier still'.

Bundles of cut blooms in baskets. What poetry is, and does best. Colour, redolence, blend, weave, cumulation, distension, hyperinflation, and burst ('carpite, permixta, nectens, sparge, condit, pollice molles | demetitis flores, textum, cumulate, distendat contorti stamina, pressaque . . . rumpatur', 297–307). Fit for a Nero (= 'mercibus . . . uernis = diues Vortumnus abundet . . . multo . . . plenos grauis urbe reportet', 308–10). But as the herbs are culled, pulled, torn, cut, chopped, and lifted —  
— the sky darkens.

We must make haste ('recurrere in hortos', 317).

<sup>48</sup> *Metamorphoses*, 5.552; Columella introduces this metamorphosis reunion at 256–7, 'uersicoloribus anni | fetibus . . . pingi'.

<sup>49</sup> *Eclogue* 2.18–19, 45–55.

For it is a *systemic syndrome* of didactic poetry to tip in a trice from ripe acme over into crowding threat, lowering poison, rotting decay.<sup>50</sup> We shall not save the poem from itself as it plunges toward its own winter extinction. From here on in, the year runs away with us, for growing has to keep in step with time, even when it runs out: *carpe diem* . . .

Sheets of rain. Caterpillars and bugs. Rust and blight. Remedies, a pot pourri of mumbo jumbo. Taking the biscuit, in this cupboard-full of 'Etruscan' wizardry:<sup>51</sup>

. . . in case no treatment can fend off the infestation,  
then Dardanian techniques must come in. A woman must plant  
her bared feet, as her time comes, when a good heifer like her  
must serve natural law, and blood flows to her shame, unclean —  
but she must walk free, loose at the breast, loose hair for last rites —  
as thrice she is led round the beds, and hedge, of the garden.  
Her step beats the bounds in lustration. Stupendous to see!  
Just as when a tree gets a good shake, and a cloud rains down  
of shiny round apples, say, or acorn's protective case.  
Down on the ground roll torn bodies. Convulsed caterpillar.  
So hypnotic spells once drugged the dragon, till it dropped off.  
Slid down from Phrixus' fleece, so all of Iolcos could see.

Sex, caterpillars, videotape: and . . . cut ('sed iam prototomos tempus decidere', 369). It's a wrap, of defamiliarized didactic making one last desperate shift at powering the essay now the flowers run out, and rot, *Fleurs du mal*.

But, it's time, the season to chop those early 'first-cut' stalks,  
and tear off the stems . . .

of all those plants we have already written into the ground. Time to cut away from the recent run of quaint potions, and the overdone sequence of elaborate similes, run to stalk and seed. Perfect emblem of the poetics of luxuriance, now, watch (out for) the double act cucumber and gourd.<sup>52</sup> Through the ranks of rank bush and rank bristle creep and crawl this pair of fat-bellies, everything from fatal through life-saving, as versatile as Columella's verse, as necessary as his expertise.

When the Dog Star arrives to presage the closing of the circle from the poem's opening [400 ~ 41], there is just space/time for one more fresh topic (*aperit*, 401). Fruit comes pelting down and piling up to fill a page with juice and plenty, and . . . still turnip is still going into the ground in late August. Yes, the planet's harvest of figs lifts one last wave of ecstasy, as Columella's vintage is due, praise be to . . . (that yelp of adoration), Dionysus. Full circle, The End:

— But Columella's grapes are now ripe. Fearful lobbying  
by 'Hosanna' Bacchus. Who tells us, horticulture is done.  
We close the garden gate. We countryfolk heed your command.  
So exultant we do harvest your blessings, sweet Bacchus.  
Among rutting Satyrs. Among Pans half-human, half-goat.  
Our arms wave now. They droop when the wine gets stale, and goes off.  
'You, the Maenalian! You, Bacchus! You the Lyaeian! And you,  
father, the Lenaean!', we hymn. Invite him into our home.  
So the wine-tank ferments, filled with lakes of Falernian wine.  
The vats will boil and bubble with rich new must. Overspill.

At this point, Woody, ends my lecture on horticulture . . . ,

<sup>50</sup> cf. R. F. Thomas (ed., comm.), *Virgil, Georgics*, Vols 1–2 (1988), notes on 1.178–86, 4.228–50. This is the round of birth/death that shapes Lucretius' writing as well as his theorizing: R. Minadeo, *The Lyre of Science. Form and Meaning in Lucretius' De rerum natura* (1969), *passim*.

<sup>51</sup> A. Richlin, 'Pliny's brassière', in J. P. Hallett and

M. B. Skinner (eds), *Roman Sexualities* (1997), 197–220, at 202–4.

<sup>52</sup> Columella's cucumber, long and round, serves up a sinister deformity for the fall, where Virgil's garden saw only a joy he could have grown into a greenhouse of delight, no worries (*Georgic* 4.121–2).

from the 'ancient sources', Hesiod through Virgil through Columella.<sup>53</sup> Columella the consummate (, the) gardener ('excultos . . . claudamus hortos. | claudimus', 424-5).

So Book 10 is complete, as complete and full as those ten Virgilian *Eclogues* ('claudite . . . claudite', 6.55-6, 'ite domum saturae . . . ite capellae', 10.77). At least as rich and full as it was when Columella stepped in, last winter ('multo completa . . . exundent pingui spumantia dolia', 431-2). The call comes, time we called Bacchus into our tanks, vats, racks, cellar, stores ('sub tecta uocantes', 430).

Strong poetic closure, however, must return us at once to the managerial genius organizing the whole farming operation. The garden gate is shut, but the business has yet to synchronize its departments, and complete the massive project. The mimetics of Book 10 have been a tonic for the morale of *De re rustica*. But the next prose preface brings us back down to earth, for the vital logistics of scheduling, for Book 11. Then, when the crops are all finally brought to bear, there is preserving to do, a modern farming life to be organized, and shared, in storehouse and barn, inside the conjugal farmhouse of Book 12, with a well-thumbed *Columella* on the shelf. Behind Columella's living hedge, we got our look at how and why a farm needs its garden. The fruit and veg. need their spice and herb. Herbs aren't herbs without the honey, vinegar and brine, oil *recipé*. And the modern garden calls for the gardening book, an essential element of any well-planned organization of the together farming life.

### XIII. APPENDIX: WHOSE MASTERPLAN?

Cato's farmstead was a sticky pudding of a primeval plot. Virgil's world of Work on Earth *entirely* hides the farmhouse from the outlook: bees have homes and gardens; humans would only spoil the poet's view. The manual he used, however, was a philologist's blueprint, eighty years young as Varro may brag of being (*Res rusticae* 1.1.1). Was Columella's continuing struggle with himself and the negotiability of definition of the Countryside a *pre-fabricated* run-in with the reader?<sup>54</sup>

Varro's three-book venture is itself no dead-pan instantiation of system. Nor does it lack its own soundtrack of unfolding dialogue with readers. It takes a good deal of getting used to. Book 1 accurately promises three volumes, 'for' the Mrs: for Fundania (that is, 'Mrs Farmery'). Founded on reading 'over fifty' Greek studies, plus Mago's twenty-eight Punic volumes, etc. etc. Contrast slim Varro's triptych:

uno de agri cultura, altero de re pecuaria, tertio de uillaticis pastionibus, hoc libro circumcisis rebus, quae non arbitror pertinere ad agri culturam. itaque prius ostendam quae secerni oporteat ab ea, tum de his rebus dicam sequens naturales diuisiones. (1.1.11)<sup>55</sup>

As is plain from the outset, definition of proper boundaries for the farm and its manual comes close to the heart of the matter. Once Varro populates his patch with his absurdist cast of agricultural names on etymo-legs, the argument takes up from criticism of previous writers (not least that Mago, naturally), who have 'strayed too far afield' (like grazing animals) — for example by including *grazing* (*pastio*, 1.2.13). The thought of Theophrastus the ramifying theorist of Plant Science suggests infinite topics to be covered, but a bold spirit declares just four main subjects, each divisible into two sub-categories (1.5.1, 4): '(1) soil and farmhouse/sheds; (2) equipment, human and non-human; (3) planning and location; (4) solar and lunar timing'.

<sup>53</sup> These *ueteres fontes* loop back to the poetics of irrigation introduced at 23-5, 'sint amnes . . . aut fons', sloganized at 40, 'tenui deducite carmine', and operationalized for the 'numerous' régime of *copia* at 49, 'terra bibat fontes, et hiantia compleat ora'. Cf. the emphatic admonition at 143, and the fastidious connoisseur's specifications at 284-5.

<sup>54</sup> As with the modern symphony, trouble does seem to arrive for productive Roman writers when they

leave V and approach X: Martial and Quintilian at 10/12; Lucan and Pliny, *Letters* cut off at 10/? and 9-10/?

<sup>55</sup> 'Book 1: Agriculture. Book 2: Livestock. Book 3: Farm animals. Things I reckon not to relate to agriculture have been chopped from this tome. So I shall show first what should be distinguished from agriculture, and speak then on these topics following natural categories.'

This scheme is remorselessly pursued through the first volume. Discussion of the calendar channels into a sixfold analysis of growing time: 'planning, planting, feeding, picking, storing, delivering' (1.37.4). Accordingly, the (fifth-stage) sub-moment comes 'for you to fetch crops into farmhouse' (1.56, 'dum fructus in uillam referas'). Book 1 completes its allotment, before (pretending to break off when) dire news of a fatal mugging in town breaks up the session. Book 2 then almost at once re-thinks the call to treat livestock, arguing that they are undeniably allied (*societas*). So Turranius Niger the cattle-fancier can receive Book 2, now that Fundania has her Book 1 safe . . . (2. *Praef.* 1). Varro's group shall discuss 'the origin, standing, and art' of pasturage (2.1.1). The 'art' gets all the coverage: 'nine sub-categories for three categories for three main areas . . . , a minimum of eighty-one fractions: . . . animals, small: sheep, goats, pigs; animals, large: cattle, asses, horses; animals, to herd the herds: mules, dogs, herdsmen' (2.1.12). The design is comfortably achieved and there is yet time to spare a brisk supplement on supplementary animal products — milk and wool (2.11). After such a display of efficiency, Varro tacitly boasts, they — he — could knock off early, for a well-earned full holiday in peace (2.11.12). When we come back for Book 3, the preface is still originating the age-old antithesis between farmer and herdsman, when Varro proudly announces a new division of his own: add to Fundania's Agriculture, and Turranius' Livestock, the never-before clearly-distinguished alternative form of grazing, namely 'Farmstead Pasturage' ('de uillaticis pastionibus', 3.1.9): Book 3, to be presented to another new bird, a certain Pinnius ('Feathers'). It will be a work of neighbourly love, in honour of shared conversations 'on The Villa With Everything' ('de uilla perfecta', 3.1.10). The group assembles at the *Villa Publica*, a vital nerve-centre for the social and political workings of the Republic, to compare and contrast the huge spectrum of outfits concealed by the blanket term '*uilla*', from hut to mansion. It takes no time at all before their farcical naming for kinds of feathered friend inexorably topples the discussion into focus on new-fangled, stupendously profitable, aviaries supplying birds for the table.<sup>56</sup>

'Farmstead pasturage' will indeed be diagrammed, into another bisected triad: '(1) aviary: terrestrial + aquatic; (2) "hare-runs", i.e. all game kept by the farmhouse: (hunted) boar, roe, hare + (non-hunted) bee, snail, dormice, poultry; (3) fish-pond: saline + freshwater' (3.3.1-2). Bees, we learn, used to swarm under the eaves, and game-run, hive, and pond cluster near the homestead (3.3.5). So to the modern luxury bird factory (3.4.2-11.4). Game has its due (3.12-15), but finally we play at interrupting ourselves for a special tribute to honey-bees (3.16) before plunging, at length, into the fish (3.17).

*Nos haec*, Varro wonderfully concludes.

Our friend arrives, having got himself elected aedile while we confabulated our survey 'On farmstead pasturage'.

That is the End — very likely, of Varro (3.17.10).

It would be astonishing if Columella, or any other successor, ever thought to follow at all closely the lead suggested by this maverick mix of order, parable, jocularly, system sermon, foible. To be sure, there is a certain degree of homology with Virgil's 'Hesiodic' trajectory, homing on a finale of bees; and Varro's direction does draw him toward the '*uilla*', too — and toward bees.<sup>57</sup> The superb discipline of the book of 'Agriculture (proper)', however, lends it a strong autonomy, enhanced by the 'changes of plan' which segregated, first 'grazing' from Fundania, then Pinnius' innovative sub-category of 'farmstead pasturage' from within Turranius' master-category of 'grazing'. Book 1's strong closure with the calendar sequence of delivering us to harvest time, and storage of crops and fruit, stamps the trilogy still more firmly as a quizzical mix of inimitable creativity. Varro no doubt set a Columella thinking, and plenty of principles attest underlying influence. ('Farmstead pasturage' was here to stay: *De re rustica* 8-9.) But, particularly in the sub-Virgilianizing gardening in his exotic jazzed-up garden, and

<sup>56</sup> See the brilliant essay by C. M. C. Green, 'Free as a bird: Varro, *De re rustica* 3', *American Journal of Philology* 118 (1997), 427-48.

<sup>57</sup> cf. N. Purcell, 'The Roman garden as a domestic building', in I. M. Barton (ed.), *Roman Domestic Buildings* (1996), 121-51, esp. 149-50.

in the culminating scenario of his preservation order on the manager's partner and her cupboard, Columella has surely staked out a conception of the ideal farm which is fundamentally his own.

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